

2012-7

Transferring Knowledge and Life Experience Between Generations: the Potential of Community Based Intergenerational Projects

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Transferring Knowledge and Life Experience
between Generations: The Potential of
Community based Intergenerational Projects

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In submission for the award of M.Phil

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July 2012

Abstract

In recent decades we have seen a trend towards greater age segregation in society. Changes in society such as family functions being assumed by age-specific institutions, changing family structures, the emergence of the beanpole family, increased longevity, increased geographical mobility, migration patterns and a shift from an industrial to a knowledge society are associated with a degree of disconnection among the generations. There is some research evidence to suggest that intergenerational projects can help reconnect the generations allowing for the transfer of knowledge and life experience and creating a greater understanding and tolerance between the generations.

Although, small-scale intergenerational projects have been set up in recent years in schools, youth centres, and care settings in Ireland, information on intergenerational practice is scarce. Projects are diverse and often once-off, involving different groups of participants in different types of settings and with a range of aims. While projects are generally believed to have positive benefits for all participants, there is a gap in our knowledge about what these projects actually achieve, the nature of collective learning that may occur, and their capacity to transfer wisdom from older people to younger people.

The aim of this study is to address a deficit in our knowledge about the nature and benefits of intergenerational projects and to suggest how intergenerational learning can be further developed as a resource in Irish society. As this was an uncharted field of study, creativity in data collection was required and multiple methods of data collection were employed, best described as a bricolage. The study was conducted in five phases. The first phase consisted of background research on intergenerational practice. Phase two involved a survey to organisations in rural and urban settings to identify the range and type of intergenerational projects. Phases three to five involved a study of three selected sites, two educational sites and one community site: DIT's Intergenerational Nutrition Project, 'Log on, Learn' and the community of Rathville in Dublin's north inner city.

Evidence from this study suggests that a number of key elements pertaining to the organisation and logistics of intergenerational projects are necessary as they impact on the experience and outcomes for participants. The findings highlights the many benefits of intergenerational projects with regard to challenging negative stereotypes, encouraging participation in other educational and community activities, providing opportunities for participants, particularly older people, to transfer knowledge and skills and to be a positive influence over others and the potential for increased community tolerance, harmony and participation.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis, which I now submit for examination for the award of MPhil, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study by research of the Dublin Institute of Technology and has not been submitted in whole or in part for another award in any other third level institution.

The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of DIT's guideline for ethics in research.

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Signature: _____

Date: _____

Candidate

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my Supervisor, Dr. Carmel Gallagher for giving me the opportunity to undertake this research and wish to express my sincere gratitude to her for her advice and guidance and above all her kindness and immense patience during this process.

I would also like to thank the participants without whom this research would not have been possible.

I could not have completed this research without the support and patience of Aidan, Eoghan and Aoife.

Abbreviation List

AONTAS	Aos Oideachais Náisiúnta Trí Aontú Saorálach, (National Adult Education through Voluntary Unification)
CARDI	Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland
CDP	Community Development Programme
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CSPE	Civic, Social and Political Education
DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology
DoES	Department of Education and Science
DCU	Dublin City University
EAGLE	European Approaches to Inter-Generational Learning
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency
NCAOP	National Council for Ageing and Older People
NYCI	National Youth Council of Ireland
RAPID	Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development
TILDA	The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing

TY	Transition Year
U3A	University of the Third Age
WHO	World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Historically the family was responsible for nurturing communication and exchange between the generations with interaction among the generations a normal part of routine family life. In recent decades, we have seen a trend towards greater age segregation and more socially constructed roles and expectations for young and old. This has coincided with major changes in the structures and values surrounding family life. Increased longevity with people living longer and healthier lives together with smaller family units has led to the emergence of the 'beanpole' family consisting of many generations of the one family living simultaneously but with smaller numbers in each generation (National Institute on Aging, 2007). Preliminary reports from the 2011 Census indicate that 28% (136,295) of those over the age of 65 years living in private households live alone (www.cso.ie). Changes in family structure from nuclear families to new family models such as single/divorced/separated parents and second marriage families with children from previous marriages have led to a change in grandparents' involvement with their grandchildren (Timonen, Doyle and O'Dwyer, 2009).

The shift from an industrial to a knowledge society has resulted in younger and older people having different experiences of life. Letter writing has been replaced by text and email, meeting friends for a chat has been replaced by facebook, searching the library for information has been replaced by google and long expensive travel has been replaced by quick, cheap flights purchased online. 'Age appropriate' activities and

events are organised for young and for older people but rarely for both. These changes together with increased geographical distance and migration have resulted in a perceived disconnection between the generations. It appears that the way we live today disconnects the generations.

This perceived distance between the generations has led to an interest in intergenerational practice and its potential to narrow the gap between the generations. Intergenerational practice is well established in parts of Europe and in the United States and research would indicate that intergenerational practice has much to offer participants and society (Butts and Chana, 2007; Goff, 2004; Pinazo and Kaplan, 2007). Although it may be argued that intergenerational practice has always occurred in Ireland primarily through helping and befriending initiatives such as students undertaking work placements in care centres, planned intergenerational projects began to emerge in Ireland in the late 1990's.

1.2 Aim of the Study

This study seeks to address a deficit in our knowledge and understanding of intergenerational practice in Ireland. It aims to identify intergenerational projects and learning opportunities in both rural and urban settings in Ireland, to investigate the experience of participants in different types of projects and in different settings, to describe models of good practice and to suggest how intergenerational learning can be developed further to enrich the lives of younger and older people.

1.3 Background to Study

Intergenerational projects entail younger and older people interacting in mutually beneficial activities leading to greater understanding and respect between the generations (HM Government, 2009). They include different age groups, in different settings undertaking different activities with a range of aims (Granville, 2002; Springate, Atkinson and Martin, 2008). A number of organisations promoting intergenerational practice have emerged in Europe and the United States. In Europe, key institutions are the UK Centre for Intergenerational Practice (CIP) and Linking Generations Northern Ireland managed by the Beth Johnson Foundation, the Spanish Intergenerational Relations Network and the European Approaches to Intergenerational Lifelong Learning (EAGLE) Project co-funded by the European Commission. In the United States, Generations United and Generations Together are two organisations working to advance intergenerational practice. The International Consortium for Intergenerational Learning is hosted by the Beth Johnson Foundation in the United Kingdom,

In recent years intergenerational projects have been set up in Ireland in schools, youth centres, care settings and family resource centres involving social and learning activities with older and younger people participating together. However, these projects are mainly once-off and isolated from each other and there is little accumulated knowledge about these projects. Many have developed through the work of voluntary organisations working with older people such as Friends of the Elderly, the Third Age Foundation, Age Action and Age & Opportunity. Voluntary organisations working with young people such as the National Youth Council, Young Social Innovators and

An Gaisce have all assisted and encouraged the establishment of intergenerational projects through their work. Activities include students teaching older people computer skills, older people teaching children knitting skills, older and younger working together to produce a life and times biography or spending time playing games together such as bingo and the Wii. Some activities are quite competitive including intergenerational quizzes and intergenerational competitions in snooker and darts. The GAA's Oral History Project encourages young people to engage with older people in their community while Dublin City University and NUI Galway have both established intergenerational projects. The success of 'Log on Learn', an initiative introduced by Intel, Microsoft and An Post which is discussed in chapter four, has resulted in it being run in over 186 schools (www.logonlearn.ie).

While intergenerational projects are generally believed to have positive benefits for all participants including changing negative stereotypes, enhanced active citizenship, improved community cohesion, a reduction in fear of crime and increased health and well being (Bernard and Ellis, 2004; Butts *et al.*, 2007; Goff, 2004; Hatton-Yeo, 2008; Pinazo *et al.*, 2007) there is a gap in our knowledge about what such projects actually achieve, their capacity to transfer knowledge and life experience and bridge the perceived gap between the generations in an Irish context. It was thus necessary to explore intergenerational projects with questions in mind such as: impact on age stereotyping, the marginal roles of young and old in society, the reality and possibilities of lifelong learning and the opportunities for genuine interaction among different age groups in public places and communities. Key concepts which proved useful in understanding intergenerational practice were the construction of ageing, the role of

older people in society, active ageing, lifelong learning and community and community development.

1.4 Scope and Limitations of Study

In order to obtain a broad overview of the range of intergenerational projects in Ireland, a survey was conducted using cluster type sampling among organisations identified in the literature as possible sites for intergenerational practice. Issues regarding the definition of intergenerational practice were identified very early in this process which necessitated the inclusion of additional information on intergenerational practice with each introductory letter. A follow-up survey was sent to respondents with the aim of identifying a small number of projects for in-depth study. However, intergenerational practice was much more diverse than initially anticipated and access to participants was difficult. As a result of this process, three main sites in Dublin were identified for further study. The survey highlighted the popularity of ‘Log on, Learn’ which was chosen for further study. Community based projects in Rathville were also identified from the survey and required creative research methods to overcome the challenges encountered engaging participants in the process. The researcher’s involvement in an intergenerational nutrition project provided insight into the organisation of an intergenerational project and access to participants throughout the duration of the project.

1.5 Overview of the Research Design

Multiple methods of data collection were employed in this research, best described as a bricolage. A bricolage makes use of different methods to best suit each particular

situation and adds value to the research (Kalof, Dan and Thomas, 2008; Yardley, 2008) and is described in more detail in chapter three. Quantitative methods were required to obtain an overview of the types, numbers and scale of projects taking place in rural and urban settings in Ireland and qualitative research methods were necessary to explore the impact the projects had on participants. The use of multiple methods also allowed the reliability and validity of the data collected to be cross checked (MacNeill and Chapman 2005). As this was an uncharted field of study, creativity in data collection was required and the research design emerged as the study progressed.

Within the research process, five phases emerged. The first phase consisted of background research on intergenerational practice including a comprehensive review of literature on intergenerational practice, and concepts and theories informing the practice. Although intergenerational practice involves younger and older people, the focus of this research was primarily on older people. Internet research was undertaken to obtain a broad overview of the range and types of intergenerational projects in Ireland resulting in an initial working classification of projects. Informal exploratory interviews were undertaken to gain an understanding of the views of 'ordinary' people and those working in the field. Opportunities to attend events which would provide further information on intergenerational practice were sought. Phase two commenced with an initial survey of organisations identified in phase one as possible sites for intergenerational activities. A follow-up questionnaire was distributed to respondents of the survey with the aim of identifying a small sample for further study.

Phases three, four and five involved the in-depth study of the three selected sites.

Phase three took the form of action research. The researcher through her work in Dublin City Council was in a position to collaborate with the Community Links Project in the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) on an intergenerational nutrition project. This provided an opportunity for the researcher to be involved in a project from beginning to end and to undertake research which would provide feedback on the project to the organisers and contribute to this research. Phase four involved a study of 'Log on, Learn', a project involving Transition year students teaching basic computer skills to older people. Semi-structured interviews with participants and organisers of the project were undertaken. The final phase consisted of a study of intergenerational projects in a community in the north inner city of Dublin using multiple research methods such as formal semi-structured interviews, unstructured informal interviews and observation.

1.6 Outline of Report

This report continues with a discussion in chapter two of the literature on intergenerational practice and concepts and theories informing the practice including perspectives on ageing, lifelong learning and community development. Chapter three describes the process of developing an appropriate methodology and ethical issues. It discusses the approach taken, the research design and the methods of data collection employed in each phase of the study. It discusses the analysis of the data, validation of findings and acknowledges the limitations of the study. Chapter four presents the findings in three settings, representing the three main areas of research: intergenerational nutrition project, 'Log on Learn' and community based intergenerational projects. Chapter five presents a discussion on the findings of the

research under two main headings: key elements of good practice and potential benefits of intergenerational practice. The key elements discussed pertain to organisation and logistics while potential benefits include challenging stereotypes, encouraging participation in other activities and providing opportunities to exercise a positive influence over others. The potential benefits of intergenerational projects for education and community sectors are also discussed. Chapter six concludes the report and offers recommendations to further develop intergenerational practice and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to examine intergenerational projects, activities and learning opportunities in Ireland in order to explore and understand the benefits. Its focus is on investigating the experiences of the participants while it seeks to identify models of good practice and suggest how intergenerational practice can be developed further in Ireland to enrich the lives of younger and older people. Intergenerational projects were initially introduced as a response to the perception that the gap between the generations was growing. Demographic change, geographic mobility, a shift from an industrial to a knowledge society and a general dissolution of the traditional family are seen to have contributed to generations becoming more segregated from each other (Lunn, Fahey and Hannan, 2009; Uhlenberg, 2000). Alongside these changes has been the development of age-segregated activities and living arrangements which have further distanced the generations (Hatton-Yeo, 2006). While the rationale for initial efforts to promote intergenerational practice was a general concern to increase contact and communication between young and old, it appears that aims and objectives have widened since to include the resolution of social issues and problems at community level.

As literature on intergenerational practice in Ireland is scarce, a review of the literature from further afield, in particular the United States and Europe was undertaken. While research from other countries is useful, the researcher is aware that it is only of value if the context from which it emerged is understood. It is not possible to transfer practice

from one country to another as the social, economic and cultural context in which intergenerational projects take place influence how different generational groups perceive each other (Kuehne 2003a; Kuehne 2003b; Pain, 2005; Raynes 2004).

Although the literature highlighted the absence of any theory or agreed definition of intergenerational practice, it did suggest a number of concepts and theories across several disciplines including sociology, psychology and education which inform intergenerational practice (Bernard *et al.*, 2004; Kuehne, 2003a; Kuehne, 2003b; Sanchez, 2007). While the research seeks to address a deficit in our knowledge about the nature and benefits of intergenerational projects for all participants, the main focus of this research is on older people and the perspectives of younger people are examined in a more limited way.

While the literature highlighted differences in the practice and understanding of intergenerational practice in different countries and over time, there appears to be consensus on the potential benefits of intergenerational practice not only for the participants but society at large. As intergenerational practice aims to bring older and younger people together, literature on the relationship between the generations and the obstacles faced by both age groups in the form of age discrimination is discussed. As the main focus is on older people, the construction of ageing and the role and participation of older people in society is outlined as is the impact of public policy on intergenerational activities and in particular the emphasis on active ageing and lifelong learning. As community was identified in the research as an important site for intergenerational projects, concepts relating to community and community development are reviewed in the context of ageing and intergenerational practice.

2.2 Intergenerational Practice

2.2.1 Historical perspective

In some countries intergenerational practice is culturally rooted in values and expectations around family solidarity and support across the generations. In China and Japan the idea of intergenerational interaction is embedded in familial and patriarchal relationships where intergenerational describes “*a traditionally cherished value*” (Bostrum, Hatton-Yeo, Ohsako and Sawano, 2000, p.3). In Hong Kong and Singapore there is a similar cultural emphasis on intergenerational solidarity with intergenerational practice focusing on family and grandparents as fewer people live alone than in the UK and USA (Thang, 2002 cited in Pain, 2005, p.11). One of the goals of the African Network for Intergenerational Relationships is to re-establish intergenerational relationships where communities have been torn apart by HIV and AIDS (Morgan, Vertera, Reid, 2007). Yet in Greece, intergenerational practice is not established which may be due to the fact that informal intergenerational exchange is embedded in Greece as traditional familial relations are still common with grandparents playing a significant role in the care of grandchildren and the passing on of skills and traditional handicrafts (EAGLE, 2007).

This research focuses on deliberate or planned intergenerational projects as opposed to intergenerational cultural practices which are embedded in societies. Planned intergenerational projects were first introduced in the United States in the 1960’s and 1970’s in order to correct the perceived threat of “*the growing distance and confrontation between the different generations*” (Sanchez, 2007, p12). In the 1990’s

they were further developed to tackle social problems relating to cultural, social and economic needs such as “*increased loneliness, lowered self esteem, school dropout, drug abuse, violence and inadequate support systems*” (Newman, 2000, p.57). In Europe they appeared in the 1990’s in response to problems such as difficulties in relation to integration of immigrants in Holland, and in Spain as a response to a perception of a crisis affecting traditional family solidarity models (Newman and Sanchez, 2007). In the United Kingdom they appeared in response to political issues concerning the social inclusion of older people and their role in society while in Northern Ireland, many intergenerational projects have been funded by Community Safety Partnerships with a focus on tackling the fear of crime amongst older people and reducing anti-social behaviour of young people (McConnell and Hatton-Yeo, 2009).

2.2.2 Intergenerational practice in Ireland

In Ireland non-familial interaction between young and old has traditionally been fostered through helping and befriending schemes such as those facilitated through schools, scouts and youth work. Examples include primary school students visiting a residential home to perform songs or play musical instruments or the scouts helping older people with shopping or gardening. Documentation on intergenerational projects in Ireland is scarce but they appear to have begun in the late 1990’s with projects such as the ‘Maugherow Intergenerational Arts Project’ in County Sligo and ‘Living Scenes’ in County Galway. The Maugherow Intergenerational Arts Project was established by St. Patrick’s National School and Sligo County Council in 1998 to explore the potential of using art to address the isolation and social exclusion that were believed to be experienced by older people. The project involves workshops in the school with local

older residents and students, visits to art exhibitions and the hosting of exhibitions. Living Scenes was first piloted in Presentation Secondary School, Galway in 1999 by NUI Galway's Adult and Continuing Education Office and has since expanded to other schools in Galway, Cork, Clare and Mayo. The project focuses on developing links between teenagers and older people in school settings as part of the school curriculum and the Transition Year programme. The Living Scenes project seeks to develop innovative programmes in the curriculum following consultations among young and old with the aim of uncovering common links between the generations, fostering mutual respect and empowering both groups. In 2008 'Log on, Learn' which is discussed in chapter four, was launched and continues to expand with many schools throughout the country incorporating the project into the Transitional Year (TY) curriculum.

The research identified many small-scale, once-off projects which necessitated the development of a working classification. Many of the projects identified were those which were established or promoted by voluntary organisations in Ireland working specifically with older or younger people. Friends of the Elderly have developed an initiative for the TY and CSPE Programme which aims to give time for younger and older people to enjoy each other's company and includes activities such as students making a friendship commitment to an older person and producing a 'life and times' biography for an older person. Age Action launched their Generations Together Programme in 2011 and is working with primary and second schools and youth groups to support intergenerational practice. Twenty intergenerational projects were identified from the Young Social Innovators 2010-2011 list of projects including 'A Blast from the Past' a project completed in Cashel Community School in County Tipperary and

‘Reeling in the Years’ undertaken by students in Mercy Secondary School in Tralee, County Kerry. The Young Social Innovators, a national charity, aims to raise social awareness in Ireland by providing social awareness education through action and platforms for young people. Among the other organisations identified were the Third Age Foundation, Age & Opportunity, An Gaisce and the National Youth Council.

2.2.3 A definition of intergenerational practice

Intergenerational practice is a broad and at times ambiguous term used to describe interactions between younger and older people in diverse projects with different aims and involving different activities, diverse settings and different groups of participants (Granville, 2002; Springate *et al.*, 2008). The form intergenerational practice has taken in different countries manifests in different definitions which have changed over time as the practice has developed. In the United States, they were first defined as activities which increase interaction, co-operation and exchange between any two generations (Ventura-Merkel & Liddoff, 1983) and have since developed into organised programmes to foster ongoing and mutually beneficial interactions between children and youth and older people (McCrea, Weissman & Thorpe-Brown, 2004). In Europe they were introduced at a later stage and although there is no agreed definition, the one most frequently cited in the literature is that which was proposed by the Beth Johnson Foundation:

“Intergenerational practice aims to bring people together in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities, which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities. Intergenerational practice is inclusive, building on the positive resources that the young and old have to offer each other and those around them”

(Hatton-Yeo, 2006, p.2).

Newman *et al.* (2007, p.45) suggests that intergenerational practice is much broader and includes all “*formal or informal, intentional or unintentional and solitary or continued interactions*” while Slaght and Stempley (2006, p.74) describe intergenerational practice as “*a broad term that includes programs where the service provider and the service recipient may span the life-cycle*”. Though acknowledging that the term is often used to describe situations involving young and older people in the same place, McConnell *et al.* (2009) maintain that a number of elements need to be present for such activities to be called intergenerational practice. Intergenerational practice is not just about one group helping the other but about reciprocity between the generations, bringing generations together to engage in mutually beneficial activities aimed at resolving a social, economic or cultural issue (Bernard, 2006; Granville, 2002). While there is no agreed definition, a key theme running through the various definitions is that it involves younger and older people interacting in mutually beneficial activities to promote understanding between the generations (HM Government, 2009). However, there is no clarity as to what age constitutes old (Springate *et al.*, 2008). Granville (2002) in her review of intergenerational practice in the UK, referred to older people as those over the age of 50 years. Pain (2005) in her paper on intergenerational practice for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in the UK, suggests that older people are those over the age of 60. In Ireland old age is often seen as the date of retirement or the date at which one qualifies for the old age pension, at 65 or 66 years. Yet research has shown that few people think that less than 60 years is old with the majority putting old somewhere between 64 years and 75 years, while some regard 75 years as older (Gray and Dowds, 2010). Furthermore, within the category of old, there has emerged in recent years sub-

categories: 'young old', 'old old' and 'oldest old' (Martin, Poon and Johnson, 1996; Degnen, 2007).

The lack of clarity regarding the definition poses questions as to whether projects should include familial relations and multi-generations. Springate *et al.* (2008) in their review of the literature found that the middle generation often participated in projects, while Granville (2002) and Hatton-Yeo (2006) suggest that the role of the middle generation is not as participants but as facilitators. Although VanderVen (2004, p.91) questions the exclusion of other generations in light of the potential benefits of intergenerational practice, she does recognise that multigenerational can be problematic in that "*a triangular relationship tends to be unstable with there being a stronger bond between two people and the third person being somewhat external to it*". In observations by the researcher at activities involving multi-generations, there appeared to be little or no direct contact between the younger and older generations as both age groups interacted with the middle generation. One reason may be that the interaction needs encouragement as was evident in the findings of this research or perhaps somehow the presence of the middle generation deterred this direct interaction. With regard to the inclusion of familial relations in the definition, Springate *et al.* (2008) conclude that familial relations are not included, while Granville (2002) claims that projects which aim to challenge negative stereotypes are less effective where there are familial relations among participants. However, this may be restrictive as projects involving grandparents participating in activities in schools may be both familial and non-familial such as a life and times biography or 'Grandparents' Day'.

As intergenerational practice is an evolving area of practice and culturally bound, definitions must be kept under review. More recently, in recognition that intergenerational practice takes many forms, the Beth Johnson Foundation have broadened their understanding of intergenerational practice to “*linking together a range of processes that build positive relationships between generations, bringing mutual benefits to all involved*” (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011, p.5). There is growing recognition that there are different levels of contact between the generations which to some degree can be beneficial to either or both groups. The Beth Johnson Foundation suggests that intergenerational practice is a continuum and proposed seven levels of contact between the generations ranging from low level to high level. Low level or level 1 contact involves participants learning about the lives of other age groups but there is no direct contact. In level 2, contact is from a distance such as letter writing, exchanging videos, or sharing artwork. Level 3 involves a once-off meeting such as a group of students visiting a nursing home, while level 4 involves contact on an annual or periodic basis for an established event such as a Christmas party. Level 5 are intergenerational projects where generations meet on a regular basis to undertake a shared activity. Level 6 contact occurs in intergenerational programmes where successful lower level contact has resulted in the activities becoming part of general activities of the organisation. Level 7 contact arises when intergenerational practice has become embedded in the community and is designed to accommodate all ages and recreational interests (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011). Level 7 is similar to Granville’s suggestion that intergenerational practice “*is not a single approach but a style of working that can lead to many different activities and outcomes*” (Granville, 2002, p.26).

The literature provides no clear distinction between intergenerational projects, intergenerational programmes and intergenerational practice, with all three terms being used. Granville (2002) in a review of the literature found that intergenerational practice, projects, initiatives and activities are used to describe the practical application of intergenerational ideas. However, McConnell *et al.* (2009, p.2) recognising the “*confusion over terminology when using the terms*” differentiated between a project and a programme, with a project being a single initiative and a programme a number or series of projects. However, the continuum of intergenerational contact recently proposed by the Beth Johnson Foundation (2011) indicates that intergenerational practice occurs when level 5 projects lead to level 6 programmes and ultimately resulting in intergenerational practice becoming embedded in the community at level 7 where it becomes a way of working. McConnell *et al.* (2009), introduce the concept of “lifetime” projects which take place over a significant number of years, although not necessarily with the same participants. Although McConnell *et al.* (2009) found no examples in Northern Ireland of lifetime projects, the ‘Living Scenes Project’ described previously is an example of a lifetime project in Ireland.

2.2.4 *Benefits of intergenerational practice*

The literature provides some evidence of the potential benefits of intergenerational practice to younger and older participants and to the community. Aside from the enjoyment experienced by the participants in projects, research indicates that for both younger and older participants, increased understanding of the other age group from the experience often leads to a more positive opinion and thus a reduction in negative

stereotyping for both age groups (Bales, Eklund and Siffin, 2000; Epstein and Boisvert, 2006; Gilbert and Ricketts, 2008; Kuehne, 2003b; Meshel and McGlynn, 2004; Pain, 2005). Interestingly, Pinguart, Wenzel and Sorensen (2000) in their research in the United States on changes in attitudes of participants following intergenerational projects, found that the positive attitudinal change was directed specifically to the other generation involved in the project and the change in attitude towards the other generation in wider society was unclear. They also concluded that although attitudes did improve, the participants began with neutral or positive attitudes and the outcome may have been different if they had a negative attitude from the outset (Pinguart *et al.*, 2000). As participation in intergenerational projects is voluntary, it is likely that only those with a somewhat positive opinion of the other age group would volunteer to participate.

For older people, intergenerational projects provide a means to transmit culture, traditions and skills (Butts *et al.*, 2007) and to acquire new skills (Martin, Springate and Atkins, 2010). Participation can reduce the sense of isolation experienced by some older people and provide them with opportunities to socialise and network often leading to participation in a wider range of activities (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011; Kuehne, 2003b; Martin *et al.*, 2010). These benefits often result in increased sense of well-being being experienced by the older participants (Butts, 2007; Butts *et al.*, 2007; Hernandez and Gonzales, 2008; Martin *et al.*, 2010; Newman and Larimer, 1995; Pinazo *et al.*, 2007; Slaght *et al.*, 2006). A study of the 'Personal Action to Health across the Generations' project in the United States was undertaken to investigate the perceptions of well-being of older participants following participation in an intergenerational project

(Resig and Fees, 2006). The participants were recruited from a programme which was set up to support the development of mutually beneficial relationships between the generations. The programme which was established in six sites in 1999 had rolled out to 55 sites by the time of the study. Ten sites were selected for research representing sites with varying years of experience of running the programme. The results indicated that the older people experienced a high sense of satisfaction and enhanced well-being from the experience as they were contributing to society and involved in a productive activity. They reported feeling young while working with the young people and the experience allowed them to stay connected to the young people and the community further contributing to their sense of satisfaction.

The benefits for young people include advice, wisdom, support and practical skills which older people have to offer, together with a more positive perception of older people which can help increase tolerance and understanding of the ageing process (Pinazo *et al.*, 2007). Intergenerational projects can provide opportunities for younger people to develop qualities such as initiative, flexibility, openness, empathy and creativity and to understand the value of lifelong learning (Goff 2004). Greater participation in positive intergenerational activities results in increased sense of worth, self-esteem and self-confidence and an enhanced sense of social responsibility. Benefits reported also include better school attendance and results (Pinazo *et al.*, 2007). In an evaluation of the mentoring programme organised by Big Brothers/Big Sisters, an American association involving older people mentoring younger people at risk, one of the outcomes was the positive impact on academic performance (Bernard and Marshall, 2001, cited in Pinazo *et al.*, 2007, p. 77). A study by Martin *et al.* (2010) in the United

Kingdom of five intergenerational projects, two community based: Football and Knife Crime and three school based: Art, Living History Project and Personal/Social/Health Education, to ascertain what works in intergenerational practice, found that projects that have a focus relating to the school curriculum can result in positive benefits for academic work. Evidence from the Art Project suggests that by taking young people away from the pressure of school and allowing them to learn for fun, their practical, technical and social skills improved. Participation in the Living History Project which was introduced to address negative stereotypes also resulted in the younger people gaining knowledge of key topics in history and an improvement in school work and attitude to learning. Anecdotal evidence from the Personal/Social/Health Education Project suggests that the participants contributed more in class, were motivated to work harder and were learning more following the project (Martin *et al.*, 2010).

Research suggests that intergenerational projects can result in positive outcomes for the wider community with better use of public space and facilities, particularly when projects have been established to resolve conflict over public space and to plan shared spaces for all ages (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011; Pain, 2005). An evaluation of the LifeLink Project in the UK which addressed fear of crime in communities, provided evidence that older people who are active and involved in intergenerational projects are less anxious about crime and using public space (Granville, 2002). Thus becoming involved together with increased tolerance and better understanding of young people can result in older people becoming more confident using public space. Community facilities such as schools which are used for intergenerational projects often become available for use by the community with educational institutes themselves becoming

more involved in the community (Springate *et al.*, 2008). Research also suggests that intergenerational projects can lead to increased social cohesion and active citizenship with both younger and older participants taking on other activities and voluntary roles (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011; Granville 2002; Hatton-Yeo, 2007; Martin *et al.*, 2010; Pinazo *et al.*, 2007). However, Martin *et al.* (2010) acknowledge that the involvement of older people in other activities following intergenerational project tends to occur when a key individual in the project encourages and supports them to get involved in other activities.

Although intergenerational practice has the potential to generate positive outcomes, negative outcomes are also possible. In research conducted by Martin *et al.* (2010) there was evidence to suggest that negative stereotyping can in fact be reinforced. One older person spoke about younger participants being out of control and intimidating while some younger people spoke of a project where the older people were boring, dominant and did not listen to them (Martin *et al.*, 2010). Stratham (2009, p.476) cites US studies which found that where intergenerational projects are not well organised or there is a '*power imbalance*' negative attitudes may be reinforced.

Reinforcement of negative stereotypes can also occur if young people are interacting with older people who cannot reciprocate the interaction (Gilbert *et al.*, 2008; Pinquart *et al.*, 2000). Furthermore, there is no evidence to confirm that any changes in attitudes are sustained or if they extend beyond participants on the project to wider society (Pinquart *et al.*, 2000). The extent of the outcomes depends on good practice and sufficient attention to the process with the absence of common goals and interests

resulting in negative impact (Granville, 2002; Martin *et al.*, 2010; Pinqart *et al.*, 2000). Reminiscence projects, for example, can lead to assumptions that the past was better than now and the ‘now’ is bad. In projects involving participants from different cultural backgrounds, issues can arise from the participants’ own experience and expectations of how young/old and male/female should act. Cultural differences can result in negative outcomes if they are not recognised and factored into projects (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011).

As the research on intergenerational practice is based on projects outside Ireland, in different cultural and social settings with different policy issues, the researcher is aware that the outcomes may differ in an Irish context. However, the research does contribute to our knowledge of intergenerational practice, its potential to contribute to the lives of older and younger people and the community and to the issues and challenges surrounding the implementation of intergenerational projects.

2.3 Relationships between the Generations

Traditionally the family was responsible for fostering positive interaction and exchange of knowledge and life skills between the generations. Changes in society such as family functions being assumed by age-specific institutions, the dissolution of the traditional family, increased geographical mobility, changes in economic and welfare patterns and the emergence of the knowledge society have lead to the perceived disconnection between younger and older people (Hatton-Yeo, 2006; Lunn *et al.*, 2009; Uhlenberg, 2000). Yet, Chamber, Allan, Phillipson and Ray, (2009) maintain that a considerable degree of continuity in the ties between generations continues to exist.

The Irish Longitudinal Study of Ageing in Ireland (TILDA) (2011) reported that although 74% of the older population in Ireland live in fairly close proximity to at least one of their children, historical patterns of emigration have resulted in those in the oldest age group less likely to have any children living in Ireland. Yet this geographical separation does not necessarily mean lack of contact, with families finding ways to stay in frequent contact such as text, email and skype (Victor, Scrambler and Bond, 2009; Williams and Nussbaum, 2001). In a survey of older people (over 50 years) and Information Communication Technology (ICT) in Ireland, an increase in computer users from 32.2% in 2006 to 48.1% in 2008 was reported. Internet users also increased from 26.7% in 2006 to 40.3% in 2008 (Work Research Centre and Age Action Ireland, 2009).

2.3.1 The grandparent-grandchild relationship

Changing demographics with smaller families and increased longevity are often seen as contributing to the generation gap. However, the emergence of the 'beanpole' family has resulted in older people having extended grandparental relationships with many experiencing great-grandparenthood. Grandparents continue to play an important role in the provision of knowledge, in transmitting values and family history and providing guidance to grandchildren (Bernal and Fuente Anuncibay, 2008; Timonen *et al.*, 2009). They do so without the responsibilities that they had during their parenting role and the relationship has less emphasis on rules and discipline and more on enjoyment (Timonen *et al.*, 2009). Timonen *et al.*, (2009) found that older people believed that grandparents in the past had a more distant relationship with their grandchildren and that contact today is more frequent involving the intellectual and emotional development of the

child. Many grandparents are willing to provide significant levels of support to their grandchildren and are highly active in their lives participating in activities such as playing, story-telling, watching television and school pick-up (Bernal *et al.*, 2008). In contrast other grandparents prefer generational independence (Mason, May and Clarke, 2007), only seeing their grandchildren intermittently (Crosnoe and Elder, 2002 cited in Chambers *et al.*, 2009, p10; Dench and Ogg, 2002 cited in Chambers *et al.*, 2009, p11). For many grandparents work commitments and an active social life have resulted in less time for grandparenting but arguably it is the quality of the contact rather than the frequency of contact that matters (Victor *et al.*, 2009).

The grandparent-grandchild relationship is not static and will alter as grandchildren become economically and socially independent with the parent often acting as intermediary passing information back and forth. However, family events such as birthdays and weddings continue to provide opportunities to reinforce the intergenerational connection. The relationship between grandchild and grandparent is influenced by the relationship between grandparent and parent with maternal grandmothers having a more extensive involvement in the grandchild's life than the paternal grandparents (Chambers *et al.*, 2009; Doyle, O'Dwyer and Timonen, 2010). Increased rates of divorce, separation, co-habitation and lone parenthood also influence intergenerational family relationships. For some grandparents this has resulted in more involvement in the life of their grandchildren with some feeling that they have a "*role to play in ensuring that the child was well looked after*" (Timonen *et al.*, 2009, p. 78). However, the extent of the grandparent-grandchild relationship following divorce or separation is influenced by the relationship between the grandparent and the custodial

parent. Doyle *et al.* (2010) found that while a high proportion of grandparents experienced reduced or no contact with their grandchildren post-separation, those who had no contact made efforts to stay in contact by sending letters and birthday cards etc. Although the grandparent-grandchild relationship is expressed in diverse ways and may not always be fulfilling, “*the underlying and largely taken-for-granted premise is that grandparents and grandchildren will have an enduring and active connection*” (Chambers *et al.*, 2009).

2.3.2 Non-familial intergenerational relationships

Research on intergenerational contact has tended to focus on contact within the family which in general is positive. Intergenerational practice which focuses on non-familial interaction assumes that younger and older want to interact. While the usefulness of broad survey questions in obtaining insight into attitudes and perceptions is limited, a survey conducted on intergenerational solidarity on behalf of the European Commission (2009) found that two thirds (67%) of respondents agreed that young people and older people do not easily agree on what’s best for society, indicating that they have little in common. Yet, in research conducted by Gallagher (2008) some older respondents thought there was not enough contact between older people and younger people and some thought it was better for older people to mix with younger people than with their peers only. While it may not always be apparent how young and old perceive each other, both groups have much to offer each other. Older people have acquired valuable life skills and insights based on experience which younger people need to “*navigate situations and processes*” such as child rearing, remedies and reassurance (Lloyd, 2008, p.2). They can act as positive role models and provide support and advice as well as

transferring valuable assets such as family history and skills such as sewing, cooking and household budgeting which appear to be very relevant in the current challenging economic circumstances. Young people on the other hand, “*offer new perspectives, untarnished by time, that embody hope for the future*” (Butts, 2007, p.92). Rapid changes in technology and the provision of services via technology can often result in difficulties and isolation for older people while younger people have the skills to help them navigate new technology and access services. Both age groups share many common concerns as they experience ageism and stereotyping and are often marginalised in decision making.

2.4 Age Stereotyping

Ageism and stereotyping are particularly relevant to both young and old. Ageism was first defined in 1969 by Robert Butler as a process of "*systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people simply because of their age*" (Butler, 1969 cited in National Council for Ageing and Older People (NCAOP), 2005, p.9). Ageism "*legitimizes the use of chronological age to mark out classes of people who are systematically denied resources and opportunities that others enjoy*" (Blytheway, 1995, p14). While older people often experience a sense of being of little importance, younger people often experience a sense of being voiceless, ignored and dismissed (Devlin, 2006). Yet, there has been more attention to ageism and discrimination against older people, particularly in legislation such as the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2007 and the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004. The legislation defines discrimination as treating a person less favourably than another person in a comparable situation on specified grounds including age (Russell, Quinn, King-O'Rian and

McGinnity, 2008). Yet, it can be argued that the state directly discriminates on age grounds, such as eligibility for driving licences, pension scheme, unemployment benefit and jury service while indirect discrimination occurs when attitudes are used in decision-making and the provision of services (Crawley, 2005). For older people ageism can take its toll on confidence when forced to retire at 65 years of age when they know their jobs well and can still make a contribution. Older people themselves often do not recognise themselves as old, particularly in comparison to other old people (Jones, 2006) and may disassociate themselves from their peers, which can lead to isolation and depression (Crawley, 2005).

Stereotypes on the other hand, are fixed beliefs which are assumed to apply to all members of a particular group with no regard given to individual traits. This is a universal human phenomenon and society as a whole has always stereotyped groups such as disabled people and religious groups as well as older people and youth. Since the 1950's (when the current older population were in their youth) there has existed moral panics regarding youth behaviour with youth cultures such as 'teddy boys', 'mods', 'skinheads', 'hippies' and 'punks' portrayed by the media as a threat to society (Stratham, 2009). McConnell *et al.* (2009, p.4) claim that there is an element of '*historic amnesia*' regarding youth offending and wayward behaviour with older people often forgetting their own activities when they were young. In a survey conducted in Ireland in 1986, of young people over the age of 15 years, 46% thought older people regarded them as vandals while 42% thought that older people regarded them as disrespectful and rude (National Council for the Elderly, 1987). Research conducted in the late 1990's on equality and power in schools in Ireland highlighted the lack of

consultation and a say, experienced by young people. In the study, students raised concerns pertaining to respect, differential power and authority in school with 50% wanting “*greater democratic engagement*” (Lynch and Lodge, 2002, p. 156). In a more recent study of ninety young people in their mid-teens who were members of youth projects throughout Ireland, there was agreement that young people in general are stereotyped with youth being associated with crime, deviance, delinquency, alcohol and drug abuse and sexual promiscuity. Many felt they had been treated dismissively, had not been listened to and had no say in how schools are run (Devlin, 2006). In research conducted in the UK in 2010 on the perceptions and opinions of young people (13 to 24 years), respondents felt overlooked in relation to meetings, opportunities and interviews in work and felt patronised by their older colleagues (London Youth, 2010).

Stereotypes commonly associated with older people and ageing are ill health, balding, greying and wrinkling and declining mental health and can result in older people enduring “*unacceptable limitations in their lives*” (NCAOP, 2005 p.24) or simply conforming to the stereotype and withdrawing from society (Larragy, 2009). Discourse on ageing is infused with words such as the “*pension time bomb*”, “*burden of the elderly*”, “*old age crisis*” (Larragy, 2009, p.9) and “*bed blockers*” (Carroll, 2005). In a survey on attitudes towards age and ageing in Ireland, 35% of respondents age 65 years plus, felt they “*were treated worse than everyone else*” (Gray et al., 2010, p.8). In a recent survey in the UK on young people’s perceptions and opinions of age, young people classified old people as “*very grumpy, weak and unkempt with one foot in the grave*” (London Youth, 2010, p.2). Stereotyping tends to overlook the positive characteristics of older people and labels them with negative attributes such as frail,

senile, confused, isolated, miserable, conservative and stubborn (Degnen, 2007; Huber, 2006; Laz, 2003; Pinguart *et al.*, 2000;). Public policy relating to old age pension reinforces the view that older people need less income and thus worth diminishes with age (Kennedy and Quinn, 2008; Walker, 2009).

Both young and old are themselves guilty of age stereotyping. Changes in society and in particular, developments in information technology have resulted in both age groups experiencing life quite differently. Young people are better educated, have more opportunities to travel and better jobs. Advances in information technology have widened the gap and communication channels between young and old. Older people are more constrained in their life choices due to technological advances and availability of services via the internet with many online services less costly than over the counter products. Older people have less expectation of material comfort and entitlements as they have previously experienced hard times and recession. There is also a tendency, particularly in urban areas, for younger and older to socialise in different settings. Older people often perceive young people hanging around as a threat and even if this perceived threat is based on stereotyping of young people, it can impact on the quality of life of older people (CDP, 2008¹; Kuehne, 2003a; Pinguart *et al.*, 2000; Stratham, 2009). According to Social Identity Theory, negative attitudes can occur when comparisons between groups are made partially based on the individuals' views of the different social groups, views which are portrayed in the media and society at large (Kuehne, 2003a). This is more likely to occur if the groups differ in terms of visible distinguishable characteristics such as age (Pinguart *et al.*, 2000). These negative

¹ This document was published by a community development group in a community who participated in

attitudes are embedded further by a failure to recognize variations in the group and overestimating the differences between the groups (Pinquart *et al.*, 2000; Stratham, 2009). Direct positive contact with older people can be effective in changing young people's attitudes about older people and ageing (Bales *et al.*, 2000; Epstein *et al.*, 2006; Meshel *et al.*, 2004) as negative stereotyping often occurs as a result of a deficit of intergenerational contact (Kuehne, 2003a; Stratham, 2009). Positive interaction between the generations allows older people gain an appreciation of the challenges faced by young people (Statham, 2009) and younger people to gain knowledge of the ageing process thus dispelling myths and stereotypes (Knapp and Stubblefield, 2000).

Research indicates that intergenerational projects can have a positive effect on the attitudes older and younger people have of each other (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011; Hernandez *et al.*, 2008; Lloyd, 2008; Martin *et al.*, 2010) with many intergenerational projects aspiring "*to lessen the negative stereotypes*" (Epstein *et al.*, 2006). An intergenerational project which allows both groups to work towards a common goal is more likely to have the effect of improved attitudes towards each other (Kuehne, 2003a) as contact alone is not sufficient to change intergenerational attitudes (Bernard, 2006; Pinquart *et al.*, 2000).

2.5 The Construction of Age

How we construct age is central to ageism and stereotyping and has implications for intergenerational practice. In societies generally, there exists a distinction between groups of individuals based on their age with members of each group having socially

this research. The name has been changed to ensure anonymity for participants in this research.

constructed expectations imposed on them (Blytheway, 1995; Hunt, 2005; Moody, 2006). For example, Erik Erikson outlines eight stages of the life cycle, each with developmental tasks and social roles which determine how the individual copes with the next stage. This compares to pre-industrial societies with two stages: pre-adult and adult with progression marked by a rite of passage (Hunt, 2005). A series of distinct age groups emerged as a result of industrialisation and age was constructed in terms of economic activity and the labour market (Kennedy *et al.*, 2008; Walker 2009).

In Erik Erikson's life span theory, individuals progress through the eight stages which determine how the individual copes with the next stage (Slater, 2003). Each stage has the possibility of opposite outcomes, for example, in stage 1 (0-1 years), the outcomes are trust or mistrust. Babies learn to trust their parents to meet their basic needs. If these are not met, Erikson contends the child might grow up with a general mistrust of the world. In Stage 7 which is said to occur between the age of 35 to 55-65 years, career, work and family are most important. Age 55 to 65 is regarded as the period when people retire from work and children become less dependent. The opposing outcomes of this period which affects old age are stagnation or generativity.

Generativity which is concerned with guiding the next generation and making a difference manifests in different ways such as beliefs and concerns, commitments and actions (McAdams, de St. Aubin and Logan, 1993, p.1013). While parents show generativity through caring for their children, others preserve traditions, care for the environment or create something such as a painting or a book which will remain after death. The need to achieve generativity and leave a legacy can be a motivational factor in volunteering in later life (Morrow-Howell, 2010). This is followed by Erikson's

stage 8 (from 55 or 65 years to death) which involves reflection leading to integrity or despair. Integrity is achieved from a sense of making a contribution to life while despair may occur at perceived failures and a struggle to find purpose to life (Slater, 2003). Intergenerational projects provide older people with a means to transmit culture and traditions to the next generation and contribute to society (Butts *et al.*, 2007). Research on the impact of intergenerational projects has found that self-esteem and confidence increases as participants' knowledge and contribution to society is validated and they feel useful (Butts, 2007; Butts *et al.*, 2007; Newman *et al.*, 1995; Pinazo *et al.*, 2007; Resig and Fees, 2006).

Changing demographic realities with older people living longer, healthier lives and their continued involvement in society after the age of 55 or 65 years, would suggest that more flexibility is required in describing stages in later life (Birren, 2009). In 2000, the population of people aged 60 years and over was 600 million globally, this rose to over 700 million in 2009 and is projected to rise to 2 billion by 2050 (United Nations, 2010). Ireland like the rest of the world is facing demographic changes. In 2006, 467,926 persons (11% of the population) were 65 years and over with predictions that this will increase threefold to 1.4 million in 2041 (McGill, 2010). Towards the end of his life, Erikson himself questioned whether the eight stages were sufficient given the changes in the length of old age (Coleman and O'Hanlon, 2004). However, Erikson's life span theory demonstrates that regardless of health or physical ability older people can still find a sense of meaning. It continues to be an important theory in intergenerational activities as it covers the complete life span (Kuehne 2003a).

2.6 The Role and Participation of Older People in Society

The focus on ageing in research is quite recent in comparison to child development.

Social gerontology which emerged in the post-war years as a multidisciplinary field was shaped by health and social policy concerns for older people and the political and economic view that the ageing population was a social problem. A biomedical study of ageing constructs age as a process of decline and dependency which supports a needs based approach to ageing policy further reinforcing a negative stereotype. Powell (2006, p.32) argues that although medicine has been partly responsible for people living longer and healthier, it still “*struggles with the notion that being old is positive*”.

Historically, the psychological approach to ageing regarded old age as a stage in life when people became regimented and not amenable to change and was associated with decline and an inability to adapt and change (Powell, 2006). Disengagement Theory views ageing as a natural and acceptable process of withdrawal from society as older people disengage themselves consciously and subconsciously from society on realising the inevitability of death (Powell 1999). Although role change such as retirement from work and reduced parental responsibilities are associated with old age, the theory fails to recognise the complexity of the ageing process (Estes, Biggs and Phillipson, 2003; Gallagher, 2008; Hunt, 2005; Timonen, 2008). While Activity Theory recognises that older people maintain their sense of well-being and life satisfaction by replacing the roles and responsibilities lost in retirement with new ones (Estes *et al*, 2003; Hunt 2005; Kuehne, 2003a; Powell, 2006; VanderVen, 2004), it too regards old age as a uniform process and neglects differences in people of the same age. It assumes that life satisfaction and well being are derived from activity and work (Gallagher, 2008) when

in fact some people want to withdraw from roles and responsibilities and relax. The “*population of older people do not form a homogeneous group and the reality is that increasing numbers of older people are remaining active and independent into older age*” (Conboy, 2005 p. 41).

Older people are not a single uniform group as individuals experience age differently depending on their gender, sexuality, race, socio-economic background and indeed their own perception of what constitutes old age. The application of the label “old” depends very much on the person defining old age (Taylor, 2009). In a survey conducted in Ireland in 2008, respondents were asked at what age they consider someone to be old. Very few thought less than 60 years was old with 56% regarding those aged between 64-75 years as older and 25% regarding 75 year plus as older with some respondents refusing “*to classify someone as an older person until they were well into their nineties*” (Gray *et al.*, 2010, p.7). Oldness is also constructed by older people themselves as they compare themselves to other ‘older’ people. New distinctions within the category of old, including ‘young old’, ‘old old’ and ‘oldest old’ (Degnen, 2007; Martin *et al.*, 2010) or ‘young-old’, ‘mid-old’ and ‘old-old’ (Older & Bolder, 2008) have posed further questions on what old age is.

Although our biological and psychological make-up shape who we are and what we do, they do not determine who we are or what we do or in fact how we act our age (Laz 2003). Age is socially constructed within interpersonal relations, within institutional settings and through social policies. It takes place in a “*dynamic social context*” (Victor *et al.*, 2009, p.18). The Humanistic Perspective on ageing focuses on what

makes life satisfying in old age and how individuals experience their life as meaningful. This is not a new approach to old age, in fact Cicero created a philosophy of old age more than 2000 years ago. He was the first advocate of the idea of successful ageing. Cicero did recognise that old age came with gains as well as losses and was not solely a time of decline but also an opportunity for using the wisdom of old age (Moody, 2006 p.14). Losses can be compensated and satisfaction with life enhanced by remaining active and pursuing interests through community services and continued learning and reflection.

Intergenerational practice can facilitate older people in what Cicero saw as their role in providing advice and “*exercising a positive influence over others*” (Gallagher, 2008 p. 65). As opportunities for contact vary as one progresses through the life stages, intergenerational projects can provide opportunities for older people to access social roles and pass on the knowledge and experience they have gained through life (Hatton-Yeo, 2006; Horkan and Woods, 1986; Pinazo *et al.*, 2007). While intergenerational practice has a role to play in assisting older people to find replacement roles, it must be acknowledged that not all older people want to participate in intergenerational projects and those who do, have diverse interests, abilities and available time which must be taken into account when organising intergenerational projects.

2.7 Public Policy: Active Ageing and Lifelong Learning

2.7.1 Active ageing

Recognising increased longevity and the possibilities of increased quantity and quality of years available to older people post-retirement, public policy towards ageing

emphasises active ageing². The World Health Organisation (WHO) adopted the term in the late 1990's "*in order to enhance quality of life as people age*" and allow them to participate in society according to their needs and desires (WHO, 2002). Within a European context, the idea of active ageing was initially viewed in terms of employment and maintaining employable skills but this changed to a recognition that active ageing should be more than just work (European Commission, 2001; European Commission, 2006).

While active ageing emphasises the importance of physical, social and mental health of older people, it can be argued that it fails to recognise that factors such as income, education and ethnicity impact on the lives of older people and their participation in wider society (Grundy, Fletcher, Smith and Lamping, 2007). According to Moody (2006, p.11), the "*pathway to life depends very much on social class*". Inequalities experienced in life with regard to access to education, employment and health care as well as inequalities experienced due to gender and race will have a "*critical bearing on status and well-being in old age*" (WHO, 2002 p.40). Education in early years contributes to future life-chances (Hunt 2005). Prior to the introduction of free second level education in Ireland only the brightest of children who were awarded scholarships or those with the ability to pay, attended second level education. In 1966, 55% of the population in Ireland finished school before reaching the age of 15 years (Department of Education and Science, (DoES) 2000, p.34). Although the introduction of free second level education in 1967 impacted positively on the participation rate in second level education of those from less well of backgrounds, the educational attainment of older

² Other terms such as positive ageing, healthy ageing and successful ageing have also been used in the literature to emphasise the different aspects of identifying a more positive view of ageing and old age.

people is low with nearly half (48.1%) of those aged 65 years and over, with primary education or no formal education (CSO, 2007).

The third age, a theoretical perspective on ageing introduced in 1989 by Peter Laslett, is becoming a familiar way to speak about ageing (Jyrkama, 2003). The third age and fourth age replaces the generic term 'old age'. The third age occurs post retirement and is a period of fulfilment, free from paid work and parenting when a person is still active and able to engage in leisure activities (Coleman *et al.*, 2004; Gallagher, 2008; Hunt, 2005). This is followed by the fourth stage, a time of dependency. However, Laslett assumes that life is about development and learning and that people post retirement are actually interested in education and intellectual pursuits (Coleman *et al* 2004; Gallagher, 2008). He views old people as social agents choosing new identities (Jamieson, 2002) but ignores the fact that inequalities and social exclusion exist. He sees free-time as a commodity possessed by millions of elderly citizens (Phillipson, 1998) and ignores the fact the older people continue to hold positions of responsibility in society. Many older people find themselves with little time to engage in education as they provide supporting/caring roles to their spouses, grandchildren and indeed their own parents. In the 2006 census, 3.9% of the population over the age of 65 years, classified themselves as carers, of which 37% provided up to 14 hours unpaid help per week and 48.6% provided 43 or more hours unpaid help per week (CSO, 2007) while nearly half (46%) of older people in The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing provided care for their grandchildren (TILDA, 2011). Although Laslett ignores the fact that some degree of withdrawal from activities is inevitable as one ages and some people actually want to slow down, his theory represents a shift in thinking about older people and in

particular active older people.

People are living longer, healthier lives with many gifts and talents to offer society (Birren, 2009) and continue to play important economic and social roles in society (WHO, 2002; Goode and Fitzgerald, 2005) and yet their contribution to society receives very little attention as they are seen as recipients of support (Timonen *et al.*, 2009). Research on the lives of older people in Ireland has highlighted the significant contribution older people make "*to the lives of others through what they do and how they interact*" (Gallagher, 2009, p. 217). Satisfaction with life among older people is strongly related to the perceived benefits of voluntary work, community involvement and purposeful activities (Gallagher, 2008). Voluntary work is unpaid activity involving time spent doing something for the benefit of others (Davis-Smith, 1998) and according to the CSO (2007) 69,940 (15%) of people over the age of 65 years are involved in voluntary activities, representing 12.64% of all volunteers. Apart from voluntary work, older people provide much informal help to friends and neighbours. TILDA (2011) reported that 23% of older people provided help to neighbours and friends such as feeding the cat, watering plants and providing transport etc. In a study conducted by Gallagher (2008), 72% of respondents said there was someone who relied on them for advice or support.

2.7.2 *The lifelong learning agenda*

Lifelong Learning is defined as "*all purposeful learning activity, whether formal or informal, undertaken on an ongoing basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence*" (National Economic and Social Council, 1999, p.270). The Lifelong

learning agenda in Ireland is based on three attributes; it is life-long, from the cradle to the grave; it is life-wide, learning takes place in multiple sites; it focuses on learning undertaken on a voluntary, self-motivated basis (DoES, 2000). While the Education Act (1998) promotes opportunities for adults who did not benefit from school education, section 9(j) of the Irish Universities Act (1997) states that one of the objectives is to “*facilitate lifelong learning through the provision of adult and continuing education*”.

The publication of ‘Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education’ “*marks the adoption of lifelong learning as the governing principle of educational policy*” (DoES, 2000 p.24). According to Minister O’Dea, “*a lifelong learning policy requires learning opportunities to be provided over a lifespan..., a recognition that learning takes place in a wide variety of settings... and ensure that quality services are available to meet the diverse needs of a wide range of groups, both young and adult*” (O’Dea, 2000). The White Paper gave an “*overview of participation and educational attainment levels of those aged 16-64*” (DoES, 2000, p.52) and by their omission, those aged 65 years and over are excluded as they are not considered to be contributors to competitiveness and growth. The Department refers to the workforce in the context of lifelong learning throughout the document and the need for a highly educated and trained workforce.

The high proportion of older adults whose education finished at primary level and the importance of access to learning as a strategy for active ageing is referred to in the White Paper. However, older adults are seen as “*providers, mentors, literacy volunteers, promoters of solidarity between the ages, childminders*” as well as “*learners*” (DoES, 2000, p.167). The White Paper refers to one of the barriers to

accessing education and training opportunities for adults being the increasing number with responsibility for the care of elderly relatives. However, it states that “*it is beyond the scope of the education sector to provide services in this area*” (DoES, 2000, p.168). Yet in looking at the barriers to education for the younger cohort, it recognises the need for “*childcare*” (DoES, 2000, p.94). Once again, the State places greater emphasis on access to education for those who are considered to have the potential to contribute to maintaining competitiveness. There are no specific strategies to target those over the age of 65 years and the emphasis remains on following an economic agenda within the lifelong learning agenda (Expert Group on Future Skills Network, 2007).

This policy shift towards lifelong learning as a means to up-skill the workforce and address labour shortages in fact excludes older people (Lalor, Doyle, McKenna and Fitzsimons, 2009). In their review of lifelong learning in Ireland, Maunsell, Downes and McLoughlin (2008) conclude that there is evidence that the Government is pursuing the lifelong learning agenda but that community education groups are growing uneasy with the move towards education for economic reasons and with less emphasis on education for the improvement of social capital. Although the White Paper emphasises the need for training in ICT among older people, funding fell far short of need (AONTAS, u/d). Given the changing economic circumstances in recent years, the emphasis on training the workforce has further shifted to re-skilling the unemployed. Funding is limited and that which is available is concentrated on the educational institutions best positioned to re-train the unemployed in the skills required in potential growth areas. Although there exists much policy reference to lifelong learning, in practice, from a policy perspective formal education remains the domain of the young.

2.7.3 Older people and lifelong learning

People talk about learning during their daily lives and many sayings such as ‘you live and learn’; ‘you learn something new every day’ and ‘the university of life’ are familiar to us all. We are also familiar with terms such as ‘you can’t teach an old dog new tricks’. As people grow older they tend to align learning with life experiences. This was evident in comments such as “*life is a learning curve*” and “*older people have loads of experience of life*” from older participants on the intergenerational nutrition project which is discussed in chapter four.

Learning is the process of experiencing something, thinking about it, coming to a new understanding and moving on or changing and takes places in many formal and informal settings (Richardson & Wolfe 2001). When we think of learning most of us think of school; “*the formal process through which certain types of knowledge and skills are delivered, normally via a predesigned curriculum in specialised settings: schools.*” (Giddens, 2009, p.834). Specialist educational institutions, providing organised learning by a teacher leading to a qualification emerged in modern society to prepare young people for the workforce and remain a major part of our lives today (Eruat, 2000). However, learning is no longer seen as the domain of the young in a formal setting but with learning throughout life in formal, non-formal and informal learning situations. Formal learning takes place in structured programmes in school or institutes leading to qualifications which prepare pupils for exams by teaching them “*how to present work for assessment; ...a hidden curriculum of orderly, disciplined behaviour, working to deadlines and submission to authority*” (Eruat, 2000, p.26).

While many adults attend formal education the participation rate remains low with only 5% of adults (aged 25 years and over) receiving formal education in 2008 and 20% receiving non-formal education (CSO, 2010).

Traditionally adult education has been the domain of the non-formal education sector where education has responded to the needs of the learner such as work-based learning and community education. The emergence in recent years in communities throughout Ireland of the University of the Third Age (U3A) with support from Age Action has provided a new learning environment for older people. U3A refers to the 'university of life' and no qualifications are required or obtained. Each U3A meet on a regular basis in a convenient location such as a library and learning takes place through sharing knowledge and experiences and engaging in shared activities. For young people, non-formal education is provided within the Youth Work Sector. The Youth Work Act 2001 defines youth work as a planned programme of education which aims to enhance the social and personal development of young people and is complementary to their formal education. Informal learning on the other hand is acquired outside of organised programmes, it is non-intentional and is picked up through activities related to work, family, community and sport etc and best described in the phrase 'you live and learn'.

Barriers to formal education for older people not only include physical barriers associated with poor health and lack of accessible transport but also social and psychological barriers. Social barriers include ageist attitudes, fear of inadequacy and failure and negative memories of their own educational experience (AONTAS u/d; Lalor *et al*, 2009). In a study of older literacy students in Ireland conducted by the

National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), the memories of school were harsh; "*I'd be going to school and me stomach would be in knots I hated it that much*"; teachers would "*give you the cane across the legs*" (NALA, 2008 p. 32). In a further study, positive experiences were reported but the prevalent memories and experiences were negative and the general consensus was that "*school was difficult due to the physical and psychological abuse suffered at the hands of those who taught them*" (Lalor *et al.*, 2009, p.7). Feelings of fear, resentment, bitterness and anger were expressed with reports of physical and verbal abuse widespread involving beatings using canes, golf clubs and bamboo sticks and being called a '*dunce*' or '*slow learner*'. The experience had an impact on the respondents' "*desire and ability to learn*" (Lalor *et al* 2009, p.47) and contributed to their reluctance to re-enter education later in life. They felt that they were now too old to learn and that education was for the young. However, not all those interviewed in the study were opposed to education in later life but those who were not opposed were nervous about the idea of returning to school. Their concerns were centred on their own attitudes and perceptions of how younger people would perceive them (Lalor *et al.*, 2009).

The participation rate of adults (aged 25 years and over) in education decreases as age increases. In 2008, 11% of those aged 25 to 34 years participated in formal education compared to 1% of those aged 65-74 years. Participation in lifelong learning is correlated to the level of education obtained with 36% of adults with a primary certificate or lower level education participating in informal education rising to 74% for those with at least a third level degree (CSO, 2010). However, as the highest level of education attained by nearly half of those aged 65 years and over is primary or no

formal education (CSO, 2007) one can assume that the participation rate for this cohort is low. The participation rate in lifelong learning was also higher for adults who were employed (31%) and unemployed (25%) compared to those who were not economically active (10%) (CSO, 2010). These statistics would indicate, as argued earlier, that although the Government regard lifelong learning as a strategy for successful ageing, the emphasis is on learning for those who have the potential to contribute to the workforce.

Intergenerational practice fits across the full learning spectrum; formal, non-formal and informal. Within formal learning settings, intergenerational projects have been set up to assist students in the acquisition of skills such as the Dublin Institute of Technology's (DIT) intergenerational nutrition project. Although this is part of the formal learning process for the students, for the older participants it is non-formal learning, albeit in a formal learning environment. The 'Log on, Learn', again held in a formal learning environment which forms part of the overall year assessment for the TY students, is non-formal learning for the older learners as the classes are tailored to their needs and no examinations are undertaken. Many intergenerational projects involve older people working with primary school students in history projects or life and times biographies which may take place in the school or the wider community. For older people, intergenerational projects, particularly those which take place in formal educational settings, can help them overcome concerns about returning to education as the experience is based on equality and reciprocity. Also, where a range of opportunities are on offer in the venue, the older participants are more likely to make that transition back into education (McGivney, 1999). Research indicates that participants in

intergenerational projects participate in other activities and often want to learn more (Martin *et al.*, 2010; Morgan *et al.*, 2007). The findings of this research which are discussed in chapter four, suggests that participation in intergenerational projects can lead to participation in other learning activities.

2.8 Education as a Site for Intergenerational Learning

In its adoption of a lifelong learning focus, the State recognises the need for integration between the provision of adult education and mainstream education “*with much greater intergenerational mix*” but rather than dealing with it under the lifelong learning agenda it is “*part of a long-term debate*” (DoES,2000, p.103). Research by Reay & William (1999) concludes that an increase in high profile, high stakes, standardised testing can have a deep and negative impact on children who can learn at a very young age to identify and value themselves in terms of academic achievement. In order for the formal education system to be effective, Bentley (1998) recommends that young people must be given the opportunity to integrate what they have learnt with their understanding and experience of themselves and the communities they live in. The importance of the acquisition of knowledge and skills obtained outside the formal learning structure is recognised in the Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) Programme and the Transition year (TY) within the Second Level Education Curriculum. The aim of CSPE is to develop active and participatory citizenship in pupils. TY is a one year programme which aims to “*promote the personal, social, vocational and educational development of students and prepare them for their role as autonomous, participative and responsible members of society*” (Department of Education, 2004, p.1). It does this through various interdisciplinary participatory

activities inside and outside the school such as work experience, setting up a mini-company, participating in projects in areas such as Mental Health, 'Log on, Learn' and the Young Social Innovators. Each school devises its own curriculum which is based on four layers: Core Subject Layer; Subject Sampling Layer; TY Specific Layer and Calendar Layer (<http://ty.slss.ie/index.html>). The TY Specific Layer includes the social outreach module with many schools offering 'Log on, Learn' within this module. In a recent survey conducted by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), TY was seen as a key lever for young people taking up volunteering roles as it gave them "*time and space*" to get involved. Many respondents reported that it was during TY that they received the "*information, support and encouragement*" to get involved (NYCI, 2011, p.28).

Many third level educational institutions have introduced innovative methods of learning. For example, DIT established a programme called 'Students Learning with Communities' to provide an opportunity for students and staff to work with community partners allowing students an opportunity to work with real clients and apply their skills. Dublin City University established a Centre for Intergenerational Learning in 2008 to provide older people with an opportunity to contribute to the learning process of the students and provide an opportunity for the university to contribute to the life of the older people by social engagement and mental stimulation. In research conducted by Morgan *et al* (2007) on the impact of an intergenerational learning programme in science, the findings indicated that not only did older and younger participants learn more in the intergenerational learning environment than in the tutor lead environment but the majority of older participants indicated they had an interest in learning more.

2.9 Community as a Site for Intergenerational Learning

Traditionally the focus has been on the family as a site for the transfer of knowledge and experience between the generations. However, increasingly attention is being focused on community as a site for the transfer of skills, information, values and norms between the generations (Lloyd, 2008). The literature on intergenerational practice has in the main focused on theories around human development and learning such as those discussed previously in this chapter and it is only in recent years that intergenerational practice has been linked to community development. Kuehne (2003a) draws attention to the potential of community development literature and theory to be applied “*in application to intergenerational programmers and researchers*” while Hatton-Yeo and Watkins (2004, p.5) observed an increasing interest in approaches to community and community development “*that acknowledges the need to build intergenerational connections and understanding*”.

Community is a complex concept and although there have been many attempts to define it, no agreement has been reached on a definition (Brent, 2009; Day, 2006; Gilchrist, 2009; Minar and Greer, 2007). It has multiple uses including community as a geographical location, a group with a shared interest or purpose such as the gay community, business community or a religious community and describes how people recognise themselves in relation to others. Warren (1963) describes community as shared institutions and values while Nisbet (1967, p.47) defines it as “*all forms of relationships which are characterised by a high degree of personal intimacy, emotional depth, moral commitment, social cohesion and continuity in time*”. Day (2006, p.1) refers to community as “*a kind of social bond or direct personal relationship which*

impacts on the lives of individuals". McMillan and Chavis (1986, p.9) talk about a sense of community as being "*a feeling that members have a belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together*". While, Cohen (2002, p.165) comments that there is "*no mileage in trying to define it*" and the concept should be returned "*to whence it came*", Brent (2009, p.204) asserts that just because its meaning is ambiguous does not make it unusable and searching for an exact definition of community "*blinds us to the use value of the word*".

The current obsession with community as the solution to societal problems has resulted in a focus on the perceived decline of community (Clarke and Newman, 1997; Day, 2006). However, Crow and Allan (1994) contend that the claim of loss of community can only be sustained within a nostalgic view of the traditional community and Cohen (2002, p.169) notes "*perhaps communities are just as prevalent now as we supposed them to be in previous times and other social circumstances, but we are failing to see them, because they take different forms or are more covert*". So rather than trying to re-establish traditional communities, perhaps the focus should be on finding and valuing "*real substance of personal relationships*" by "*supporting... direct, face to face contacts*" (Williams as cited by Day, 2006, p.19). Intergenerational practice has a role to play in facilitating face to face contact between younger and older members of communities.

2.9.1 Community as a strategy to combat social problems

The Irish landscape has undergone major change and with it a growing concern about

the extent to which people are prepared to be involved in their community (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2005; Komito, 2007; Taskforce on Active Citizenship (Taskforce), 2006). This concern led to the establishment of a National Committee on Volunteering in 2002 and the appointment of a Taskforce on Active Citizenship in 2006. The Taoiseach who presided over these initiatives, Bertie Ahern was influenced by the writings of Amitri Etzioni, the "*celebrated advocate of communitarian values*" (Day, 2006, p.15) and Putman's work on declining social capital (Harris 2008, p.4). Communitarianism puts community centre stage linking it to ideas such as volunteering, active citizenship and social capital and focuses on community responsibility and moral obligations with people taking "*responsibility for themselves, their families and neighbours*" and the State "*managing the partnership through which this is to be achieved*" (Clarke *et al.*, 1997, p.120).

Interest in active citizenship and volunteering is linked to social capital and concerns about its decline (Taskforce, 2007). There are many definitions of social capital which according to Wilding (2003, p.i) is "*widely used and abused, not to mention misunderstood*". Although Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putman are the three names which have been most associated with the development of the concept of social capital (Taskforce, 2007), Putman has been credited with contributing most to making it popular (Humphreys, 2007; Wilding, 2003). Putman defined social capital as "*features of social organisation such as networks, norms and trust that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action*" (cited in Humphreys, 2007, p. 52). It comprises social networks and connections among people with shared values and understandings which facilitate co-operation and access to shared resources

(Chamlee-Wright and Storr, 2011; Gilchrist 2009; OECD, 2001; Putman 2000).

Minister Noel Ahern described social capital as "*those benefits which accumulate from individual acts of volunteering which shows itself in the strength of our community spirit*" (Ahern, 2004). It is the support of family, friends and neighbours in times of crises or the sense that a neighbourhood is a good place to live where people look out for each other (Peillon, Corcoran & Gray, 2006; Taskforce, 2007).

There is evidence to suggest that social capital can have a positive impact at many levels of society (Jochem, 2003). Communities where social capital exists facilitate access to mentors and positive role models for young people and are generally regarded as good places to raise children with clean public spaces, low crime rates and friendly people (Blair, 2002; Putman, 2000). However, Putman has been criticized for being too optimistic on the positive benefits of social capital (Leonard, 2004). Peillon *et al* (2006 p.79) maintain that the focus on social capital can result in "*the importance of the conflicting nature of civil society*" being overlooked as it assumes that society is by and large consensual. Social capital has the potential to have negative implications and although generally good for those inside, strong bonds between community members can lead to the exclusion of others (Jochem, 2003). Gilchrist (2009) also recognises the 'downside' of close community ties, stating that some communities are 'tribalist' and oppressive. However, Cox and Caldwell (2000) argue that if networks led to negative action then it is not social capital but collective action. Although research indicates that active citizenship is beneficial for societies leading to improved quality of life, participation and empowerment (Breen and Rees, 2009), it can be problematic leading in some instances to certain people dominating the process resulting in power

inequalities. Class and inequalities in society are central to the issue of social capital. It is difficult for communities which are “*socio-economically deprived to accumulate and convert social capital into civic and political action*” (Breen *et al.*, 2009, p.26).

Community development has a role in cultivating and converting social capital as it facilitates active participation for change. It is also worth pointing out that in a study conducted by Breen *et al* (2009), the authors noted that not all members of communities have any inclination or interest in being involved in their community or being active citizens.

Although many may argue that community ties are still strong in Ireland, there is no doubt that the ‘Celtic Tiger’ encouraged individualism reducing voluntarism and active citizenship. However, Putman (2000, p.405) contends that stocks of social capital can be replenished by addressing “*both the supply of opportunities for civic engagement and the demand for those opportunities*”. Community development which “*supports networks that foster mutual learning and shared commitments*” (Gilchrist, 2009, p.21) is well positioned to address the decline in social capital and intergenerational practice has a contribution to make in this regard.

2.9.2 Community development

Community development is a “*process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation*” (United Nations, 1955). It deals with issues of power and difference including class, ethnicity and of course age and it aims to increase opportunities for disadvantaged or marginalised groups in society. Founded on a process of empowerment and participation (Ledwith,

2005), it seeks to develop opportunities to those lacking choice, power and resources (Government of Ireland, 2000, p.23). It helps to establish and maintain networks and relationships in a geographic area which allows communities to tackle problems and continue to grow and become stronger (Day, 2006; Gilchrist, 2009). In Ireland community development arose from the self-help movement such as Muintir na Tire³, the Women's Movement and unemployment activists in the 1970's and the 1980's. The Local and Community Development Programme supports Community Development Projects (CDP) across the county to address poverty and disadvantage. Other initiatives such as Family Resource Centres also operate on community development principles (Motherway, 2006).

The community development worker in a geographical area looks at the needs of the whole community and is best placed at local level to implement appropriate initiatives, measures and responses which strengthen community ties (Taskforce 2007) as the *"development of the true community includes all its representative parts"* (Greengrass, 2003, p.11). Through the use of communal space, the community development worker facilitates interaction between people which can foster relationships and networks as *"strong communities are those that offer members positive ways to interact, important events to share"* (McMillan *et al.*, 1986, p.14). By facilitating and encouraging, for example, community festivals, opportunities are provided for residents to participate in something which doesn't require a deep commitment but brings them into contact with neighbours in a friendly environment (Gilchrist, 2009). It is often within these casual community settings that networks are developed.

³ Muintir na Tire is a national voluntary organisation which promotes community development.

One of the many issues confronting socio-economically deprived communities is anti-social behaviour or at least the perception of high levels of anti-social behaviour. Research conducted in 2006 on the leisure needs of young people living in areas designated as disadvantaged under the Government's RAPID programme found that young people felt ignored and excluded within their own community and felt marginalised from the wider community (Byrne, Nixon, Mayock and Whyte, 2006). Hanging around was often the only leisure option open to them due to a lack of amenities and lack of money to pay for amenities (Byrne *et al.*, 2006), leading to young people being stereotyped and labelled vandals (Devlin, 2006). In research conducted by a community development project on the needs of older people in an inner city community, the older residents complained of young people "*hanging around*" resulting in fear among older residents (CDP, 2008 p.21)⁴. Although older people are less likely to become victims of crime than other groups, their fear of crime is higher (Garda Siochana, 2010). Fear of crime is defined as "*an emotional response of dread or anxiety to crime or symbols that a person associates with crime*" (Ferraro, 1995, p.4). The perception of low personal safety has as much affect on the well-being of older people as the experience of crime itself (NCAOP, ud) often resulting in older people restricting their activities or withdrawing from social life altogether (CARDI, 2010; Dept of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2009) which puts them at risk of social exclusion and isolation (McConnell *et al.*, 2009). An evaluation of an intergenerational project funded by the Belfast Community Safety Partnership stated that "*groups reported a reduction in fear of crime amongst older participants, greater mutual*

⁴ This document was published by a community development group in a community who participated in this research. The name has been changed to ensure anonymity for participants in this research.

understanding and improved relationships” (McConnell et al, 2009).

Youth work is a significant player within community development and is an important site for intergenerational practice. Youth work aims to build self-esteem and confidence of young people and help them develop social awareness and a sense of social solidarity. It aims to provide opportunities for young people to learn and develop new skills in an informal environment and enhance active citizenship. The benefits of youth work for the community is in “*adults and young people working together building community spirit and playing an active role in the development of their community*” (www.nyc.ie). The National Youth Council of Ireland, in recognition of the potential of intergenerational practice offers workshops for youth workers on delivering intergenerational projects.

Intergenerational practice can become a significant aspect of community development work. Research conducted outside Ireland suggests that intergenerational projects result in positive outcomes not only for the participants involved but for the wider community (Martin *et al.*, 2010). Mutual understanding can strengthen social cohesion as younger and older participants are more at ease with each other and more likely to stop and speak to each other in the community which can often result in better use of public space (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011; Martin *et al.*, 2010; Pain, 2005; Pinazo *et al.*, 2007; Springate *et al.*, 2008). Increased active citizenship occurs as participants become more active in the community and facilities such as schools are put to better use (Beth Johnson 2011; Springate *et al.*, 2008). Physical benefits can accrue from projects designed to improve the environment leading to greater satisfaction by all residents of

the community. Intergenerational practice is regarded as a useful strategy in addressing Government priorities such as promoting active citizenship, volunteering and building cohesion and social capital leading to safer neighbourhoods and more sustainable communities (Bernard *et al.*, 2004; Kuehne 2003b; Strathem, 2009).

One of the greatest benefits of intergenerational practice, according to Granville (2002, p.4) “*has been to release the potential of older people to contribute positively to their community*”. Often members of a community just need a nudge and will engage if enabled and encouraged to do so by the community development worker (Gilchrist, 2009; Taskforce 2007). Morrow-Howell (2010) maintains that being asked is a commonly given reason as to why people volunteer. Research indicates that older participants often take on other voluntary roles following participation in intergenerational projects (Hatton-Yeo, 2007), as do younger people. In a study conducted by the National Youth Council of Ireland of ninety young people in urban, semi-urban and rural settings in Ireland, respondents thought younger people were more likely to volunteer in 2011 than in the previous 5 years as they “*are very committed to making a positive social contribution to their local and national communities*” (NYCI, 2011, p. 23). Furthermore, a considerable number of respondents said they volunteered because they were asked to do so (NYCI, 2011).

Intergenerational practice can have a positive impact on communities where community development and education intersect. Evidence suggests that educational institutions which are used for intergenerational projects often become available to the community with educational institutions themselves becoming more involved in the community

(Springate *et al.*, 2008). The positive benefits to the community when community development and education jointly embrace intergenerational practice and facilitate the continuous learning process are discussed in chapter four.

2.10 Conclusion

This study focuses on planned intergenerational practice as opposed to intergenerational practice which is culturally rooted and embedded in familial and generational ties. Planned intergenerational projects emerged in the United States in the 1960's and 1970's and in Europe in the 1990's. Initially they were introduced to bridge the perceived gap between the generations but have since developed to seek to resolve many social issues for younger and older people and society at large. In Ireland, they appeared in the late 1990's coinciding with new perspectives on ageing, in particular active ageing. This study identified a substantial number of small-scale, once-off intergenerational projects in schools, youth centres, care settings and resource centres throughout the country resulting in the development of an initial classification of projects based on theme. Unlike previous initiatives which involved helping/befriending activities, these planned intergenerational projects are based on principles of equality and reciprocity.

The many definitions of intergenerational practice pose questions on the appropriateness of the definitions in light of the developing nature of intergenerational practice. Questions concerning age of participants, the role of the middle generation and the inclusion of familial relations have emerged during the discussion on the definition. In recognition of the developmental nature of intergenerational practice and

the questions posed by the many definitions, the Beth Johnson Foundation (2011) suggested a broader understanding of intergenerational practice involving a continuum of contact level from low level 1 to high level 7. Although it is recognised that there is a need for *“more work around the conceptual development of what intergenerational practice is and how it is defined”* (Springate *et al*, 2008, p.18), perhaps it is the very lack of a restrictive definition which has allowed intergenerational practice to develop and the quest for a definition may hamper its development. However, there appears to be agreement on the potential of intergenerational practice to make a positive contribution to the lives of younger and older participants as it facilitates *“the blending of the enthusiasm and ability of the young with the reflective experience of older people”* (National Council for the Elderly, 1994, p.12).

Changes in society have had an impact on the relationship between the generations with a perceived disconnection between the generations. It is claimed that changes have resulted somehow in a weakening of the grandparent-grandchild relationship, yet there is much evidence to suggest that perhaps a different relationship has emerged which may in fact be better. Non-familial intergenerational relations are overshadowed by the stereotypical images of young and older people and the perception that they have nothing in common and nothing to offer each other. Yet, they have the potential to offer each other benefits in terms of experience, skills and companionship.

Intergenerational practice is an applied interdisciplinary practice drawing on theoretical perspectives from education and the social sciences and as the main focus of this research is older people, the influence of theoretical perspectives and public policy

related to ageing has been discussed. Education has always been regarded as the foremost setting for the formal transfer of knowledge and skills and research highlights the benefits in incorporating intergenerational practice into formal education. Yet the impact of prior educational experiences on the current cohort of older people cannot be underestimated in the implementation of intergenerational practice. In more recent years, the potential of intergenerational practice in community development has been recognised and is likely to become more evident as intergenerational practice becomes more established in communities.

Intergenerational practice is socially and culturally situated and it is not clear how much the literature emanating from the experiences in other countries is relevant in an Irish context. However, as Ireland is experiencing similar cultural trends to many western societies from where the literature emanated, the literature can provide pointers, empirical and conceptual, to understanding intergenerational practice in Ireland. The literature provides insights into the potential positive and negative impact of intergenerational practice together with the challenges and issues involved in planning and implementing intergenerational projects. The literature has helped refine the research question, suggested possible sites of projects in Ireland and provided a conceptual framework for the analysis and a base to compare and contrast the findings which are explored in chapter four.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the process of selecting and creating a suitable methodology for the research question which examines the benefits of intergenerational learning. The aim of this research is to address the deficit in our knowledge about the nature and benefits of intergenerational projects in Ireland. It seeks to identify intergenerational projects in both rural and urban settings. It investigates the experience of the participants in different types of projects in different settings to ascertain what makes an intergenerational project successful. It seeks to identify models of good practice and suggest how intergenerational learning can be developed further to enrich the lives of young and old people. The evidence base for the effectiveness of intergenerational practice is weak (Granville, 2002) and there is a need for more research to inform future policy and practice (Springate *et al.*, 2008).

A review of the literature suggests that intergenerational practice is interdisciplinary. It is diverse, incorporating activities that involve different groups of participants, different types of settings and activities and with different aims (Granville, 2002; Springate *et al.*, 2008). Intergenerational projects mean different things to different people and local projects manifest themselves in a variety of ways. There are many definitions but the key theme running through all definitions of intergenerational practice is that it is “*used to describe older and younger people interacting in mutually beneficial activities to promote greater understanding and respect between the generations to contribute to*

building more cohesive communities” (HM Government, 2009, p.5). No distinction between the terms intergenerational project, intergenerational programme or intergenerational practice was apparent in the initial literature review and all three terms were used in the research. However, as the interaction between the literature and field work progressed it became apparent that the terms were unclear and required clarification. The field work in this study was conducted prior to the publication in 2011 of the broader understanding of intergenerational practice suggested by the Beth Johnson Foundation which begins to differentiate between the three terms (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011).

This exploratory study in a relatively uncharted field of knowledge in Ireland necessitated a creative research design which evolved as the area was explored and data unfolded. Multiple research methods were utilised at different phases and stages in the research. Quantitative research methods were necessary to identify and classify the types and number of projects while qualitative research methods were required to capture the experience and impact that intergenerational activities had on participants. As the research developed, five phases were identified and although outlined below as five distinct phases, they in fact overlapped and each phase was influenced by the findings in other phases.

3.2 Selecting an Appropriate Methodology

Methodology is a “*system of explicit rules and procedures upon which research is based and against which claims for knowledge are evaluated*” (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2005, p.13). Methodology informs the methods used, that is the processes

used to gather the data. There are two main approaches to research in the social sciences, quantitative research and qualitative research. Quantitative research is often held to be associated with a positivist paradigm while qualitative research adopts a humanistic stance to sociological knowledge. Quantitative research produces numerical data and is associated mainly, though not exclusively, with strategies such as surveys and experiments (Deanscombe, 2007). Collecting quantitative data requires standardised measures so that data can fit into predetermined categories to which numbers are assigned (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research on the other hand, produces data in the form of words and images and is associated mainly, and again not exclusively, with strategies such as ethnography and informal interviews. It allows for in-depth and detailed study and often attempts not to be constrained by predetermined categories of analysis (Deanscombe, 2007; Patton, 2002).

Quantitative research is used to test causal relationships, to identify the frequency of a phenomenon and understand variations (Kalof *et al.*, 2008). Positivism is the epistemological position which attributes scientific status to the social. It suggests that the social world can be measured in the same way as the natural world and that it consists of knowable facts which can be discovered by asking the right questions, using the right research methods and carrying out experiments (Bryman, 2008; Wisker, 2008). Positivists regard methods which produce quantitative data as more reliable than those which produce qualitative data. However, studying the social world is a little more complicated than the approach associated with positivism would suggest. As individuals "*actively create social reality through social interaction*" (McNeill *et al.*, 2005), it is often necessary to understand the action as the participants do. Qualitative

research tries to capture reality in the field, describing the view of the subjects with the aim of understanding people. Yates (2004) identified the main philosophical positions informing qualitative research: phenomenology and hermeneutics. Phenomenology is sometimes presented as an alternative to positivism and deals with people's perceptions, meanings, emotions, attitudes and beliefs. It does not concern itself with why something happened but with how it is experienced. Rather than categorizing, quantifying and theorizing the experience, it aims to get a clear picture of the experience (Deanscombe, 2007; Sarantakos, 2005; Yates, 2004). Hermeneutics focuses on meanings and on humans as making and using meaning. Much qualitative research is a mix of these two philosophical positions with a focus on planned actions that people find meaningful.

It is common in the approach to social science research to contrast quantitative and qualitative or positivism and constructivism, however it is not simply a matter of taking one approach over the other. There have been many tensions between these two traditions, however the distinction can be "fuzzy" (Kalof *et al.*, 2008, p.35). Sarantakos (2005, p.49) claims that arguing over the differences between the two is not logical as "*it is like arguing that ships are not an effective means of transport because they cannot fly and aeroplanes are not efficient because they cannot cruise the sea*". However, regardless of the methods used, the validity and reliability of the data must be assured. To ensure validity and reliability in quantitative research, relevance, accuracy and precision is measured by means of "*statistical analysis and interpretation*" (Sarantakos, 2005, p.86). In qualitative research, a number of measures are used to ensure impartiality, stability, consistency and precision of the data. Measures include

prolonged engagement and observation, using informants to check accuracy of perceptions, using multiple researchers, using more than one theory or one source of data and using more than one method of data collection (Kalof *et al.*, 2008). The use of more than one method of data collection may provide a better understanding of the subject as it is viewed from different positions and may facilitate triangulation by validating the accuracy of the data collected and the reliability of the research tool (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007; Danscombe, 2007; Kalof *et al.*, 2008; McNeill *et al.*, 2005). The use of more than one method does not prove that the researcher got it right but it does provide support for the data collected, it reduces the possibility of error and provides a fuller picture.

3.3 Ethics

Ethics refers to general principles or rules of conduct (Robson, 2002). Regardless of the methods used in data collection, researchers are morally and professionally obliged to act ethically in conducting their research. People on whom research is conducted have rights and researchers have obligations to the researched (McNeill *et al.*, 2005, p. 12). Ethics is required not only in the collection of data but also in the process of analysis and dissemination of findings (Deanscombe, 2005). The researcher was guided in this research by the Code of Ethics of the International Sociological Association (www.isa-sociology.org) and the Dublin Institute of Technology's guidelines of good practice for undertaking research (www.dit.ie).

The first principle in conducting research is informed consent. Code 2.3.4 of the Code of Ethics of the International Sociological Association states that: “*the consent of*

research subjects and informants should be obtained in advance". Participants must participate voluntarily and must be given information regarding the goals and any risks or benefits in order to make an informed decision on whether to participate. Where children and people with cognitive impairments are required to participate in the research, consent must be granted from their legal guardian (Kalof *et al.*, 2008). Code 2.3.3 of the Code of Ethics states that "*security, anonymity and privacy of research subjects and informants should be respected rigorously*". Participants have the right to confidentiality and their contribution should not be made available to others. When anonymity is promised, information which would identify the informant should be removed from the research records (Kalof *et al.*, 2008; Sarantakos, 2005). Participants have a right to privacy regarding questions on sensitive issues or questions they dislike. Questions of a personal or sensitive nature which the participant is uncomfortable with should not be pursued and information about the private affairs of the participant should not be obtained indirectly (Deanscombe, 2007; Sarantakos, 2005).

The researcher is responsible for ensuring that no physical, mental or legal harm is caused to the participants. Participants must be treated with respect and procedures which would physically harm participants or motivate them to self-harm or cause stress, anxiety, discomfort, embarrassment or indeed contribute to a negative experience by the participant must be avoided (Sarantakos, 2005). Violation of the rights of the participants may lead to legal harm and the researcher is responsible for ensuring that the participants' rights are upheld. The researcher is also responsible for ensuring their own safety and consideration should be given to safety in the research design with any potential risks identified and avoided as far as possible (Deanscombe, 2007).

Participants interviewed in this research were given information on the research prior to commencement of the process and informed consent was received from participants (Appendix I). An information sheet was prepared outlining the research, guaranteeing confidentiality, assuring the privacy and protection of the identity of participants and providing contact details (Appendix II). Participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time and to inform the researcher at any time during the interview if they were uncomfortable with any question. Parental permission was obtained for all participants under the age of 18 years prior to participating in the research and all interviews with young people took place in pairs or groups and in the presence of a parent or gatekeeper. Potential difficulties with older participants were identified in the initial exploratory interviews. These interviews evoked memories of the participants' children and grandchildren, including often sad memories of their own childhood and in particular their experience of education and school. To assist both the researcher and older participants in dealing with topics which they may find emotional a protocol was prepared (Appendix III). To ensure the safety of the participants and researcher, a risk assessment was completed and steps identified to protect both from potential harm (Appendix IV). All interviews took place during day time and where possible in a public place.

However, many of the participants in the research on the community based projects which are discussed further in this chapter were not formally interviewed and data was collected by way of observation and informal conversations during events which the researcher was invited to attend. Participants were introduced to the researcher and

informed of the research and the reason for her presence but prior written consent was not sought from individuals as data was collected as opportunities arose.

An application (Reference 41/10) was made to DIT's Research Ethics Committee on 20th May 2010. The research was approved by the Ethics Committee on 19th July 2010.

3.4 Approach to the Research

The exploratory nature of this research necessitated the consideration of different theoretical, paradigmatic and philosophical perspectives. Consideration was given to a number of philosophical positions informing qualitative research such as phenomenology and hermeneutics. However, the term which best describes the multiple methods of data collection used in this research, that is, making use of different methods to best suit each particular phase of the research and add value to the research is a bricolage with the researcher being described as a bricoleur (Kalof *et al.*, 2008; Yardley, 2008). *“In order to capture the complexity of the intergenerational field, we... need designs that combine both quantitative measurement with qualitative understandings and think imaginatively about the range of methods we use. We need to... ensure that we do the best research we can with the resources we have”* (Bernard, 2006, p. 17). Quantitative research was required for the identification and classification of the types and settings of projects in Ireland and qualitative research was essential to capture the experiences of those involved. Qualitative research design is a matter of *‘horses for courses’* (Deanscombe 2007, p. 3) and the design continued to emerge as the research progressed and a pragmatic approach allowed the researcher flexibility and openness to opportunities as they arose (Lee, 2005; Patton, 2002). Opportunities to collect data

during the course of the research which are discussed later in this chapter could not have been foreseen at the early stage of the research design and thus an element of creativity in data collection was required. *“Creative approaches are those that are situationally responsive and appropriate, credible to primary intended users and effective in opening up new understandings”* (Patton, 2002, p.400).

The translation of the French word ‘bricolage’ may give the impression that this is a “do-it-yourself” (DIY) approach, however the bricoleur is more skilled than a handyman (Galloway, 2008). Bricolage as a mode of knowledge collection recognises that the lived world is complex (Kincheloe, 2005) and provides value where *“a simple theory could not solve complex problems”* (Starr-Glass, 2010, p.5). The bricoleur is not just a fixer using whatever is available in an irrational manner but *“see[s] alternatives, limitations, different ways of making sense and pragmatic solutions that are not degraded by their pragmatism”* (Starr-Glass, 2010, p.9) and uses holistic and inclusive models to explore the lived experience of individuals (Kincheloe, 2004). In applying this method, the bricoleur must be skilled in applying many research methods and display a *“philosophical/ epistemological/ ontological sensitivity to the context of analysis”* (Kincheloe, 2001, p.10). The bricoleur collects things that might be useful and *“seeks to make do with whatever is at hand”* (Levi-Strauss, 1974 p. 17).

Recognising that any single research perspective brings with it its own assumptions and limitations and recognising that different approaches can complement each other, the bricoleur makes do with whatever is available to collect data (Kincheloe, 2001; Starr-Glass, 2010). Through flexibility and creativity, the bricoleur adds new methodological tools in response to unpredictable and unforeseen circumstances,

resulting in complex knowledge production (Kincheloe, 2001; Weinstein and Weinstein, 1991). The choice of methods depends on the questions that are asked, what is available in the particular context and what the researcher can do in that setting.

Using multiple methods in this research was necessary as the data required was that which emerged in social interactions in settings which were socially and culturally different. The researcher, as a bricoleur was aware of the limited nature of the different research methods available and it became apparent as the research unfolded that different modes of listening and collecting viewpoints in the different settings was required. Formal semi-structured interviews which were used to gather information on school based projects were not suitable for gathering data on community based projects. Having spent some time with the older participants in the community based projects, it became apparent that even if the researcher had decided to use formal interviewing they would not have agreed to participate. Besides, the researcher recognised that informal conversation and observation would yield more insights. The researcher is aware that the data collected may have been interpreted in a different way by another researcher or from another theoretical perspective. However, the knowledge produced using different methods, tells many stories and provides an insight into the impact of intergenerational projects on participants in various settings and contributes to the theoretical understanding of intergenerational practice.

3.5 Research Design

In order to investigate intergenerational practice in Ireland, it was necessary to explore the meaning of intergenerational practice in an Irish context and gain insight into

activities involving the transfer of knowledge and skills between the generations in different settings. A broad overview of the types and settings of intergenerational projects was required in order to ascertain what types of projects were worth exploring in depth. A small number of intergenerational projects in different settings were chosen to investigate the experience of participants and examine the benefits of intergenerational learning.

A literature and desk based research process provided an initial broad overview of the types of intergenerational projects in Ireland. A number of exploratory interviews were conducted to gain an understanding of the meaning of intergenerational practice in Ireland. This was followed by a survey to collect preliminary data on intergenerational projects. However, as the research progressed and projects for further exploration were identified, creative methods of data collection were required to fully utilise opportunities as they arose. The planned study interacted with unplanned events yielding interesting and meaningful data – a case of serendipity. Methods of data collection chosen were those deemed most valid and feasible for each situation and included semi-structured formal interviews, unstructured informal interviews/conversations, participant and non-participant observation and action research.

This researcher as bricoleur moved through the various stages or phases of the research with some more structured than others. The phases were not completely distinct or exclusive and the researcher often moved back and forward as new findings sometimes required a re-examination of the literature and a different approach to analysing

previous findings. For example, the initial research highlighted schools as popular sites for intergenerational projects and an examination of formal and informal learning theories was undertaken. The study of the community based projects required a reimmersion in the literature on community and community development and concepts such as social capital, active citizenship and volunteering.

3.5.1 Phase 1 – Background research

As this was a study into a new field of knowledge in an Irish context, little information was available and the first phase consisted of a comprehensive literature review, desk research, attendance at conferences and intergenerational events and informal interviews with individuals who had the potential to shed some light on the area.

3.5.1.1 Literature review

The literature review highlighted the absence of any theory or agreed definition of intergenerational practice and a review of the literature on concepts and theories informing the practice was undertaken. While the study was interested in the experiences of younger and older participants, there was more of a focus on older people and concepts relating to ageing, ageism and active ageing were examined, as was the participation of older people in society. Theories relating to learning and informal education were investigated. The concepts of active citizenship and social capital appeared relevant from the outset with community and community development becoming more significant as the research advanced. Although the literature reviewed pertained to intergenerational practice outside Ireland, the information obtained was useful in directing the researcher to themes in the literature and possible sites of projects

in Ireland. It was also beneficial in the development of the initial interview questions and provided a base to compare and contrast information gathered.

3.5.1.2 *Desk research*

Internet research was undertaken to identify the type and range of projects in Ireland as this allowed the researcher access to a very high volume of information quickly and at a very low cost (Deanscombe, 2009). The researcher was aware that the accuracy of the information obtained from the internet could not always be relied on. Further enquiry into some of the projects listed revealed that although some were included on websites or programme of events, they never actually took place. However, this exercise did generate a list of contacts for groups involved in intergenerational activity and a snowballing approach was used by asking contacts if they were aware of any other intergenerational activities or programmes.

Following the desk research, an initial classification of projects identified was undertaken. A number of theoretical frameworks or typologies for intergenerational projects have been suggested (Bernard *et al.*, 2004, Hatton-Yeo, 2008); however, it was difficult to fit the data collected into a pre-determined theoretical framework or typology due to the diverse nature of intergenerational projects and activities in Ireland and the lack of detail. Activities and projects were classified by the following themes which were suggested in the literature as types of projects: Social Inclusion, Social Awareness, Active Citizenship, Education, History and Reminiscence, Art and Sustainable Communities. It must be noted that many of the projects could have been classified under more than one theme. In the process of reviewing projects, a number

of what can be termed multi-generational practices were identified including community gardening, traditional Irish music sessions, community festivals, activities associated with the Tidy Towns competition and the GAA. Although these projects included younger and older people interacting in mutually beneficial activities, they also included the middle generation. Community gardening projects involve residents sharing space in the community and learning from each other. According to Moss (2010) when such projects are successful they are inclusive, allowing young and old to use the areas for play, learning, socializing and of course gardening. Community festivals, Tidy Towns, the GAA and traditional Irish music sessions are similar in that they involve multiple generations working and socializing together with the aim of encouraging learning, valuing heritage and integrating communities of locality and interest.

3.5.1.3 Attendance at events and conferences

In order to develop a better understanding of the meaning of intergenerational practice in an Irish context, prior to developing a questionnaire, the researcher attended a number of conferences and events attracting people interested in the area of intergenerational practice. These provided opportunities to informally talk to participants about their understanding and experience of intergenerational practice. The presentation of a paper at a Conference in Dublin provided an opportunity to network with individuals working with and conducting research on older people and intergenerational activities in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The contacts and conversations contributed to an understanding of intergenerational practice and informed the subsequent survey and interviews. It also provided opportunities to speak

to individuals and agencies interested in the research for the purpose of disseminating the findings.

3.5.1.4 *Informal exploratory interviews*

In order to begin to gain some insight and understanding of intergenerational practice, a number of informal exploratory interviews took place. The aim was to obtain the views and experience of ‘ordinary’ older people and community workers who had relevant experience of intergenerational practice. Four interviews took place with two older people and two community workers. The two older people, one male and one female, were known to the researcher, both lived alone and neither had grandchildren. There appeared to be little opportunity for either of them to interact with young people. The aim was to obtain an understanding of their views on interacting with young people and on transferring skills between the generations. These interviews helped to inform the terminology used in the questionnaire and subsequent interviews and the establishment of the protocol for working with older participants. The term ‘intergenerational learning’ was initially used when informing the interviewees about the study. However, the term ‘intergenerational learning’ resulted in interviewees assuming that learning was formal learning which took place in a formal learning environment thus totally disregarding informal learning or exchange of knowledge. The term ‘intergenerational projects and activities’ was used in subsequent interviews and in the survey. Also the term ‘learning’ was associated with school and the interviewees’ memories of their school experience evoked emotions. This proved problematic as it was difficult to move away from the idea of school and learning and the attached emotions. The impact of the emotion was unexpected and a protocol was developed to help the

interviewer and interviewee should the interviews evoke sad thoughts or emotions.

Two further informal unstructured interviews took place with community workers known to the researcher through her work in Dublin City Council. One community worker ran an intergenerational local history project on the northside of Dublin, the other was not involved in intergenerational projects but managed a centre which was used by both young and old people, also on the northside of Dublin. The aim of these interviews was to gain an understanding of community work and intergenerational activity from a community perspective. These interviews provided an insight into opportunities that can arise in community development settings for positive interaction between the generations. Attendance in a community facility to interview one community worker highlighted the informal interaction which takes place between the generations in a shared space.

The issue of child protection also arose during these exploratory interviews. One older male interviewee was opposed to the idea of interacting with young people as he was uncomfortable in the presence of young people if the middle generation was not present. He believed that there would be too much potential for allegations of improper behaviour if the middle generation were not present and gave examples of newspaper reports of professionals having their careers destroyed by false allegations of improper behaviour. The issue was also highlighted by the community worker involved in the local history project. Older volunteers in the local history project were asked to provide a reference from a past employer or priest before working with children. However, this request prevented some older people volunteering as they could not or were not willing

to seek a reference. A question on child protection/garda vetting was included in the questionnaire which is discussed below.

These interviews not only provided the researcher with a better understanding of intergenerational practice but provided an opportunity for her to question her own assumptions at a very early stage in the research.

3.5.2 Phase II – Survey

In order to obtain a more accurate picture of intergenerational projects and activities a survey was undertaken. The aim was to gather information on the number and type of projects taking place, their aims and activities, how often they took place and the types of organisations sponsoring projects. It also provided an opportunity to identify projects for further study. To obtain this information in urban and rural settings, a type of cluster sampling was used. Cluster sampling is a “*sampling procedure in which at an initial stage the research samples areas (i.e. clusters) and then samples units from these clusters*” (Bryman, 2008). During the desk research, secondary schools, day care centres, residential homes, youth groups, family resource centres and community development projects were identified as settings where intergenerational projects had been set up. Emails were sent to these organisations for which email addresses were accessible in the following geographical areas: Dublin, Roscommon, Leitrim, Mayo and Sligo. These areas represented urban and rural settings in geographical locations which the researcher was familiar with. A list of schools was obtained from the Department of Education and the email addresses sourced on the internet. Information on residential homes and day care centres were sourced from the website of the Health Services

Executive and websites advertising nursing homes throughout the country⁵. Details of family resource centres were obtained from the family resource website and information and email addresses for youth groups were obtained from websites of organisations working with youth such as the City of Dublin Youth Services Board, Foroige, Youth Work Ireland and Youth Work Galway. The list was not a complete list for all the targeted organisations in the geographical area but it did provide a large sample resulting in a sample size of four hundred and sixty-eight organisations.

As the sample size was large and geographically dispersed, a self-administered questionnaire was developed as it was cheaper and quicker to administer than interviews. The information required lent itself to a short questionnaire suitable for self-completion and convenient for the respondents as it allowed them to complete the questionnaire at their convenience. The disadvantages of the self-administered questionnaire were acknowledged, in that a lower response rate was received and it was difficult to expand on questions or clarify questions. However, an email address and phone number were provided for further consultation or clarification, if required. Respondents were asked to indicate if they would be willing to allow further contact to be made on this matter which provided an opportunity to identify participants for the next stage of the research.

Distribution via email was chosen as it was fast and cheap in comparison to a postal questionnaire. As the response rate is influenced by the ease of completion and return (Deanscombe, 2009) an embedded questionnaire containing the questions in the body of

⁵ Websites used included www.seniorcare.ie, www.nhi.ie, www.nursinghomes.ie, www.nursinghomeireland.ie, www.retirementservices.ie.

the email was chosen as opposed to an attachment.⁶ This allowed the respondent to complete the answers and select the reply button to return the completed questionnaire. The embedded questionnaire was deemed most appropriate for distribution as unsolicited emails were being sent, and people are wary of and may be reluctant to open an attachment from an unknown source. There was also a concern that the attachment may be problematic if the software was not compatible. However, following feedback from a recipient regarding difficulties experienced trying to complete the embedded questionnaire all subsequent emails contained both the embedded questionnaire and the questionnaire as an attachment⁷.

Four hundred and sixty-eight questionnaires were sent over an eight week period commencing on 24th September 2010. Each email contained an introduction to the research followed by the questions (Appendix V)⁸. Each letter was tailored to the organisation to which it was being sent. Reminders were sent out approximately two weeks after the original email. Forty-seven (10%) completed questionnaires were received from which thirty-two intergenerational activities or projects were identified in fifteen schools, seven organisations working with older people, four youth groups and six community groups (Appendix VI).

⁶ In a comparison of embedded and attached questionnaires by Dommeyer and Moriarity (2000), the attached questionnaire was regarded as better looking, easier to complete, clearer in appearance and better organised, however a higher response rate was achieved from the embedded questionnaire. There was little difference in their findings in terms of speed of response and whether questions are likely to be omitted (cited in Bryman, 2008)

⁷ Sending the questionnaire in both formats allowed recipients to view the questionnaire before opening an attachment from an unknown source.

⁸ The introduction was changed slightly after the first batch was sent as early replies indicated that clarification on intergenerational practice was required. All subsequent introduction letters and all reminders included further information on intergenerational practice together with examples of projects and activities.

Of the thirty-two respondents to the survey who provided information on intergenerational projects, four asked that no further contact be made and one requested that contact be made by phone rather than email but no phone calls were returned. The researcher made direct contact with six Dublin based respondents resulting in three interviews. The interviews took place with a community worker, a youth worker and a facilitator on a 'Log on, Learn' project. These are discussed below in phases IV and V and are included in the schedule of interviews (Appendix VII). A follow-up questionnaire was sent to the remaining twenty-one respondents (Appendix VIII). The aim of this questionnaire was to seek more detailed information on projects and the participants such as participants' age, the recruitment process and their input into planning the activities. To identify good practice, information on the logistics such as the venue, the time period, the activities, the matching of participants and the evaluation process was sought. To ascertain outcomes, information on the impact of the project on all participants, including the facilitator and the community at large was sought, as was information on unexpected outcomes and possibilities for future projects. To identify possible avenues for disseminating the findings of this research, question 26 sought information on the availability of guidelines and information on intergenerational practice. Nine completed questionnaires were returned representing a 43% response rate.

At this stage two sites were identified and chosen for further study. Rathville was chosen as two organisations in the community, one working with older people and one working with younger people responded to the questionnaire indicating that further

contact could be made. 'Log on, Learn' was identified as a popular project in schools throughout the country and a number of projects were identified in Dublin as this location was most convenient for the researcher. A third project/site chosen was an intergenerational nutrition project. The researcher sought an opportunity to organise an intergenerational project resulting in a collaboration between Dublin City Council and DIT on an intergenerational nutrition project.

3.5.3 Phase III – Intergenerational nutrition project

The first educational site studied was the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT). The Community Links Programme in DIT was established to encourage, support and develop community-based learning and research. Through the researcher's unique position as a student in DIT and her work in Dublin City Council with older people, the researcher contacted the Community Links Programme to investigate the possibility of establishing an intergenerational project with undergraduate students and older people in the community. This resulted in the researcher and lecturers on the BSc in Human Nutrition and Dietetics Course collaborating on an intergenerational nutrition project with second year BSc in Human Nutrition and Dietetics students and older people in the community. As this was a new project for both partners and had the potential to become an established teaching method, evaluation of the project was required.

Sarantakos (2005, p. 423) defines action research as "*applied research oriented towards bringing about change, involving respondents in the process of investigation and particularly in the implementation of the findings*". Action research is practical, in that it deals with real-world problems and aims to bring about change through evaluation

involving participants (Birley and Moreland, 1998; Deanscombe, 2007; Sankaran, Hou and Orr, 2007; Sarantakos, 2005). It pursues both change and understanding, and aims to improve a situation by making modifications, studying the effects of these changes to gain a better understanding resulting in further informed change (Sankaran *et al.*, 2007). Although action research tends to be small scale with a focus on specific problems, general principles which are established may have the capacity to be transferred to similar situations (Birley *et al.*, 1998). One of the main strengths of action research is that it endeavours to resolve problems and improve practice and thus makes a difference (Deanscombe, 2007). However, it must be noted that the involvement of the researcher as practitioner is not entirely satisfactory. Having the inside knowledge is a bonus for the research, but it can pose problems, in that the researcher as insider is never entirely impartial (Deanscombe, 2007). However, the researcher's position as researcher and co-organiser enabled her to investigate aspects of the organisation, interaction, processes and outcomes while the project was in progress.

This project involved ten older people resident in the North Central Area of Dublin and twenty-one second year students of the BSc in Human Nutrition and Dietetics. The second year programme includes a module on 'Nutrition through the Lifecycle' and a module on 'Behavioural Science & Communications' and lecturers recognised that the practical application of these skills would benefit the students prior to clinical work placements at the end of the academic year. The aim of the project was to provide the students with an opportunity to practise their communication and history taking skills, to use their knowledge to recommend nutrition and dietary advice to people at a different stage in the lifecycle and to provide simple recipes for nutritional meals

keeping in mind that many of the older participants cook for one. For the older people, expected benefits were from the advice they would obtain, from the recognition that they were assisting in the education of the students and the opportunity to attend college. The researcher's participation in the project was to recruit older people and to advise on additional aspects of the programme which would enhance the interaction of the two generations. The aim of the action research was therefore twofold; firstly to provide feedback on this new initiative in the education of students on this course and the social integration of older people, and secondly, to contribute to the research study on the transfer of knowledge and skills between the generations. Data was collected through informal conversations with the older participants and observation during the project and through a questionnaire completed by the participants at the end of week two (Appendix IX and X). This facilitated triangulation in that it contributed to the overall validation, reliability and transferability of the findings in this study.

The researcher was aware of her position as practitioner and researcher and the potential limitations this could pose on the research. However, the participants' familiarity with the researcher allowed data collection through informal conversation and contributed to a high response rate to the questionnaire. As practitioner, the researcher accompanied the older participants to and from the project, facilitating the observation of the interaction and conversation among the older participants before and after the event. The researcher's knowledge of intergenerational practice was beneficial in organising and evaluating the project.

3.5.4 Phase IV – ‘Log on, Learn’ project

The ‘Log on, Learn’ project which involves TY students teaching older people computer skills was an obvious choice for further study as one hundred and sixty eight schools throughout Ireland are registered as participating in this programme (www.logonlearn.ie). Fifty-nine of these schools were included in the initial survey sample, however only eight of the schools responded to the questionnaire of which two requested no further contact. The remaining six were sent the follow-up questionnaire but only one school replied indicating that a visit was possible. Unfortunately due to the academic timetable, a suitable date for a visit was difficult to coordinate.

Participants for this research were subsequently recruited by the researcher using her contacts through her work with older people and community groups. Formal semi-structured interviews with two younger participants, four older participants and two facilitators, representing three projects took place. A semi-structured telephone interview with one older participant also took place (Appendix VII). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to ensure the issues under consideration were addressed and also allowed the interviewees to speak more widely on the issues and develop ideas. This proved particularly important in interviews with the younger participants as the questions did not always yield replies and it was necessary to probe and to create a dialogue which encouraged them to reflect on different aspects of the interaction and their perceptions of older people.

3.5.5 Phase V - Community based projects

Community based projects were identified from the initial phases as important in the

study of intergenerational practice. A response to the survey from two organisations, one working with older people and one working with youth, based in the same community in Dublin's north inner city were received. This provided an opportunity to explore intergenerational practice in greater depth in a community context. However, prior to contact being made to request an interview from either respondent, the researcher received an invitation to attend an intergenerational quiz in the community. This is an example of serendipity in research in that the attendance at this event not only provided an opportunity to observe an intergenerational project but resulted in introductions to a number of key people in the community involved in intergenerational activities. These introductions led to unexpected invitations and at times daunting opportunities to gain an insight not only into intergenerational practice from a community perspective but into the community. Following attendance at the intergenerational quiz, invitations to attend an intergenerational dart and snooker competition, to visit the games room in the community centre to meet the older men who take ownership of the room each Tuesday and Thursday and to attend activities during the older person's summer project were extended (see Appendix VII for schedule). These provided opportunities to speak to the older participants in an informal environment. Flexibility and creativity were required to make use of every opportunity to gather information and the researcher as bricoleur was well positioned to adopt methods to suit each situation which included observation, interviews and informal conversations.

3.5.5.1 Observation

“Observation is one of the oldest methods of social research” and is “proclaimed as one

of the central techniques to social research” (Sarantakos 2005, p.220). Observation can be participative requiring the researcher to join the group and observe from within or can be non-participative whereby the researcher observes from the outside (Sarantakos, 2005). Observation allows the researcher to listen to what people say and watch what they do without the need to ask people for their views or opinions as replies to direct questions only give access to small parts of a changing complex world (Robson, 2002; Sarantakos, 2005). According to Robson (2002, p.310) “*observation also seems to be pre-eminently the appropriate technique for getting at ‘real life’ in the real world*”. The researcher was aware that her presence could affect the situation being observed but this was overcome by spending time with the participants in many different settings which allowed them to become familiar with her. The researcher was aware of possible observer-bias particularly as the relationship with the groups developed over the course of the research. In order to avoid as much as possible bias in describing and interpreting an event, observations were recorded directly following the event and were re-checked at a later stage when sufficient time had lapsed for any emotional attachment to the event or the participants to have faded.

Both participative and non-participative observation were utilised in this research. The initial invitation to attend an intergenerational quiz led to an unexpected opportunity to participate in the quiz providing an opportunity to observe activities and to talk to participants. Participant observation allows communication and interaction to be observed in a natural setting and in a non-structured manner. Attendance at an intergenerational snooker and dart competition provided an opportunity for non-participant observation of the interaction between the older men and the youth group.

The attendance at this event and the observations made proved useful when conducting unstructured informal conversations/interviews with the older men. Information was difficult to obtain from these men but reference to the competition or an observation made, resulted in stories being relayed providing rich data. The data collected during the observation complemented information collected during the interviews and conversations.

3.5.5.2 *Interviews*

The most difficult aspect of the research in the community was gaining acceptance by those working and living in the community and in particular the older men. The older women were a little hesitant, however following attendance at a number of events, the researcher was finally accepted by the majority of the group. The older men were very reluctant and in some instances refused to even acknowledge the researcher. In an attempt to make conversation with the older men, the researcher talked about the area and how she remembered it as a child visiting her grandmother. Once the researcher's background was established she was no longer viewed with suspicion and the men became more relaxed and forthcoming. Although the researcher developed a rapport with the group, requests for formal interviews were not sought as the researcher feared that formalizing the relationship would change the dynamics of the relationship and may have hindered conversations and observation which could possibly yield more useful insights than formal interviews.

Attendance at the older person's dance classes provided an opportunity to chat to organisers and participants in an informal setting. Informal interviews/conversations

took place with the older men in the games room. The experiences of these older men were often relayed through a story during a break in the activities. Narrative was the most appropriate way to find or discover meaning in the experience of the participants. An inclusive and dynamic dialogue (Yardley, 2008) between the researcher and participants was stimulated. Stories from lived experience provided far greater insight into the impact of the projects on the community than would have been achieved through a questionnaire or formal interview. And although it was not always first-hand experience being relayed, the fact that the stories were being told by others, gave insight into the impact the experience had on the whole community.

Formal semi-structured face-to-face interviews took place with one youth worker, one community worker, the school principal, one teacher, three younger participants and one older participant in the community. All these interviews were recorded. Informal unstructured interviews took place with a second youth worker and a second community worker. The information obtained about this community and intergenerational practice was insightful and would not have been obtained if a rigid research plan had been adhered to. The value of following leads, taking opportunities to observe and allowing the data to unfold over time and as a process, was confirmed by the richness of the findings from this phase of the research.

3.6 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was chosen for analysing the data as multiple methods of data collection were employed in this research and thematic analysis allowed patterns across the entire data set to be identified. The researcher transcribed the data collected through

observation, interviews and questionnaires facilitating a degree of familiarisation with the data. Interviews were taped and data transcribed. Data collected through conversation was, as far as possible, transcribed verbatim immediately following the conversation. Data from observation was transcribed as dictated immediately following the event.

As the aim of the research was to investigate the experience of participants, to ascertain what makes an intergenerational project successful and identify models of good practice, it was necessary to collect specific data on outcomes and logistics. Initial themes had been generated prior to data collection from the literature review on intergenerational practice, initial exploratory interviews and from the researcher's work with older people. However, a number of themes also emerged during the data collection and data analysis process. Data was coded using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis computer software package. Responses from the completed questionnaires during the intergenerational nutrition project were auto-coded with each question coded separately, containing the responses from all the students or older participants to each question.

Although the number of interviews with participants on the 'Log on, Learn' project was small, a large volume of data was collected. NVivo was used to code extracts of data from the interviews with some extracts coded many times. To ensure context was not lost, surrounding data was included. Data from the community based projects was coded in a similar fashion. Coded data was collated and sorted into themes. The themes which were identified during the literature review were: positive outcomes for

participants, negative outcomes for participants, logistics, preparation, child protection and challenges. However, a number of important themes emerged during the data collection analysis process which required changes to the initial coding categories. The reasons for participating, opportunities for informal interaction, attitudes of each group towards the other and views on whether each group can learn from each other necessitated additional themes.

The importance of community and the impact of intergenerational practice on the wider community emerged during the data collection process in the community based projects. Much of the data was collected through narrative with many of the stories being told of the experience of others as a result of the intergenerational projects indicating that intergenerational practice has a wider impact on the community than the researcher expected. This necessitated a further exploration of the literature on community and community development and a re-analysis of the findings.

3.7 Validation of Findings

The advantages and disadvantages of using multiple research methods are well documented. In order to strengthen the validity of research findings, Creswell (2007) suggests eight procedures of which at least two should be adopted. The eight procedures are prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field, triangulation, peer review/debriefing, revision of working hypothesis, clarifying research bias, member checking, rich thick description and external audit. As this study was exploratory, the researcher endeavoured to validate the data collected through triangulation and the use of multiple methods of data collection. The use of multiple

sources of data collection reduced the possibility of error and the prolonged observation and engagement with participants using multiple methods facilitated the validation of findings. Regular contact with the researcher's supervisor ensured the research process and findings were reviewed on a regular basis, new concepts and themes were identified and explored and any bias identified. The working hypothesis was revised throughout the process as the field work and literature interacted and new concepts emerged. New concepts identified during data analysis required further literature research and a re-analysis of the data collected using additional themes. The data collected from the community based projects using multiple methods was in the form of rich thick description and rather than attempting to over-analyse it, this descriptive data is presented in the findings.

3.8 Limitations

Information and research on intergenerational practice in Ireland is scarce. The literature highlighted the cultural and social situatedness of the many definitions of intergenerational practice. Furthermore ambiguity surrounding definitions was apparent from the results of the survey highlighting a lack of understanding of intergenerational practice and revealing the complexity of the field of study. Intergenerational projects are isolated from each other and many are once off resulting in difficulties identifying and accessing projects for further exploration. Once the projects were completed accessing participants was difficult. Many of the younger participants in school based projects had finished school or were in the exam cycle and were unavailable. Under data protection legislation, organisers of school based projects were not in a position to pass on details of older participants.

Many older participants in day care settings were also inaccessible as some had moved into residential care or moved in with children or carers and unfortunately some had died. Gaining acceptance by groups, particularly those in the community setting to undertake the research was difficult. Time spent in the community allowing participants and organisers to become familiar with the researcher in different settings was required and although time-consuming it did result in rich data which may not have been unveiled if time had not been spent developing a relationship with participants. As this was an uncharted field of knowledge, a degree of creativity was required by the researcher in the data collection process and quick decisions on the most valid and feasible method for the situation at hand were required as opportunities arose. The researcher is aware that another researcher may have chosen a different method in a given situation and that data collected through the multiple research methods used may be interpreted differently using another theoretical perspective or by another researcher.

3.9 Conclusion

Creating a suitable methodology for this exploratory study in this unexplored field of knowledge was complex. The aim of the initial survey was to obtain a broad overview of intergenerational projects in Ireland and allow projects to be identified for further study. However, the results revealed that projects were much more diverse than initially anticipated and were difficult to access and creative research methods were required. Although the literature had suggested that intergenerational projects in educational settings and projects in the form of community development initiatives might be important sites for investigation, the initial survey confirmed that these were indeed

settings where intergenerational projects were emerging in Ireland. Two projects for further investigation in educational settings were identified: one at second level and one at third level. The ‘Log on, Learn’ project, an established project with one hundred and sixty eight registered participating secondary schools, was identified for further study. Action research on the intergenerational nutrition project was possible due to the unique position of the researcher as an employee in Dublin City Council and researcher in DIT. Within a community setting, a community in North Inner City Dublin was identified from the survey.

As the data unfolded five phases of the research emerged requiring multiple research methods. Although they were distinct phases, the findings in each phase impacted on other phases often requiring a re-examination of concepts. The aim of the first phase was to gain an understanding of intergenerational practice and comprised of a literature review, desk research, attendance at conferences and intergenerational events and informal interviews. Phase two involved the identification of types and settings of intergenerational projects using quantitative research methods. Phase three was the study of the intergenerational nutrition project and action research was undertaken. Phase four comprised of a study of the ‘Log on, Learn’ programme through semi-structured formal interviews. Phase five, the study of community based projects required creativity to best utilise situations as they unfolded. The research methods utilised in this phase were observation, semi-structured formal interviews and informal interviews and conversations. The researcher as bricoleur was best situated to carry out this research as it was necessary to “*listen to the cacophony of lived experience, the coexistence of diverse meanings and interpretations*” (Kincheloe, 2004) in order to

explore alternative meanings offered by participants in different but similar circumstances. The depth and richness of the data collected in this research would not have been possible if a rigid approach had been designed and adhered to. Abu-Lughod (cited in Brent, 2009, p.48) in her studies in communities asserts that this approach is essential for studying community

The exploratory nature of this research required the researcher to consider many theoretical, paradigmatic and philosophical perspectives and many methods of data collection. Most difficult of all was choosing methods which were feasible and valid for each phase of the research and justifying each method used. The findings and experiences in the three field studies: intergenerational nutrition project, Log on, Learn and community based projects in Rathville are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The initial phases of the research highlighted the diversity of intergenerational projects in relation to activities and settings. Schools, youth groups, day centres, care settings and resource centres were identified as settings for intergenerational projects. However, many of the activities were not planned intergenerational projects but involved TY students helping out in day care centres or residential homes. From the information obtained, three sites were chosen for a more focused investigation. In order to gain a broader understanding of the practice, an opportunity to be involved in running an intergenerational project was sought and an intergenerational nutrition project was organised allowing the researcher to undertake action research. This enabled the researcher to investigate aspects of the organisation, the processes, the interaction and outcomes in order to provide feedback to the organisers and contribute to this study. The popularity of Log on, Learn in schools was apparent and this project was chosen for further study. From the information obtained in the survey, Rathville was also chosen as a community site for further study.

4.2 Intergenerational Nutrition Project

Through the researcher's position as a student in DIT and her work in Dublin City Council with older people, the researcher identified an opportunity to collaborate on an intergenerational project with DIT's Community Links Programme. This resulted in the setting up of an intergenerational project with lecturers and students on the BSc in Human Nutrition and Dietetics course and older residents in the North Central Area of

Dublin. The aim of the project was to provide the students with an opportunity to practise their communication, presentation and history-taking skills and to provide older people with advice on diet and nutrition. However, as this was an intergenerational project, it was also anticipated that other benefits would accrue such as reducing negative stereotypes, enhancing a sense of self worth for the older participants as they contributed to the education of the students and providing an opportunity for them to engage in an interesting activity. The researcher's participation in the project was to recruit older people and to advise on aspects of the project which would enhance the interaction of the two generations. Data was collected through informal conversations, observation and questionnaires as discussed in chapter three. The researcher was in a position to investigate the interactions and processes involved in a 'live' intergenerational project as well as to try to put in place the elements which would contribute to a successful intergenerational initiative.

4.2.1 The project

Initially the project was scheduled to take place on two mornings in March 2011. However, following requests from participants for a follow-up meeting, a third date was arranged for October 2011. Eleven older participants⁹ were recruited, nine female and two male together with twenty-one students. Five of the older participants were known to the researcher through her work in Dublin City Council, the remainder were recruited through advertisement in a resource centre. Older participants were not asked for their age but were all over 60 years with the majority in their mid 70's. The researcher spoke to all older participants in advance to brief them on all aspects of the project and answer

⁹ One older female participant attended the first week but was unable to continue due to ill health.

any questions and transport was provided to bring the older participants to DIT. Some of the participants were familiar with one or two others and the researcher introduced everybody as they boarded the bus adding to a relaxed atmosphere. One participant who stepped onto the bus with walking stick in hand shouting: "*does anyone know what a tracker mortgage is*" (referring to a TV advertisement) entertained everyone on the journey. The group were welcomed on arrival by two students and brought to the venue. Following tea/coffee the participants broke into groups consisting of two students and one older participant to take dietary histories. This was followed by three short presentations given by the students on diet and exercise. Sample food portions were presented on plates and handouts on the presentations were provided.

The second morning (one week later) took the same format with the students presenting recommendations which had been approved by their supervisors to their older 'partner'. Each older participant was given a written record of the recommendations and an opportunity to ask questions. Again, three practical presentations on the nutritional value of food products, cooking ideas and some basic nutritional recipes were given. Following the presentations, the older participants were given a tour of the college, providing participants with an opportunity to further interact informally. A follow-up session was organised in October 2011. Once again transport was provided and two students greeted the group on arrival. The older participants met with their students to discuss their progress, followed by a simple quiz of multiple choice questions organised by the students and an opportunity for the older participants to ask questions on any aspect of nutrition. Refreshments were served by the students.

4.2.2 Methodology

The researcher's involvement in this project provided an opportunity to observe the participants throughout the event. Accompanying the older people on the bus enabled the researcher to gain an insight into their expectations and their experience of the event. At the end of week two, all participants were given a questionnaire to complete anonymously. The questionnaires for both groups differed slightly as questions to inform the organisers on best practice for future projects were included. The students' questionnaires which were distributed by email consisted of twelve questions, with three on the organisation of the project and nine relating to this study (Appendix IX). The older participants' questionnaires which were distributed by hand included a stamped addressed envelope for return and consisted of thirteen questions of which four related to the organisation of the project with the remaining nine related to the aims of this study (Appendix X). An 80% (8) response rate from the older people and a 57% (12) response rate from the students were achieved.¹⁰

4.2.3 Findings

4.2.3.1 Organisation and preparation

The availability of transport and the presence of the researcher on the bus helped to create a relaxed atmosphere and the appearance of one lively older lady set the tone for the duration of the project. One lady commented: "*from the time I boarded the bus it was all so cordial and enjoyable*". On arrival refreshments were served providing an opportunity for all the participants to mix informally. All of the older respondents to

¹⁰ The questionnaires contained the word programme as opposed to project. The reason being that the literature did not distinguish between project, programme or practice and the difference only became evident during the study of the community based projects which took place at a later stage in the research.

the questionnaire rated the venue, students and presentation and the overall programme very satisfactory. One commented that it was “*so well organised, was very efficient and covered so much that we can put into practice daily*”. All indicated that they felt at ease in the College.

All of the students rated the overall project very satisfactory. However, there were mixed views on the suitability of the venue which may have been due to the fact that there was a delay gaining access to the venue on the second day resulting in a rush to organise the room prior to the arrival of the older participants. Two thirds were very satisfied with the time available while the remaining one third was satisfied, some suggested that perhaps it should be longer. However, the majority of the students thought it was well organised with comments such as: “*the old people were all informed of what the programme involved*”; “*the set up was very relaxed and informal*”.

4.2.3.2 *Reasons for participating*

During informal conversations with the older participants on the bus, many mentioned being asked as a reason for participating. Other reasons given were: “*something to do on a Tuesday*”; “*it's important that we can be of assistance*”; “*it's a diversion*”; “*learn about Nutrition*”. The students participated as it provided them with an opportunity to practice their skills with people they were unfamiliar with.

4.2.3.3 *Interaction*

On the arrival of the older participants on the first day, the students appeared nervous and needed encouragement from the lecturers to talk to the older participants but this

nervousness dissipated as they broke into small groups. Once the students had obtained the dietary history they continued to chat and no awkwardness was apparent. The chat among the older people as they moved seats for the presentation was very positive and included comments such as: *"they are really lovely"*; *"I hope I was of some help"*; *"older people have experience that can help these young students"*. Although the students and older people had interacted in small groups, they automatically congregated with their own age group for the presentation with the older participants sitting in front and the students behind. On the return journey, the older people praised 'their' students and spoke of how informative, polite and well mannered they were.

On the second week the students immediately struck up conversations with the older participants. Lots of smiles were observed and the conversations overheard were about everything but nutrition. They appeared to be comfortable and familiar with each other, with one student enquiring about the short holiday one of the older participants had been on. Another student entertained a group of older men relaying stories about her weekend. The students served tea and coffee and although a small group of students sat at the back to have their tea, most sat among the older participants. The participants again paired with the students with plenty of laughter heard. As the groups gathered for the presentation, the older participants were overheard commenting on how nice 'their' students were. One older lady brought gifts for her two students. On this occasion the majority of the students sat among the older people for the presentation. Following the presentations the students brought the older participants on a tour of the College giving them an opportunity to observe student life and to chat. On returning the researcher observed the participants engaged in conversation and had difficulty

persuading the older participants to leave. The final farewell consisted of handshakes, hugs, kisses and plenty of compliments.

On the journey to the follow-up meeting seven months later, the older participants were excited about seeing their students again and interested in how they got on in their clinical placements. On arrival, the atmosphere was pleasant and upbeat and conversations about the summer and the students' work placements were overheard. The participants paired into small groups to discuss their progress followed by a short quiz and refreshments. All participants sat in a circle and chatted among themselves with no apparent division of the ages in the seating arrangements. The students answered questions from older participants and the older participants gave advice on what they thought was good and bad about certain foods. The students seemed to enjoy the 'banter' and the witty comments made by the older participants. The students walked with the older participants to the bus and stood chatting. It took some time for the researcher to convince the older participants to get on the bus to go home.

4.2.3.4 *Attitude of each age group toward the other*

Two of the older respondents to the questionnaire indicated that the experience had changed their opinion/attitude of young people positively. For the remaining six it did not change their opinion as they already had a positive one. Comments made included: *"I always found younger people's attitude very positive"*; *"we hear of all the negative aspects of young people but I felt so affirmed in my opinion of their goodness"*; *"I always value young people's opinions but these 2nd year students were great - so efficient, caring, outgoing"*.

Over half (54%) of the student who responded¹¹ to the question as to whether the experience changed their attitude/opinion of older people replied “yes”. While the remainder stated “no”, in many cases it was because they already had a positive attitude towards older people. The students were surprised at the energy and enthusiasm of the older participants with comments such as: *“I imagined the elderly people to be awkward... they were lovely and much more lively... extremely interested in making changes in their diet and taking our ideas on board”*; *“I thought the older people would not be as enthusiastic and friendly as they were”*; *“I was not expecting the elderly group to be so capable and easy to talk to... they were also very open to the dietary advice”* and *“I was expecting them to be confused and ramble on”*.

4.2.3.5. Outcomes – participation in other activities

Many of the older participants stated that not only did the project provide them with sufficient information on nutrition but also an opportunity to meet other people. All would attend a similar event with younger people for reasons such as: *“younger students are very enthusiastic in their approach to helping/co-operating with older people”*; *“useful and enjoyable exercise in interaction and information”*; *“always good to be around nice young people as they can learn from us”*.

On whether intergenerational activities should be more widely available all the older respondents said ‘yes’. The reasons given were: *“to learn from each other”*; *“the young are learning new ways to do things in life”* *“life is a learning curve. Listening to young*

¹¹ One respondent did not answer this question.

people's opinions can broaden the mind"; "I think both young and old have a lot to give and learn from one another" and "some old people don't understand young people".

All but one of the respondents made suggestions for future intergenerational projects. These included computer training, gardening, cooking, crafts, music, chess, art, day trips, reading groups and discussion groups on current affairs.

All the students thought more intergenerational activities should be available for a variety of reasons including: *"help to improve relationships"; "both can learn from each other"; "gives young people the chance to prove ...that all young people shouldn't be stereotyped according to what they read in the paper"*. On suggestions for future intergenerational projects, five (42%) of the students did not answer this question, one stated they had no suggestions for future programmes and although six (50%) made suggestions for future programmes, four related to their studies. Suggestion not related to study were students volunteering to work with older people and *"a cookery class... where new skills can be learned in an interactive environment"*.

On the return journey from the second meeting, the older participants spoke enthusiastically about 'their' wonderful students. The energy and enthusiasm on the return journey was particularly striking and with this new found energy and a little encouragement from the researcher, many of the participants got involved in other activities. One lady who was interested in learning basic computer skills but was reluctant to participate in a classroom activity because of hearing problems enrolled on a one-to-one course having been provided with details and a contact name and number by the researcher. Another lady enrolled in an art class which two of the other

participants attend. All the participants have since participated in Art/Culture Route, a Dublin City Council initiative for older people which the researcher organises.

4.2.3.6. *Transferring knowledge and skills*

At the end of the follow-up meeting, the older participants expressed surprise at how much the students had changed in the short period and how confident they were. The researcher informed them that the reports from their clinical placements were that these students were much more confident and capable than previous students as a direct result of working with the group. The older participants were delighted that they had made a contribution to the students' education. One of the participants emailed the following day: "*I enjoyed this visit a lot more than I expected. The students, I felt, had benefited greatly from the one-to-one discourse, and I know it was of great value to me also, as I felt as an older person, I was contributing to students*"

Over half (58%) of the students thought the project was good for their studies: "*really helped put theory to practice*" and "*improved my communication skills*". Many positive comments were emailed with the completed questionnaires from them further reiterating the benefits of the project for the students. The lecturers were very pleased with the outcomes. From their perspective, the aim was to prepare the students for their practical professional competence examination as the students in a post-module evaluation expressed concern regarding their own communication skills (Moloney cited in Bates, 2011). These students not only learned the practical skills of taking a dietary history and making recommendations but overcame their shyness in initiating conversation with people they did not know and developed their social skills with older

people. They noticeably outperformed the previous year's class (Bates, 2011). A second project took place in March 2012 and the expectation is that it will become an annual event as it has been incorporated into the second year course programme.

4.3 Log on, Learn

'Log on, Learn' which is a joint initiative of An Post, Intel and Microsoft was developed to facilitate young people teaching computer skills to older people as part of the TY programme in secondary schools¹². It is an eight week computer training programme designed to 'buddy up' a TY student with an older person to teach basic computer skills such as surfing the net, sending emails and word processing. The learning pace is dictated by the older person with the young tutor tailoring the training to meet the needs of the older person. The project is designed to take place in the school one day per week over an eight week period. Training sessions are 1-2 hours duration and certificates of achievement are awarded to all participants on completion. All necessary guidelines and instructions for the students and older participants are available to registered schools (Appendix XI).

In her speech at the launch of 'Log on, Learn' in 2008, the Minister for Older People, Máire Hctor, TD stated: "*I have no doubt that not only will there be a huge fun factor involved, but that a two-way transfer of knowledge and experience will result, with great benefits for all*" (www.dohc.ie/press/speeches/2008). This was reiterated by her

¹² The programme was developed following research conducted by Intel in 2008 into the reasons for the widening digital gap between young and old which found that "*there were very few places where older people could get age-appropriate computer training, older people talked about the 'fear factor', that information technology was too hard, too complicated and for young people*" (www.silvercircle.ie).

successor, the Minister for Older People and Health Promotion, Áine Brady, TD when she stated, “*learning ICT skills together has the potential to create bonds of friendship between younger and older people, leading to greater mutual understanding between young and old*” (www.silvercircle.ie). ‘Log on, Learn’ won two awards in 2009 for corporate social responsibility, the ‘ICT Excellence Award’ from ICT Ireland and the ‘President’s Award’ from Chambers Ireland.

4.3.1 Methodology

The results of the desk research and initial survey highlighted the popularity of projects involving younger people teaching older people computer skills. A study of ‘Log on, Learn’ was undertaken as 168 schools were registered on the website as participating in this programme. Nine people were interviewed representing three projects. Formal semi-structured interviews took place with two younger participants aged 16 years who had just completed the transition year (Linda; Eve), four older participants (Paddy, Denise and husband and wife, Paula and Tony) and two facilitators (Barbara, Katherine). An informal unstructured interview took place with one older participant (Ella). Barbara and Katherine work with older people and were contacted by local schools for assistance in organizing the project (Appendix VII).

4.3.2 Findings

The interviewees represented three venues; Rye Community Resource Centre (RyeCRC), Scoil Aine and Scoil Brid¹³. Two older participants (Denise and Ella) one

¹³ The names of the individuals and venues have been changed to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

facilitator (Katherine) from RyeCRC¹⁴, two younger participants (Linda and Eve) from Scoil Aine and three older participants (Paddy, Paula and Tony) and one facilitator (Barbara) from Scoil Brid were interviewed. Although the interviewees represented the views of older and younger people and those involved in organising the project, the perspectives of all three in relation to one particular project was not obtained.

4.3.2.1 Organisation and preparation

The older participants in RyeCRC were users of the Resource Centre. The younger participants attended a local boys' school. The teacher, a volunteer in the resource centre, approached the centre with the idea of the students teaching computer skills to older users of the centre as part of their An Gaisce Award. At the time of the research two six week courses with the same ten students had taken place in the centre each Tuesday (9.30-10.30). The older participants were given no information prior to commencing the course. However, unlike the other two venues in this research, RyeCRC was not a school but a community facility which the older participants were very familiar with. No younger participants involved in this venue were interviewed and information on any preparatory work they undertook is not available. The group were divided into two; those participants who had their own laptops were taught in a separate room to those who needed to use the centre's computers. One lady, much to the delight of the students brought her ipad. The students were accompanied to the centre

¹⁴ During analysis of the data a number of issues came to light with regard to RyeCRC which required clarification. One of the older participants in this venue referred to the project as 'Log on, Learn' and mentioned she had seen it advertised on TV. However, the project did not take place in the school which contradicts the 'Log on, Learn' guidelines which states that the course can only take place within the safety of the school. Also students provided no guidelines or instructions for the older participants in RyeCRC which are available free to registered schools. Further investigation revealed that this school was not registered with 'Log on, Learn'. However, the data collected was included in the research as it provided valuable data for comparison purpose.

by the teacher and once settled, he would leave saying, *"I'm back to the school now, mind crossing the road"* (Ella). The students were not supervised during the session. This was not a problem as there was *"no need for it, they were well behaved"* (Katherine). The older participants and students met on the first day and paired up themselves. No notes were provided which one older participant regrets as the problem was *"trying to remember"* (Denise). There was no break during the session and at the end of the session the students were allowed to get a drink from the coffee dock as *"that was our way of saying thanks to them"* (Katherine).

In Scoil Aine, an all girls' school, the project took place in the school's computer room. Sessions lasted 1-2 hours and took place on eight occasions over a four month period. Prior to commencement, the students had one session with a teacher who *"told us what we should do and what we shouldn't do"* (Linda). The teacher told the students to call the older participants *"buddy"* and not to call them *"old people"*. The participants did not meet prior to the project but the students prepared some information about themselves for the first day. Fifteen older people and fifteen students participated in this project. The students interviewed were not aware of how the older participants were recruited. There was no break during the session for tea or coffee. The pairing involved the students approaching an older participant as they entered the room. The students were supervised at all times and the teacher was available to give advice and guidance. The students were given guidelines on what to teach each week and a copy of the instructions for themselves and their buddy.

In Scoil Brid, an all girls' school, the project also took place in the school's computer

room and involved eight students and eight older participants. It took place over eight weeks, each Tuesday for two hours. A tea break was scheduled into the session giving “*them a chance to have a wee chat*” (Barbara). The older participants were recruited by Barbara, the project co-ordinator in the local resource centre following a request from the school for assistance in running the project. Barbara organised an introduction session for the older people prior to commencing the course. Information on the project and what to expect was provided and a visit to the school in advance was arranged “*to show them... where the computer room is, where you will have a break... and for them to meet the students*” (Barbara). The older participants knew where to go and were greeted by familiar faces on the first day so it “*is not like the first day at school*” (Barbara). Not all the older participants attended the introductory session in the school, some were quite happy to go along on the first day. The older participants interviewed from this venue, thought the visit was “*a very good idea*” (Tony) because “*well you kind of feel, am I real thick going in here? You know at this stage of me life*” (Paula). The resource centre also provided an IT tutor. As in the other venues, the pairing took place on the first day with students approaching older participants as they entered the room, no pairing criteria were used. The students were supervised at all times by both the tutor and the teacher. The tutor’s role was to provide technical assistance to the students. The teacher’s role was to supervise the project. The facilitator visited the school during the project to ensure the older participants had no problems. Instruction sheets were provided at each session.

4.3.2.2 *Reasons for participating*

There were mixed motivations and reasons for participating on the project. One reason

mentioned by all the older participants was to acquire computer skills. None of the older participants interviewed had made the initial contact although there was a national advertisement campaign on the project. Paula and Tony participated because "*we were asked to do it and we were delighted*" (Paula). For one participant, the age of the tutors was a contributing factor as she knew nothing about computers and thought "*if young children were teaching like you wouldn't be bothered with too much information. I thought it would be easier*" (Denise). One lady who had some computer knowledge applied when she saw it advertised in the Resource Centre because it was "*handed on a plate*" (Ella). Another participant who had previously participated in an intergenerational computer project in DCU and continues to contribute to their blog participated "*because with computers... you can never say you have everything learnt*" (Paddy). However, both students interviewed stated that some of the participants on their course participated because they wanted "*the certificate at the end and they wanted it for some job qualification thing*" (Linda). Although the purpose of 'Log on, Learn' is to teach older people basic computer skills, it appears that some older participants see this as a formal qualification for which a certificate is awarded and used to verify their skill level.

Both facilitators were contacted by local schools for assistance. Katherine, an older lady who manages the resource centre on a voluntary basis, agreed "*straight away*" to help as she thought "*the older people would benefit ... as a lot of them think computers are a big secret*" (Katherine). Barbara who is employed as a community worker in a family resource centre got involved "*to link older people with the younger people in B... so there isn't that divide between them and this was the perfect opportunity*"

(Barbara). The younger participants got involved as it was part of the TY programme and they were given *"a list of what you could do"* (Eve) and they *"wanted one that would look good. You get certs so they look good"* (Linda).

4.3.2.3. *Child protection issues*

Both facilitators interviewed were responsible for recruiting the older participants and were asked if any issues around child protection arose. In RyeCRC, although the teacher walked to the venue with the boys each day, they were left unsupervised. Katherine who knew all the older participants had *"no issues about [the boys] coming over or being unsupervised... they were just remarkable young men"*. In Scoil Brid, Barbara was aware of child protection issues but didn't seek information from the older participants such as garda clearance or reference letters as the project took place in the school and the school have their *"own set of policies that would govern us and that would cover us"*. Although she was aware of the issues around child protection and acknowledged that it was a concern, she was unsure how far one needs to go with garda vetting particularly as it *"takes five months to do it or longer"*. She also felt that the issue of child protection and garda vetting *"limits some of the stuff you can do"*. There were two adults present at all times during this project, the tutor and the teacher, both of whom were garda vetted. In Scoil Aine, the students were not familiar with the process for recruiting the older participants or the requirements but their teacher was present in the room at all times.

4.3.2.4 *Informal interaction*

The availability of opportunities to interact informally varied between the venues. In

Scoil Aine, although there was no break scheduled in the session, there appeared to be some opportunity for informal chat during the sessions. Eve mentioned that “*they told us about themselves and their family*” and asked us “*what we were going to do*”. When asked whether there was any chat or laughter to be heard in the room during the session, Linda replied “*I think M... had a good laugh with her fella. They seemed to get along okay but he knew what he was doing*”. Whether the informal chat was a once off or continuous and whether it was experienced by all is unclear. This contrasted with Scoil Brid where a break was scheduled during the session providing an opportunity for informal interaction. The three older participants interviewed from this venue appeared to have developed a good relationship with their buddies. Paula commented that “*this little one I had was a dancing queen. A brilliant dancer she’d be telling me I’m going off now P... She’d call me name and everything. I’d say how did you get on and she’d be telling me (what) she done*”. One student informed Tony that “*my mam said that she worked with your sister*”. It would appear that the informal interaction resulted in the younger participant obtaining sufficient knowledge about Tony for her mother to make a connection. The third older participant interviewed at this venue, Paddy found it “*good for interacting with the students and them with us. And sometimes there would be things talked about. It wasn’t all computers, there was good interaction there... apart from education it can be also a good social occasion*”.

In RyeCRC, the project ran for one hour per week without a break and although the students were allowed into the café on the premises at the end of the session, the older participants did not have an opportunity to have tea and a chat with the students but “*it was just as well because some kids would get on great and some might find people a bit*

over powering... like people would have nothing to say to the kids and it might be awkward" (Denise). She knew very little of her tutor as she did not *"like to be too chatty... he just came over as a quiet person and you don't want to be kind of asking him questions"*. However, she did mention that one of the other older participants, a very chatty lady *"seemed to get on great with her student and you could hear them chatting and laughing"*. Ella, another older participant at this venue, had also participated in the intergenerational nutrition project and thought that the students were great but *"they were only young kids, they were shyish and not as forthcoming as the DIT students. But there was no opportunity for them to be chatty"*.

4.3.2.5 Outcome – acquisition of skills

It appears that the aim of the project, to teach older people computer skills was achieved. When asked if he achieved what he had hoped to, Paddy replied; *"oh, I did and much more"*. Tony and Paula were excited about their new skills; *"I was a straight beginner... I had never switched on a computer. Now I can get emails and send emails"* (Tony); we are *"delighted that we can use the computer"* (Paula). Denise, who is in her early eighties, although delighted with the project, would like to repeat it as she now forgets it all. However, she had no opportunity to practise and although she claims she forgets it all, she would like to repeat the course because she *"would know more what to ask"*, indicating that she does remember some aspects. Ella on the other hand found herself trying to think of things for the tutor to show her as she discovered she actually knew the basics. And although she didn't acquire any new skills she did think *"the course is a great benefit"* to those who have no skills.

Both Katherine and Barbara regarded the project as a success in relation to older people learning computer skills. In Scoil Brid three courses had been facilitated at the time of interview and copies of the evaluation forms completed by the older participants had been given to Barbara. The forms included questions on level of knowledge, what the participants expect to learn and whether their expectations were met, their opinion on the tutors, supervisor, content and any improvements they would recommend. The feedback was "*all excellent. There has been such positive feedback from all the participants*" (Barbara). No formal feedback was available for RyeCRC but Katherine had no hesitation agreeing to run a second course because they all "*enjoyed it so much and all participants learnt from the course, they all knew how to do their internet and their emails*". When asked if they had acquired new skills other than computer skills, only one older participant, Paddy referred to the benefits of interacting with the younger participants; "*an experience like that for a person of any age is not alone to be advised but it can be a good healthy experience too*".

Although the initial questions to the younger participants on what they had learnt from the project were met with silence, further probing resulted in them agreeing that their teaching and communication skills had improved. Eve thought that her "*confidence had also improved*". Both students agreed that they would participate in other activities involving older people but it would depend on the activity. In reply to questions about the advantage of teaching older people as opposed to their peers, Linda replied; "*I suppose older people can tell you more about the past and stuff. While younger people, they kind of just know what you know*".

4.3.2.6. *Outcome - participation in other activities*

Denise indicated that she would like to repeat the course and according to Katherine, another lady (not interviewed) *"wanted to do the second one twice. She loved it"*. For some of the older participants this project not only taught them new skills but gave them an appetite to learn more. Paddy and Tony joined a 'Beyond the Basics' course organised by the family resource centre in Scoil Brid. The students were not involved in this course. Although Paula, the other participant in Scoil Brid, didn't participate in this course, she would participate in other activities stating that, *"if it was something I was interested in I would go back and do it"*. Paddy had recently been co-opted onto the Board of Management of the Family Resource Centre and his response to a question on whether participating on the project encouraged him to get more involved in the community was; *"I would say yes"*. According to Barbara, *"from our perspective the older people who have accessed the 'Log on, Learn' have since accessed other courses we have run"*. The older participants in RyeCRC have since been involved in other activities with the TY students from the school. A group of students who had undertaken voluntary work in India were invited to the centre to speak to the older women's group about their experience. Following this the ladies agreed to organise a fundraising event for the next group going out. In relation to the project in India, Katherine commented: *"very interesting and the enthusiasm that they had. They wanted to put the world to right, you know. It was really lovely just listening to them"*.

4.3.2.7 *Unexpected outcomes*

The 'Beyond the Basics' course was not planned but came about because the *"older people want to still come back and do stuff"* (Barbara). The 'Log on, Learn' project

highlighted deficiencies in the services provided for older people in the community and the *“need for an internet cafe... because all these older people are coming in saying they want to be able to do this and this but they don’t have access to computers”*

(Barbara). It also highlighted the importance of interaction between older and younger people within the community with the Board of Management of the Family Resource Centre now discussing *“possible ways of developing things that bring older and young people together and... building on the experience”* (Barbara).

4.3.2.8 *Attitude of each age group towards the other*

The older participants did not believe that the experience changed their opinion of young people. They spoke highly of the younger participants and described them as *“patient”, “super”, “well mannered”, “very polite”* with *“nice”* being the most frequently used word. Patience was an attribute which the older participants spoke about frequently: *“they had endless patience”* (Katherine); *“he was very patient”* (Denise) indicating that perhaps they were surprised at this. The energy of the younger participants was also acknowledged by the older participants with comments such as *“energetic”* (Tony); *“funny”* (Paula) and *“lively”* (Paddy).

A number of the older participants spoke about the negative image of young people portrayed in the public arena: *“I know they give out and all about them but there is an awful lot of very nice young people”* (Paula) and *“sometimes we hear from the media that students are disruptive. I know it’s a minority”* (Paddy). Katherine also mentioned that *“young men have such a bad press nowadays”*. However, it would appear that in general they had a positive opinion of younger people prior to participating in the

programme. While Paula *“always liked them”*, Denise felt that *“if these lads wanted to do it they were nice quiet people”*. Paddy described his young tutor as his *“Guardian Angel”*. However, Katherine believed the experience changed the older participants’ opinion of young boys, stating *“oh completely... They were very impressed with the young men... Some ladies were saying to me, ‘look can I bring that fella home, he is just everything that a young man should be’. They were absolutely in full praise of these boys”*. Barbara did not think the older participants were anyway surprised with the young people but rather in awe of them and their technological knowledge. One lady said to her *“they just seem to go ‘click, click, click’ and that’s it. How does she do that?”*

The two younger participants, Eve and Linda were interviewed together. Eve had little contact with older people and only one set of neighbours *“are kind of old”* and although she would *“always say hello”*, she has no relationship with them and *“sometimes, maybe... they would chat”*. Linda on the other hand has regular contact with her grandparents and although most of her neighbours are elderly she wouldn't chat to them. Neither was involved in groups or activities with older people and both made a disapproving gesture when asked this question and proceeded to laugh at the idea. Linda’s reason for not wishing to participate in activities involving older people was; *“if you are with your own age group, they treat you like normal but if you are with older people they tend to treat you as if you are a kid”* which Eve agreed with. Questions on whether they would participate in an event involving older people were met with silence. Neither replied to questioning on this but following persistent probing both agreed that it would depend very much on the activity. Both felt that older people did

not treat young people as equals. Questions on whether they thought all older people were the same were again met with silence. Following further questioning Eve replied: *"some of them will treat, like your age but most of them will kind of"*. This sentence was finished by Linda; *"wouldn't kind of treat you your age"*. Eve justified her answer with her experience of helping at hockey coaching as part of her An Gaisce Award: *"the coach he was kind of older. But he kind of treated me as if I was one of the younger people even though I was a couple of years older than them and I was helping out. He was telling me what to do and I was supposed to be coaching"*.

Initially both younger participants thought older people were *"only interested in talking about themselves and not listening to what younger people have to say"* (Eve) and that older people *"would have more to talk about to each other than to us"* (Linda).

However, Linda had stated previously that her grandmother was interested in soaps and celebrity gossip and when reminded of this her opinion changed slightly to *"if they knew you, they would probably be able to talk to you. But if they didn't know you I don't think they would have a lot to talk about"* [this comment was followed by a nervous laugh]. However, their attitude towards the older participants was more positive: *"they are interesting, the people like... you know to talk to and to listen to about their lives and stuff... it's nice to try and socialise with them and stuff like that 'cause you don't do that a whole lot"* (Linda). They also acknowledged that although they had initially said that older people treated them like kids, that these older people *"were kind of treating you like an equal person... when you are in that kind of situation... we were like the teacher and they were like the student"* (Linda). They were also impressed with the fact that *"some of them brought in their laptops so we could show how to work them at*

home. It showed they were serious about it" (Eve). Both enjoyed the project as *"you would get a laugh out of them"* (Linda). *"Yes some were funny, the things they did"* (Eve). They were sure to add that the younger participants *"wouldn't be laughing at them"* (Linda) and to explain, Linda relayed the following story: *"Caitriona F. was telling us [that] she had asked her [buddy] to right click on something but she wrote it in word. She wrote 'right click'",* which they all found funny. However, one of their friends *"didn't get on well with her buddy because he kind of knew what he was doing"*. On whether they thought the experience had changed their opinion of older people, they responded, *"yes, maybe a little bit"* (Linda), *"they're not all boring"* (Eve).

Neither Barbara nor Katherine had any direct contact with the younger participants but thought that the project must have been a positive experience for them and although there is no evidence of whether it changed their opinions of older people, Katherine *"assume[d] that the boys had a positive experience because the same group came back for a second course"*. Barbara thought it was *"obviously... a positive experience... we've run two groups this year so we have had 16 girls that are willing to do it and who found it... an enjoyable experience"*.

4.3.2.9 *Transferring knowledge and skills*

When asked whether young and older people can learn from each other, Paula responded: *"oh yeah... when our grandkids come up and we didn't know something, they'd be straight up and they would show you what to do on the computer"*. Paddy thought that *"not only have they a lot to learn, both sides have an awful lot to give... and to contribute and to interact"*. Although he thinks that older and younger people are

interested in interacting there are not enough opportunities for intergenerational interaction and "*it is good to bring them together*".

Denise who would have no problem participating in other activities with younger people if the activity interested her, thought older people did not have a problem interacting with young people but feels that perhaps the younger people would have a problem as "*they would find it harder to adjust while older people have had some experience throughout their life of younger people. But it is the children who mightn't like strange older people*". She did not think she had any skills of benefit to younger people and thought that older people teaching younger people would not be successful as it would be too much like school but "*computers are different because they are the ones in charge and they are teaching older people*". It appears from the interview that Denise, who has little contact with young people, was uncomfortable with the idea of teaching young people and suggested that line dancing would work as an intergenerational activity as her dance teacher "*would be great with the kids*".

Eve and Linda didn't think either group would be interested in interacting or learning from each other as both are happier with their own age group. A number of questions about skills or experience that younger or older people may have which may be useful to the other group were greeted with silence. Eventually Eve thought that there were probably things that older people had learnt throughout life which could be of benefit to them but couldn't think of anything. The question of whether younger people had anything to teach older people was received with surprise: "*teach them?*" (Eve). Eventually they agreed that "*we have different skills, the computers and stuff*" (Eve).

4.3.2.10 *Impact on the community*

In Scoil Brid, although the project was initiated by the school and took place in the school, the project depended on community resources to succeed. Barbara recruited the older participants, supplied the tutor, organised an introductory session prior to commencement and visited the school during the project. The school subsequently allowed the resource centre use their computer room for a ‘Beyond the Basic’ course because of the “*close working relationship*” they have. Following this project, Barbara indicated her interest in undertaking further intergenerational work but “*it needs to be like the schools, ourselves and the youth services all working together and it is about bringing that partnership together*”.

RyeCRC is used by the older participants on a regular basis for activities and meetings. The school uses the centre’s facilities for retreats, TY students participate in a ‘question and answer’ session annually with Katherine for a project on running a voluntary organisation and recently students spoke to the older women’s group about their experience volunteering in India. According to Katherine, they “*have a history*” with the school, “*an interaction*” and “*a great relationship*”. As the facilitator/ teacher from Scoil Aine was not interviewed, no formal information is available on the school’s continued involvement in the community. However, the researcher is aware through her work in Dublin City Council that students in the school are involved in a local project on biodiversity together with members of the Tidy Towns Committee, all of whom are local older residents.

4.3.2.11 *Recommending the project*

When asked whether they would recommend the project to their friends, all the participants said they would. Eve and Linda would recommend it to other students because *“it was probably better and more enjoyable than a few of the other ones”* (Linda). Paula and Tony would *“definitely”* recommend it and have already *“told loads about”*. However, three of the five older participants interviewed would only recommend it to those who had no knowledge of computers. Ella observed: *“those who enjoyed it most were those with no knowledge”*.

4.3.2.12 *Challenges*

Two challenges emerged during the interviews; retention and level of knowledge of older participants. Issues around retention of participants arose in two venues. In RyeCRC problems were encountered with older participants signing up for the course but not turning up. At the time of the interview, Katherine had been involved in two courses and although she was over-subscribed for the first course, only two of the ten older people registered for the second course actually turned up. Ella thought the reason was *“they didn't value the course”*. Although *“some silly excuse”* was given, Katherine believed they did not appreciate it *“because they weren't paying for it”*. She did not think she would have a problem filling the course again but would introduce a fee because *“once money is involved it sharpens the mind a bit”*. The issue of older participants not attending all the sessions was echoed in interviews with Eve and Linda. Linda commented that unlike some of her peers, she did not get to know her buddy very well as she became ill half way through the programme which *“was sad”*. While encountering no issues regarding retention, Barbara did recognise that it was necessary

to ensure appropriate numbers as older people “*may have to go into hospital or something happens and they may not necessarily be able to follow through on the course*”.

The issue of participants’ level of experience was a recurring theme. All participants, both young and old, found that there was quite a diverse range of levels on the course and thought that perhaps recruitment should be tailored. Eve and Linda expected all the older participants to be at the same level and were surprised to discover that “*some of them were actually quite advanced*” (Eve) while some “*couldn’t type and didn’t know what the mouse was*” (Linda). Linda taught a number of older participants throughout the course requiring flexibility in adjusting to the different levels. She remarked that one lady “*was actually quite good at computers so we had nothing to do*”. For three of the five older participants interviewed the level of knowledge of computers was an issue. Paddy “*lowered myself down and pegged in with the rest*” while Ella soon realised she knew the basics and subsequently did not attend all the classes. Although Denise knew nothing about computers herself, she felt that some of the others had sufficient knowledge and the course was not suitable for them.

4.4 Intergenerational Practice in the Community

As outlined in chapter three, the researcher sought community based projects for further study. From the responses to the initial survey, Rathville¹⁵ a community situated in the Docklands area of Dublin was chosen as a study site because two organisations in Rathville responded to the questionnaire indicating that the researcher could contact

¹⁵ Rathville is a fictitious name used to ensure the anonymity of participants

them for further information and visits. As discussed in chapter three, prior to the researcher contacting the respondents, an invitation to attend an intergenerational quiz was received. Attendance at this event provided an opportunity to observe an intergenerational project in action and to meet the participants and organisers leading to further opportunities.

4.4.1. The community of Rathville

Rathville is situated in the Docklands area of Dublin approximately 2.4 km from Dublin's O'Connell Street in the City Centre. The community is partially covered by two Electoral Districts which have experienced a combined increase in population from 4,890 in 2006 to 8,134 in 2011 representing a 60% increase (www.cso.ie). However, as the small area population statistics are not yet available, it is not possible to extrapolate information to confirm demographic changes in Rathville. Prior to the building of houses by Dublin Corporation in the 1930's, housing consisted mainly of cottages owned by companies in the area who rented them to their employees. The residents were mainly working class, employed as casual manual labour in the coal yards, railway and docks. Although employment in the Docklands declined in the 1960's and 1970's, employment was available in locally based industries. A strong community bond existed and from the 1950's through to the 1970's, the residents established a number of clubs including a football club, bowling club, youth club and scouts.

The success of the regeneration of the Docklands area into a Financial Centre from an economic perspective is well documented but it appears to have made little contribution

to Rathville and its long-term residents. The regeneration resulted in the construction of new apartment blocks on the periphery of the community. However, as apartment living is not conducive to family living (Silverman, Lupton and Fenton, 2005 as cited in Breen *et al.*, 2009, p.9) this has resulted in transient residents. This was highlighted in a consultation process carried out by Rathville Community Development Group which found that older people did not like these changes with comments such as “*neighbours keep changing and you never know who is living beside you*” (CDP, 2008, p.21)¹⁶. It appears that the original community rather than embracing the new residents have become more insulated with a distinction between the new ‘*Runners-In*’ and the old residents (CDP, 2008).

Like many inner city working class areas, Rathville has encountered problems over the years however it has managed to maintain a sense of a small closely knit community, akin to a rural village. Although the Docklands area has undergone many changes, the physical boundaries of the community provide a very distinctive geographic location thus preventing a sprawling dimension. As May, an older resident interviewed described: “*it’s in a hollow. It is actually in a little village*”. The Catholic Church is the dominant feature of the main street where the shops are also located. Unlike newer housing developments with large shopping centres nearby, there is no shopping centre in the vicinity and the local shops remain an important element of the community. A particular example is ‘Sam the Butcher’¹⁷. As well as the provider of ‘quality meats’, Sam collects and displays photographs of Rathville and its residents over the years.

¹⁶ This is an abbreviated reference, used to ensure the area is not identified and participants in the research remain anonymous.

¹⁷ Name changed to ensure the area is not identified

Residents past and present donate photographs to the collection and can also obtain copies of photographs. Each Christmas he transforms his shop into ‘Santa’s Grotto’ for one day where local children have an opportunity to meet Santa and receive a gift. Older residents continue the tradition by bringing their grandchildren to see Santa. This helps maintain the centre or heart of the community and creates a sense of place.

However, it is not only the physical layout which creates this sense of place but the fact that many of the residents have always lived in the area. May would “*never leave here*” and spoke about the many marriages between the residents of the community: “*I married a Rathviller and my mother and father were from here. My sister married a chap from... Road and my brother married a girl from up the road*”. The sense of community can even be felt on the “*bus, the Rathville bus is a completely different bus because everybody talks to everybody. If you got up on the Strand and you got on the [bus] and everybody’s going ‘yack, yack, yack’ ... all having a bit of fun and a bit of laugh on the bus*” (May). As John, a community worker who lives in the area said: “*we are lucky with the people we have in the community*”.

For the purpose of this research, the focus is on the community centre, the youth centre and the primary school. The community centre was opened in February 2009 on the site of the old school. The centre is home to a crèche, senior citizen day care, a gym, a multi-purpose sports hall, a seven-a-side football pitch, a coffee dock and a theatre. Meals are served to older residents during the day and older women’s groups meet two days per week with the older men occupying the games room two afternoons per week. Although there is no interaction between the children in the crèche and the older users

of the centre, “*the courtyards provide diagonal transparencies between the different social activities of the centre, connecting old with young and relating passive and active recreations*” (www.rathvillecommunitycentre.ie)¹⁸. The Community Development Project (CDP) which was established in 2005 has a strong focus on older people and occupies offices in the centre. The local primary school is a mixed sex Catholic school with just under 200 pupils. Many of the parents and grandparents of the current students attended the school themselves. There is no second level school in the immediate area and young people attend schools in adjoining areas. The current youth club was established in 2000 by residents to provide youth work programmes for young people in association with the City of Dublin Youth Services Board.

4.4.2 Experiences of older people in Rathville

In 2007 the CDP undertook an Older Persons Needs Analysis (CDP, 2008). The aim was to ascertain the number of older people living in the area, the numbers accessing relevant services and to identify gaps in the provision of service to these residents (CDP, 2008). A total of 242 households completed the questionnaire which was administered by local older residents who were recruited and trained specifically to conduct this research. Despite the fact that some negative aspects of living in the area were highlighted, the majority of older respondents liked living in Rathville. According to the study, closeness to friends, neighbours and family are the best things about living in the area. Although there were positive references to strong community spirit, some respondents thought it was not as strong as it used to be but “*there is still a sense that the community pulls together in times of need*” (CDP, 2008 p. 19). The poor

¹⁸ The name of the community centre’s website was changed to ensure the community is not identified.

state of the physical environment, young people hanging around and anti-social behaviour were listed as the worst things about living in the area. Comments included: “kids are proper little vandals”; “gangs hanging around”; “abusive behaviour of some of our youth” (CDP, 2008 p.21).

4.4.3 Methodology

A multi-method approach was used which allowed the researcher make use of different opportunities to collect data. The initial contact was by way of response to the survey by the youth club and the CDP. This was followed by an invitation by the CDP to attend an intergenerational quiz in the community centre leading to many unexpected opportunities to gain insight into the community. The most difficult aspect of this research was gaining acceptance by the older people involved in the intergenerational projects. The older women were a little hesitant initially but came to accept the researcher following her attendance at a number of events. The older men were very reluctant and in some instances refused to even chat to her. However, as outlined in chapter two, it was the researcher's family connection to the area and the docklands that lead to acceptance by the older men with Bob commenting; “*you are always welcome here, it's always great to see a Rathviller*”. There is no doubt that access to this group would not have been possible but for the researcher's connection to the area. Perhaps this reluctance to engage may have been a result of a past bad experience of negative media attention as John remarked: “*we have to be careful as journalists and researchers arrange to call in and we are conscious to ensure that the older people and the area were not misrepresented*”. Like many other inner city communities in Dublin, this community has received unfavourable media coverage in the past relating to drugs,

gangland crime, murders and kidnapping.

Formal semi-structured interviews took place with the Principal (Sean) and a teacher (Karen) in the local primary school, a youth worker in the youth club (Aoife), a community development worker (Noel), an older female participant (May) and three younger male participants (Ritchie, John and Seamus). Informal unstructured interviews took place with one youth worker (Des) and a community development worker (John)¹⁹ during an intergenerational event. Attendance at the older person's summer project dance lessons on three occasions provided an opportunity to chat to organisers and participants. Participation at an intergenerational quiz provided an opportunity to observe activities and to talk to participants as did attendance at an intergenerational snooker and darts competition. Informal conversations took place with many of the men in the games room (Appendix VII).

4.4.4. Findings

Planned intergenerational activities were introduced in Rathville in 2009 following a tragic incident in the area. In December 2008 an older resident was shot and killed by a local teenager over an egg throwing incident. This was widely publicised in the media²⁰ which according to Des resulted “*in fear among the older population*”. It was this incident which was the catalyst to formally engage in intergenerational projects “*and show that young people are not to be feared. There was a refocus in the community*” (Sean). According to Noel, intergenerational activities were introduced “*to find natural opportunities for younger and older people to mix. And we found... find as*

¹⁹ All names have been changed to ensure anonymity of participants.

many opportunities as we possibly could, would in the longer term have an impact on crime and anti-social behaviour. That is the philosophy".

4.4.4.1 Intergenerational activities in the school

The school is an integral part of the community and intergenerational activities.

According to Sean, *"adults have always been involved in the school in reading, sculpture and boat making"* but it is only in recent years that they have been labelled *'intergenerational'*. *May "spent every day there when [her] children went into school... We had the parents' room and then we had personal development groups, first aid group... knitting classes... exercise, keep-fit. You name it, [we] done it all up there for years"*. The older residents currently use the computer room for their computer classes and every couple of weeks when they *"are more comfortable on the computers the kids come in and show them a few tricks and shortcuts"* (John).

Sean is committed to facilitating opportunities for the interaction of young and old as he recognises the benefits to younger people and *"sees a huge difference between children with grandparents living close by and those with none"*. He believes that students in the school *"who live with or near their grandmothers, in particular, are more stable and better at reading... it is obvious they have support of someone at home who has time to spend with them"*. Although not living in the area, he has spent all his working life in the school and is involved in many organisations which promote community development including the Residents Council. He is a founder of Parents Education Group and the local GAA club in which he is still involved. He taught English, Irish

²⁰ Newspaper reports are not referenced to ensure the area is not identified.

and Maths to adults (parents of the children) in the school in the evening. It is apparent from conversations with organisers and older participants that he is well respected in the community.

The formal introduction of intergenerational activities in the school evolved following a presentation to the school of photographs from 'Sam the Butcher', which John had copied. From this initial gift, an oral history project was established in 2010 involving students and older residents and has continued to grow. The project is facilitated by John and Karen who both grew up in Rathville, currently live there and have knowledge of and a personal interest in the area. The project involves pupils interviewing older residents about "*things like growing up, the games they played, the food they ate, the clothes they wore and the toys they had*" (Karen).

During the project, on being asked about his favourite book when he was a child, one older participant replied Treasure Island. None of the pupils had read the book and the man sent a copy to the school. "*The kids have all decided now they are going to read it... They would never have picked up something like that if your man hadn't mentioned it*" (Karen). Another participant who had been a pupil in the school sat pointing out the window to where he queued for lunch of bread and butter, prompting one of the children to get 'today's' lunch for him: "*the little carton of milk and the sandwich in the cellophane... and he was delighted with himself. He said... I can't believe I am nearly 70 and I am having lunch in school again*" (Karen). However, for May in her late 50's, it is not only the children who benefit from the project as "*I am actually learning as well 'cause I am learning from the over 70's as well*".

A group of the older female participants agreed to participate in the oral history project in return for tin whistle lessons. This resulted in the ladies attending school each Wednesday, sitting among the children to learn to play the tin whistle. The older learners become quite giddy and at times Karen had to tell them to "*settle down. I don't think they are even learning that much about the tin whistle but they are enjoying coming in and... chatting with the kids. They are enjoying being one with them*". During the lesson, each student was required to play a short solo piece and according to Karen, one particular woman was "*nervous and she'd be sitting and maybe a child beside her might be nervous as well and the two of them would be practising. They would be teaching each other what to do, you know and they'd be laughing and giggling*". On discovering that the children were not taught sewing, one lady suggested they teach the children basic sewing skills. At the time of the interview, "*they have arranged [for] one of them... to bring in thread, one... to bring in squares of material, one... to bring buttons and one... bring a pack of needles*" (Karen). Karen is keen on the idea of older people "*coming in now and again and doing little things on and off with the kids*". There is a good working relationship between the CDP and the school with Karen indicating during the interview that it was her intention to speak to John to discuss ideas to develop this relationship further and see "*what can they offer the kids and what can the kids offer them*".

The impact of the intergenerational activities in the school has had a positive impact on the wider community. According to Karen, when the children meet the older participants outside the school it's "*like they are old friends. 'Ah how ye John, how ye*

Joe, how's it going'..." Noel spoke about one lady who has repeated the story many times about walking down the street and a child coming up to her and saying: "*Ann you're a legend*" and "*you can just see her face light up each time she tells the story*". May thinks "*it is great because when you see them in the street, they go 'ah howya'... the young people... have more respect and... more time for older people*". However, she also stated that people in general "*are afraid to talk to the kids now*". She spoke of meeting a little girl in the swimming pool and telling her how she learned to swim; "*now she was delighted with herself and said 'thanks very much'. She headed to her Daddy and I said 'jayus I hope he doesn't give out to me'. And later I said to him, 'I was talking to your little girl out there. She is lovely'. But you really don't know, you don't know if you are doing right or wrong*". May also mentioned speaking to a little boy who turned and said "*I am not supposed to talk to strangers*" and walked away. Her reaction was "*it was an awful slap in the face*". On being questioned about younger people in general, May felt a little uncomfortable "*with people 26 and 27. I wouldn't imagine I would have anything in common with them... they go around with plugs in their ears and I feel they don't want to converse with you*".

4.4.4.2 *Intergenerational programme and the 'Monday Club'*

The CDP organise activities and events for the older women's group on Monday afternoon in the community centre. From an initial idea of bringing the older women and children together to play board games, a programme of intergenerational activities has grown. Students from the local primary school accompanied by the Principal visit the group every six weeks to play games including the Wii, to take part in quizzes and most popular among the children, to play bingo. According to May, "*they really look*

forward to coming around. They would ask 'when are we going around again to have a game of bingo?' They really loved the bingo and they're good kids".

The researcher's first encounter with the group was by invitation to attend an intergenerational quiz. Attendance at the quiz provided an opportunity to observe and participate in the quiz. On the day, fourteen 6th class pupils (six girls and eight boys) from school arrived in a quiet, orderly fashion, escorted by the Principal and were randomly directed in pairs towards the tables where the older participants were seated. Each table consisted of two older and two younger participants. However, one table was short one older participant and the researcher was nominated as a substitute. Each table agreed a name (suggested by the children) such as The Brainy Bunch and The Brain Boxes. The quiz contained eight rounds with questions in each round evenly directed to the older and younger participants. All participants appeared relaxed and comfortable in each other's company because "*there is no actual age limit when the children are around because... they are so used to being in our company*" (May). There was chat and discussion among the groups and the children accepted the answers to the questions given by the older participants and vice versa. At the end of each round, the questions from the previous round were read out and all participants shouted the answers before the Quiz Master got an opportunity to do so. The energy and excitement the children brought to the event was evident. During a short tea break, the children got milk and sugar for their older team members and both requested more biscuits for the other!

For the older participants the benefits extended beyond the enjoyment and sense of fun

from interacting with the children but also recognition from the children in the community. One volunteer at the quiz spoke of the impact which could be seen in the friendliness of the children towards the older people and relayed a story told by an older participant about going to Mass and “*two of the children ran over to her and gave her a hug ‘cause they recognised her from the centre’*”.

4.4.4.3 *Senior summer project*

Subsequently an opportunity arose to visit dance classes for older residents as part of the senior summer project. The senior summer project comprises activities and events during the month of August organised by the CDP for the older residents of the area, similar to that which takes place in many communities throughout Ireland for young people. The dance classes took place each Friday morning during August in the local Credit Union building. During the class, the researcher served tea providing an opportunity to informally chat to the participants and at the insistence of the participants joined in the class. A sense of fun was evident among the eleven women and three men. One lady spoke about the intergenerational activities and how much she “*loved the quizzes with the children from the school [and] had great fun playing the Wii*” especially bowling because “*the older people were good at it*”. Another lady was looking forward to the pupils visiting the Monday Club in September as “*they add to the afternoon... the children are brilliant*”. During the summer project, a number of participants approached John suggesting ideas for dance and music sessions with the pupils from the school. According to John “*it is only when you are involved that you come up with new ideas*”.

Although in general, the women were much more willing to converse than the men they were still reticent. Peggy whom the community worker had arranged for the researcher to speak to said she didn't think "*she had anything to say which would be of any use other than it's great*". In response to a question about what she thought of intergenerational projects, she replied "*it's big*". When asked why she thought it worked in Rathville, she responded; "*we are just like that here. It is the type of people we are...they [the children] call us by our first name which I think is great. The kids will do anything for you*". Peggy is studying for the Junior Certificate English exam and when the researcher asked her if she assists the younger people in her class, she said: "*oh no. We are there as equals. I wouldn't pretend I know the answer because... I wouldn't like to put them off it*".

4.4.4.4 *Intergenerational Halloween festival*

Halloween activities have taken place in Rathville "*pretty much for six years but in the last two years we have had an actual festival [and] have really concentrated on intergenerational*" (Noel). In 2009, the youth club and CDP organised a community festival and parade during Halloween with families lighting lanterns which they had made as part of the festival activities. Although not organised to combat anti-social behaviour, this was the first Halloween in many years that there was no reported increase in anti-social behaviour. Intergenerational activities continue to be part of the Halloween programme and according to Noel "*while we probably had 1000 [participants] the first year, some of the activities were intergenerational. Last year was really, really truly intergenerational. It was phenomenal*". In 2010 the aim of the Halloween Festival was to bring old and young together to make Halloween a positive

experience (CDP, 2010). Activities included lantern making by young and old, intergenerational snooker and dart competition, an intergenerational quiz, an intergenerational dance, mask making workshop for parents and children and drumming workshops for children and adults. A 'ghost and ghouls' evening for all ages also took place as did a walking tour of the area exploring every haunted nook and cranny "suitable from age 8 to 800" (CDP, 2010). Noel "*expected about 30 people for the haunted walk but over 260 people turned up... people from 90 to babies*" with many of the older people commenting: "*that's the first time in my life I have enjoyed Halloween*". A Halloween festival was again organised in 2011 with many intergenerational activities including ghost stories, a ghost walk, a parade, silk painting for age 10 to 100, an intergenerational quiz, intergenerational dance classes and a Ceili Mór (CDP 2011a).

4.4.4.5 *Spring mini-festival 2011*

Due to the success of the Halloween Festival an intergenerational Spring Mini-Festival took place in 2011 with a focus on a community clean-up. This was a collaboration between the school, the youth club, the CDP, residents association, community police and Dublin City Council. An afternoon of "*intergenerational fun and games as the young and the young at heart play the games of yesteryear and today in a light hearted battle of the ages*" (CDP, 2011b) was sponsored by Cadburys Stars and Stripes Programme. Aoife organised an intergenerational felt making class during the festival but it was "*disappointing as there were very few participants*". However, she acknowledged that the timing was inappropriate as the students were in school. This was the second intergenerational felt making workshop and she mentioned that older

participants in the previous workshop had found the activity sore on their hands. The intergenerational aspect of the first one which took place in 2010 was accidental. Aoife had engaged tutors to teach felt making but as there was little interest from the youth group, she contacted the CDP to invite the older women's group to participate. Four of the older women subsequently completed a 'train the trainer' course. The extent of the interaction is not clear and this project was not mentioned by any of the older women in the context of intergenerational projects.

An Intergenerational Ceilí was also organised which according to Aoife "*wasn't a success*" as there was a very poor turnout. However, this contradicts the experience described by May, who did not attend but friends informed her, "*it was great... it was very, very good... and the young people thoroughly enjoyed it as well. So that is something that we can work on*". Peggy also enjoyed it and although initially "*the kids were reluctant but we took them up and they had great fun*". John's 10 year old daughter attended the Ceilí and according to him, "*she talks about Annie and Peggy... Initially the kids didn't want to participate but the older ladies took them up and it was a big success*". The success of the Ceilí was not due to the numbers in attendance but the participants involved because "*if you get the right kids who are willing to give it a go, it works well*" (John).

4.4.4.6 *Intergenerational snooker and dart competition*

The Intergenerational Snooker and Dart Competition which was introduced as part of the Halloween festival in 2010 has become a regular event having taken "*five years to convince the older men to participate in a competition with the youth club*" (Noel).

According to Des, the competition was organised as there was a need “*to do something regarding the youths and anti-social behaviour which was causing anxiety among the older residents*”. Although acknowledging that there was a small group of teenagers causing trouble, he stressed that the majority were ‘good’ as he has seen “*four generation cycles of young people with trouble from only one cycle [involving] only about 10 lads*”.

The researcher received an invitation from Aoife to attend the competition in Spring 2011. The competition took place over three evenings with the researcher attending one evening. On arrival the snooker was underway and the hall was quiet²¹. Seven older men and six boys (aged 16 years) together with one younger boy (about 11 years old) were present. The seating was ‘L’ shaped with the boys sitting together in the corner and two groups of older participants, one at each end. The youngest boy sat relaxed, among one group of older men who appeared to enjoy his company with plenty of laughter among them. In the previous competition, the participants were paired into teams of one young and one older participant. However, the format changed on this occasion to allow the younger team compete against older team. The atmosphere was very relaxed and everyone appeared very comfortable in the surroundings. The rules during play were observed and everyone was quiet. One boy was not doing too well prompting an older participant to ask “*what’s up with you today, you are not playing well at all*”. While another advised the boy to “*relax yourself*” and “*count to three*”. The snooker finished with the older men leading ten games to seven over the first two nights.

²¹ The competition commenced earlier than scheduled to allow the younger participants attend a local football match.

The darts competition commenced immediately without the normal break as the younger participants had a football match to go to. The same rule of ‘silence during play’ did not apply for darts and there was plenty of banter during the games. At one stage one of the older men tripped (he did not fall or hurt himself) and all was quiet for a second until the youngest boy laughed resulting in all the older men laughing. The other younger participants did not laugh and appeared to be taking the competition more seriously, perhaps because they were losing the snooker. One older participant insisted he never played before and pretended he couldn’t see the board. On asking if someone would show him where the “2” was, the reply from a younger participant was “*I’m not going over near you with darts in your hand*” resulting in laughter. This man went on to win the game. One older participant had problems with his darts breaking and although Des fixed them, the second time they broke he asked a younger participant to “*fix that for me*”. When the games finished, the participants shook hands and congratulated each other. As the boys were leaving, they waved to the older men and said “*night, see you tomorrow*”. On leaving, Lenny, one of the older men said “*I love coming here, it makes me feel young*”. Des looked at him and the old man repeated it saying “*I’m serious, coming here makes me feel young. It gives me a lift*”. A report on the competition in the local newsletter described it as “*electric*” (CDP, 2011b).

The older participants in the competition meet twice weekly in the games room in the community centre. Up to fifty men use the room with twenty attending on a regular basis. Noel regards the room as “*a lifeline for the men*”. One man with Parkinson’s Disease did not know he could hold a cue until he came and now according to Noel,

“his wife gets two hours twice a week and knows he is safe and knows he is happy. His confidence has improved dramatically”. Another man has had a stroke and cannot communicate and *“is very, very needy, his wife... has two hours a week free. And since then he has joined a gym and his health has improved dramatically”* (Noel).

The researcher was invited to the games rooms to meet the older men and arrange interviews. The men were aware of the invitation and had been given background information on the research. However, there was no acknowledgement by the older men when introduced by John or any interaction with the researcher who made a number of attempts to engage with them. During a break, one of the older men, Tom whom the researcher recognized from the competition sat down in a nearby seat. As the researcher approached him, he took up the newspaper, placed it in front of his face and said: *“I think I’ll sit and read the paper”*. This was a clear indication he did not want to talk to her.

The researcher approached three men sitting having coffee and to break the ice, mentioned her mum was originally from the area. One of the men remembered her fondly which appeared to relax the others in the group and they were a little more open to chat. On enquiring about the result of the intergenerational snooker competition, one of the participants, Bart give a brief account of his own performance: *“I had one win and then I let them beat me twice and let them think I was soft but went in and won the last match”*. Attempts to engage further on the competition and interaction were unsuccessful. On mentioning the fun that they appeared to have during the competition, Bart said, *“they [younger participants] can take it very seriously... they want to win”*.

As one game finished, an opportunity arose to speak to another man. On mentioning the intergenerational competition, his face lit up and he commented; *“it was great craic. If I meet them on the street they say ‘ howya, when’s the next game?’... I will stand and chat to them now but wouldn’t have done that before because I would be afraid to talk to children before because you know. But once you know them it is great to chat, no problem chatting now”*. It appeared from this brief conversation that what prevented the man from conversing with the boys was not that he was intimidated by them but afraid it would be inappropriate for him to approach the boys due to child protection sensitivities.

The researcher approached Lenny and Bob who were standing outside smoking. Although they were polite, the conversation remained general. During the conversation, the researcher mentioned once again that her mother was from the area. Bob’s eyes lit up as he knew both her parents. On hearing this, his brother Tom who had previously ignored the researcher with the aid of a newspaper, approached and said: *“Jesus you are the image of your Dad”*. From this point on the atmosphere changed and all further contact with the group was relaxed. However, there was reluctance to talk about feelings and how they felt about the projects. They joked and made fun of each other and talked about how they enjoyed the competition but never spoke about their feelings and the impact the projects had on them personally.

On the second occasion the researcher attended the games room, her presence was immediately acknowledged with Bob inviting her to join them for a game of snooker. On the next occasion, the researcher called in unexpectedly and again received a warm

welcome. Lenny and Tom who were playing dominos invited her to sit with them. Initially there was some chat but the researcher soon realised that chatting during the game is not accepted as concentration is required. However, at the end of each game while the dominos were being shuffled conversation was permitted. When asked if they would consider playing dominos with the boys, Tom replied immediately: “*No. The young fellas have sharp minds, they would beat us. They would be too quick for us*”. Lenny spoke about the intergenerational competition and how he “*really looks forward to it. It is great for us seniors to mix with young people*”. His face lit up as he relayed an incident involving a group of young lads one evening as he was walking to the pub; “*there was a group of 5 or 6 lads and as I approached they started to sing ‘Leno, Leno’*”. He demonstrated this by waving his arms in the air and continued: “*isn’t that great. I was embarrassed but gave them a wave and they gave me a wave back. Now that wouldn’t have happened a few years ago*”. Although the men said very little to the researcher about the impact of the intergenerational activities, they did chat to Noel: “*they’d say, I was in the chipper the other night, this is one of the stories that came back, and the guy said hello. Normally when I am standing there, I put my head down and hope no young person is going to be offensive*”. Although the researcher had developed a rapport with the older men, she decided not to request a formal interview, as having got to know the men and the community, she believed that if she tried to formalise the relationship by requesting an interview it would change the dynamics of the relationship.

Aoife and Des arranged for the researcher to meet with three younger participants in the snooker and dart competitions, Ritchie, John and Seamus, representing nearly half of

the younger participants in the competition observed by the researcher. They suggested to the younger participants that they come into the youth club an hour before their usual time to meet the researcher for 30-45 minutes after which they could practise their snooker before the club started. The younger participants had no hesitation in agreeing to this as the reason for attending the club was to practise their snooker for the next competition. Aoife sat in an adjoining room with the door open during the interview. Neither Ritchie, John nor Seamus had attended the local primary school nor were they previously involved in intergenerational activities. They were all aged 16 years; two were in fifth year and one in transition year in different schools. All had grandparents living nearby and all had older neighbours whom they knew to chat to. They got involved in the competition because they “*thought it would be funny just to do it and just to get to know them and all and 'cause Des was telling us that some of them are funny men*” (John). Ritchie was familiar with older people through his mother’s work in the area as home help and encouraged the others to participate as “*he was able to tell us like... they’ll make us laugh. They won’t start giving out to us and all that*” (John). John or Seamus did not know the older participants prior to the competition but “*got to know them... others as well through it and now they’ll know us on the streets*” (John). When asked whether they joined the competition to have at laugh at them or with them, John replied: “*with them, 'cause... they make us laugh, they say the funny things... if you meet them on the street, they’ll say things and they’ll make us laugh*”.

When asked what they thought of the dart and snooker competition, all agreed that the youth club against the men’s club was better than pairing as it “*makes things more competitive*” (John) because “*there is a big trophy*” (Ritchie). Although they lost to the

men in the Spring 2011 competition, they were determined to win back the trophy and according to John, *“that’s the reason why we come into the club... when we come into the club we just solely focus on beating them”*. Although the older men won the overall competition, according to Ritchie, they won the darts, because *“some of them are good at darts but some of them can’t see as far as the board”*, resulting in laughter among the group. But all agreed that they are *“very good at snooker”* (John) and were *“lethal”* (Ritchie) and they appreciate the tips and the shots the older participants teach them such as *“Harolds Cross”* (John).

On questioning whether they had learnt anything from the older men other than tricks in snooker John replied: *“yeah, we learnt what it is means, like to be with older people. It is not like that Des [was] just getting them in to play. Like we can get on with them, we can make friends with them... There is a lot we could learn from them ‘cause like games they played when they were younger and all, the tricks they had learnt”*. A question on whether they had skills which they could teach the older men was met with silence.

When asked if they had any suggestions for other intergenerational activities, Ritchie suggested *“chess and draughts”*. Although none of the interviewees were familiar with the rules of chess, they thought the older men *“could learn us that as well”* (John).

The element of fun they have with the older men was a recurring theme throughout the interview. John said *“especially R., he is always just kind of there with a saying... ‘the only pot you would get is in a hardware store’ [which they use] all the time”*. They often try to remember jokes just to tell the older men but sometimes they would say *“something funny and they wouldn’t laugh”* (John) and sometimes *“you wouldn’t know*

if they were fake laughing at all” (Ritchie). With regard to the older men’s sayings, John believed *“they make it so that we will laugh at them”* and Ritchie agrees *“they want to make us laugh”*. When asked if they think the older men just make a big effort to be funny in their company, John responded *“I’d say some of them are like that with each other. They like giving each other a bit of banter and such like mess away with each other”*. Ritchie was delighted as they *“even got [the older men] to sing ‘happy birthday’ to Seamus”*.

The younger participants have a positive opinion of the older men and the competition has made an impact in that they *“know now what we can get out of them... know that they would be nice to us if we are nice to them”* (John). However, when asked if the competition had changed their opinion of older people, surprisingly Ritchie responded: *“hopefully they have a different opinion of us. I think it changed their opinion of us”*. John thought that *“they probably thought like that we were just bad teenagers and they probably would have passed us on the street but now they know our faces and they say ‘heya’ to us”*. They all responded “yes” to a question on whether it is important that older people don’t think all young people are bad. Ritchie commented: *“’cause this used to be kind of a rough area and just to let them know we are not all the same down here”*. They were very much aware that older people were afraid of gangs of youths and they *“would rather walk pass older people knowing that they are not afraid of us. Knowing that they are okay we are just walking past”* (John). They like the fact that *“every time we see them but they don’t see us, we say something to them. Like we say ‘hello’”* (John). According to Ritchie, *“when they see a gang of us they would walk past and... wouldn’t be afraid of us and when they didn’t know us they probably were”*.

Ritchie, John and Seamus agreed that similar competitions should be available in all communities and they would recommend intergenerational projects to their peers. John tells “*people in school, like and they think it is a good idea [because] before the snooker we would try to say ‘hello’ even if we didn’t know them. Now we can call them by their name and they will know us back*”. The competitions have taken place in the youth club and all agreed it would be good to hold them in the games room as they liked the room. And although they were prohibited from using the room John thought they “*would be more than welcome... if we were with the older people*” and that the older men would have no problem sharing their space. Although the boys are interested in getting involved in other activities with the older men, they have no interest in interacting with the women. They think they would have different interests and perhaps the girls would get on better with them.

4.4.4.7 *Intergenerational DVD*

An Intergenerational DVD was in the process of being produced by the CDP, the youth club and Care Local²² during the research period. This is a city-wide project which aims to portray the relationship between younger and older people and their attitudes to each other. It covers the “*classic example, the ball being kicked into the garden, a scene on a bus and a scene involving a gang of hoodies hanging around*” (Noel). The roles are reversed in the ‘hoodies’ scene which involves a young girl nervously approaching a group of ‘hoodies’ when one turns towards her and pulls down the hood to reveal her grandmother. May explained: “*she was supposed to be intimidated by us.*”

²² Care Local is a Dublin based non-profit organisation who work to alleviate loneliness and social

Just the way we feel intimidated by a gang of them”. During the filming of this scene, May was a little nervous when “*two of the young lads who normally hang around the place stopped all of a sudden and looked around and I heard one say, ‘eh they are actually trying to be like us. Look at them ‘ole’ grannies”*”. The DVD together with a teaching plan has since been completed and ready for distribution to schools and senior groups.

4.5 Conclusion

This study involved an investigation of intergenerational practice in three different sites, two educational and one community based. The intergenerational nutrition project was developed as an action research project with the researcher playing a dual role as co-organiser and researcher, ‘Log, on Learn’ is well established in Secondary Schools throughout the country while the research in Rathville allowed close observation of community based intergenerational projects over a period of time.

Quantitative and qualitative data was obtained from a multi-method research design that involved a survey, observations, informal conversations and formal interviews. The data pertains to the perspectives of the younger and older participants and key individuals involved in the organisation of intergenerational projects in the three sites. The findings which are presented in this chapter are discussed in chapter five.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The information obtained from the initial phases of this study resulted in three projects/sites being identified for in-depth study: an intergenerational nutrition project, 'Log on, Learn' and the community of Rathville. The researcher's position in Dublin City Council and the Dublin Institute of Technology provided an opportunity to conduct action research in relation to the development and completion of an intergenerational nutrition project. 'Log on, Learn', a school based project was chosen for further study as it was the most popular school based project identified in this research while the community of Rathville provided opportunities to observe intergenerational practice in action in a community setting.

From the findings a number of key practical features of good practice regarding organisation and logistics of intergenerational projects were highlighted and are discussed below. Theoretical understanding was shaped by work published by the Beth Johnson Foundation (2011) which suggests that the diverse nature of intergenerational practice might be better understood in terms of a continuum of contact level ranging from low level 1 to high level 7 (see page 23). This proposal coincided with the findings of this study and has proved a useful conceptual tool for differentiating between the different activities involved in intergenerational practice and understanding the nature of intergenerational practice. It advances our understanding of the outcomes of the projects studied and key elements of sustainable intergenerational projects. The

experience of participants and the outcomes of projects are discussed having regard for the different levels of contact in the various sites studied.

5.2 Key Practical Features of Good Practice

Many features of a good intergenerational project were identified that relate to organisation and preparation, recruitment and participation, attention to child protection, appropriate activities and informal interaction.

5.2.1 Organisation and preparation

Insufficient attention to the process and the absence of common goals and interests can lead to negative outcomes (Granville, 2002; Pinguart *et al.*, 2000). It is essential that organisers are familiar with the needs and ability of all participants and the dynamics within the intergenerational interaction. The close working relationship between the organisers in Dublin City Council and the Dublin Institute of Technology in the intergenerational nutrition project ensured its success. Both were committed to the aims of the project, were familiar with the needs of the participants and were willing to be guided on aspects of the project pertaining to each group. The students were well prepared with presentations, handouts and food samples. The older participants were informed in advance of what was expected from them, were made aware of their contribution to the learning process and were given an opportunity to question any aspects of the project prior to commencement. The older participants felt at ease in the College as they were welcomed by students on arrival and were treated like guests. The availability of door-to-door transport for the older participants also contributed to their comfort.

The 'Log on, Learn' projects were successful in the transfer of computer skills. However, the project in Scoil Brid which was run with the assistance of the local family resource centre appears to have been most successful in promoting greater understanding between the generations. The family resource centre was familiar with the needs of the older participants and provided them with information and an opportunity to ask questions prior to commencement. An obstacle for older people returning to education can often be a concern about the attitudes and perceptions of younger people (Lalor *et al.*, 2009). Scoil Brid provided an opportunity for the older participants to familiarise themselves with the school and students prior to commencement. The presence of a computer tutor to assist when required ensured that the student tutors had the required skills to teach the course and instruction handouts were provided. This compared to RyeCRC where the absence of written instructions posed a problem for one of the participants interviewed as she found it hard to remember the instructions.

The success of the intergenerational projects in Rathville appears to have been due to the key people involved, their position of trust in the community, their knowledge of the area and of the participants, their understanding of intergenerational practice and the potential benefits and pitfalls. Although many of the projects were initiated by the local CDP which has a strong focus on older people, important key people working with children in the local school and youth club collaborated on the projects. The integration of formal education and community development appears to have resulted in a more developed and sustainable programme of intergenerational projects. The school, the

CDP and the youth club are committed to intergenerational practice as they acknowledge the benefits, involve participants in planning activities and integrate education into the community with young and older people teaching each other new skills and both learning together.

5.2.2 Recruitment and participation

According to Statham (2009, p. 483) “*anecdotal evidence suggests that projects can be less successful if an appropriate strategy is not developed to ensure the recruitment of appropriate participants*”.

5.2.2.1 Recruitment process

The ‘Log on, Learn’ projects encountered some issues with the recruitment of older participants. It appears that in some venues sufficient information was not available during the recruitment process to allow suitable participants for this basic computer course to be recruited. RyeCRC encountered problems with older participants registering for the project but not turning up. Some older participants already possessed basic skills which in some instances, put pressure on the young tutors to find things to do. For one young tutor, this resulted in her not getting on with her buddy. It is essential that participants have sufficient information and an opportunity to ask questions in order to allow them make an informed decision on whether to participate. The participants on the nutrition project were provided with information and given an opportunity to ask questions prior to commencing ensuring they were well informed which led to a relaxed and enjoyable experience for all participants. In Rathville, the participants had participated in a number of projects, knew what to expect, constantly

suggested new ideas for intergenerational projects and the Monday Club included intergenerational activities in their annual plan in consultation with the children.

5.2.2.2 *Reasons for participating*

The literature suggests that people are more inclined to participate if asked to do so (Gilchrist, 2009; Morrow-Howell, 2010; NYCI, 2011; Taskforce 2007). The reasons for older people participating on the 'Log on, Learn' project were primarily to acquire computer skills from one-to-one tuition. Although there was a national campaign for 'Log on, Learn' all participants took part because they were asked to do so or it was 'handed on a plate'. The older participants in the nutrition project gave a number of reasons for participating with the principal one being to acquire information, with many also mentioning they did so because they were asked. The younger participants in the snooker and dart competition in Rathville participated because they were asked to do so by the youth worker and were encouraged by one of their peers. They also appreciated the opportunity to interact with the older men to try to reverse any negative opinion older people in the community had of young people. The older participants in Rathville were encouraged to participate by people in the community whom they knew and trusted. However, it did take five years to encourage the older men to participate in the dart and snooker competition. The findings indicate that it is necessary not only to provide information but to directly encourage and ask people to participate often requiring much persistence.

Although not given as a reason for participating, all the older participants interviewed had a positive opinion of younger people prior to participating indicating that this may

be a pre-requisite for the participation of older people in intergenerational projects. This would concur with Pinguart *et al.* (2000) who maintain that only those with positive attitudes towards the other group participate in intergenerational projects.

5.2.3 *Child protection*

Child protection was an issue that arose during the exploratory interviews in this research but it did not emerge specifically as an issue in this study. This may have been because it was factored in by professionals in cases where children were involved in activities. In ‘Log on, Learn’, it appears that the schools’ involvement alleviated concerns around this issue as schools had their own guidelines. ‘Log on, Learn’ also provide guidelines to both the younger and older participants on personal safety. And although in RyeCRC, where it transpired that the school was not registered with ‘Log on, Learn’, the students were unsupervised, but this did not pose a problem for the facilitator or the older participants. Child protection was not an issue on the nutrition project as all younger participants were over the age of 18 years. The primary school in Rathville had no issue with older people participating in activities with the children as they have their own guidelines which ensured that the children were never left unaccompanied in the presence of the older participants. The older participants in Rathville mentioned their concerns about speaking to young people they did not know and this along with fear of young people in the area may have been a factor in it taking five years to convince the older men to participate in the dart and snooker competition. However, providing a safe environment in Rathville where younger and older people became familiar with each other has resulted in interaction between them outside the project. This was acknowledged by all involved.

5.2.4 Activities

The World Health Organisation in adopting the term "active ageing" acknowledged the diverse needs and desires of older people (WHO, 2002). Finding mutually enjoyable activities with achievable aims based on equality while recognising the diverse interests and abilities of both groups is important in intergenerational practice. It is also essential to recognise and use the skills and experience of both groups for the benefit of the other group. Older people have life skills and insights based on experience (Lloyd, 2008) while younger people can offer new perspectives (Butts, 2007) and new technological skills which could enhance the lives of older people.

In Rathville, the diverse interests and abilities of participants were recognised in the variety of activities on offer which both young and older participants had equal ability to participate in and enjoy and where appropriate, to win. The projects very much reflected the social setting in Rathville with the older men and women involved in separate recreational activities. While the women participated in intergenerational projects involving activities in the women's 'Monday Club' such as bingo, crafts and dance, the men participated in intergenerational projects involving activities in the men's games room such as snooker, darts and dominos. These activities have traditionally been associated with working class communities. The older men had themselves played snooker, darts and dominos as younger men in the local pub and regarded the activities as appropriate for younger and older men to participate in. The activities in the youth club were also divided along gender lines, with the girls participating in craft type activities while the boys played snooker and darts. The

intergenerational projects replicated this divide with the older men and the boys from the youth club competing in the darts and snooker competition while the women shared crafts and skills with the young girls in the youth club and the primary school children. The gender divide was recognised by the younger participants in the darts and snooker competition who had no interest in considering intergenerational activities with the women and thought the girls would have more in common with the older women. The success of the intergenerational projects is in no small way due to the perceived appropriateness of the activities by participants.

Striving for a sense of equality between both groups is important as both younger and older people are often subject to inequality based on age (Crawley, 2005). While younger people often feel that they are not listened to and feel marginalised in school and by the wider community (Byrne *et al.*, 2006; Devlin, 2006; Lynch *et al.*, 2002), older people often feel that they are treated worse than other groups in society (Gray *et al.*, 2010). Both groups often stereotype the other, with older people seen as confused, miserable and conservative (Degnen, 2007; Laz 2003; Pinguart *et al.*, 2000) and young people labelled vandals and delinquents and seen as a threat (CDP, 2008; Devlin, 2006;). It is essential to ensure both groups are equal in the process as negative attitudes may be reinforced where an imbalance of power exists between the age groups (Stratham, 2009).

The intergenerational quizzes in Rathville were designed so that an equal number of questions were directed to the older and younger participants. The snooker and dart competitions have resulted in healthy competition between the older and younger group

and an appreciation of the talents and skills of each other as they are evenly matched opponents. Although the older men won the trophy in the competition which the researcher attended, the younger participants were determined to win it back. One of the older men in the games room did comment on how seriously the younger participants took the competition. This competitive element was not confined to the younger participants as the older men were not keen on playing dominos with the younger participants as they suspected that the younger group would be better than them. The ladies in the Monday Club liked to play bowling on the Wii because they are good at it and although this is not a competition, participants play against each other.

The intergenerational nutrition project was a success as the older participants obtained individual dietary advice while assisting in the education of the students. The students very much appreciated the opportunity to practice their communication and presentation skills with older people with whom they were unfamiliar prior to the project. The activity was thus mutually beneficial and not just a case of one group doing something for the other. 'Log on, Learn' was successful in that it provided the older participants with basic computer skills and a certificate, which for some was important. For the younger participants interviewed, the provision of a certificate appeared to be more important than the activity itself.

5.2.5 Interaction

The type and degree of interaction which takes place both formally and informally will impact on the outcomes of intergenerational activities. A number of factors such as an opportunity for informal interaction, the duration of contact and the age of younger

participants will impact on the type of interaction during activities and subsequently the outcomes. However, as discussed separately above, attention to preparation, recruitment and suitable activities are also required to ensure successful outcomes.

5.2.5.1 Informal interaction

The findings would suggest that the provision of opportunities for informal interaction impacts on the relationship between the generations. The many opportunities in the nutrition project for informal interaction enhanced the experience for all participants. Tea and coffee were served at the beginning to give both groups an opportunity to chat informally, get to know each other and relax. The tour of the college on the last day also provided an opportunity for both groups to informally mix. This had a very positive impact on the relationship between the younger and older participants, as the older participants got to know ‘their’ students and were interested in their lives and not just their studies. Although the projects in Rathville scheduled in breaks, providing opportunities to informally interact was not necessary as all participants were familiar with each other from the many intergenerational projects in the community and from meeting casually in the area.

‘Log on, Learn’ in Scoil Brid which had a scheduled tea break provided an opportunity to chat and the project was an enjoyable social occasion. The older participants spoke fondly about their student tutors and were keen to find out how they got on in other activities they were involved in at the following session. This contrasted with RyeCRC where opportunities to informally interact were not available and both older participants interviewed thought this was best as the younger participants were not very chatty and

thought it may have been awkward. However, the findings of this study would suggest that it is likely that this opinion would have changed if informal interaction was encouraged.

5.2.5.2 Duration of contact

The continuum of contact levels proposed by the Beth Johnson Foundation (2011) suggests that the duration of contact between the generations impacts on the relationship and thus the outcomes. In the nutrition project, although everyone was at ease on the first day, it was necessary to encourage the students to interact with the older participants. However, this contrasted with the second week where immediately without prompting the students mingled and chatted with the older participants and sat among them for the presentation. On the follow-up date some seven months later, the atmosphere on arrival was pleasant and upbeat. There was no hesitation from the students and they immediately struck up conversations with the older participants. In Rathville where intergenerational projects were formally introduced in 2009, the older and younger participants were familiar with each other and informal chat appeared to happen naturally. However, one younger participant on 'Log on, Learn', who buddied with a number of older participants thought it was sad that she did not get to know her buddy as well as those who worked with the same older person for the duration of the project.

5.2.5.3 Age of participants

Although the only reference to age in the literature related to a discussion around the age range of young and older participants, the findings would indicate that the age of

the younger participants may be a factor in the degree of interaction that occurs between the participants. Older participants in the 'Log on, Learn' thought the age of their tutors was not an issue in relation to learning computer skills but age appeared to make a difference when the older participants were asked about informal interaction and chat. The younger participants were seen as children, something that the younger participants had also alluded to in their interview. Two older participants on 'Log on Learn', who had previously participated in intergenerational projects in third level institutions with young adults did indicate that the relationship with the 'Log on Learn' students was more formal and they did not really get to know them. It may be that they regarded the third level students who were young adults as equals resulting in a warmer and more engaging relationship. Yet, age was not an issue in Rathville where the women appeared to enjoy the interaction with the primary school children when learning the tin whistle, playing the Wii, playing bingo and taking part in the intergenerational quiz and indeed were keen to suggest further activities with the children. Perhaps this is due to the established nature of the relationship between the ladies in the Monday Club and the pupils in the primary school as a result of the many intergenerational activities they undertake together.

Although all the projects studied were successful, the initial phases of the research highlighted projects which were not. One project in Dublin which came to light during the study involved older participants recruited by the local resource centre, attending a local youth centre to undertake an intergenerational gardening project. There was no effort made by the organisers to engage with the older participants or bring the groups together resulting in the older participants sitting on their own and vowing never to

participate again. It appears that the presence of the older participants at the venue satisfied the organisers that it was an intergenerational project. The type of interaction which occurs during intergenerational projects and the subsequent outcomes are a result of a combination of factors: opportunities for informal interaction, duration of contact, age of younger participants and encouragement from organisers.

5.3 Levels of Engagement and Outcomes

The initial phases of this study highlighted the absence of a distinction between the terms intergenerational project, intergenerational programme and intergenerational practice and the absence of a suitable theoretical framework for the diverse nature of intergenerational projects identified in this study. Although the researcher initially used the words project, programme and practice interchangeably to describe planned intergenerational activities, a distinction between the three began to emerge during the study of the three sites/projects. A further review of the literature, which was required in order to better understand the findings, identified a new development in the understanding of intergenerational practice. The Beth Johnson Foundation (2011) proposed 7 levels of contact from low level to high level, representing the many forms which intergenerational practice can take. This broader view of intergenerational practice with different levels of contact coincided with the findings of this study and was useful in differentiating between intergenerational projects, programmes and practice, understanding the levels of outcomes identified and the key elements of successful intergenerational activities.

The initial phases of this study identified projects with limited contact but they were not

considered for further investigation as the literature had indicated that intergenerational practice was about reciprocity between the generations and bringing generations together to engage in mutually beneficial activities aimed at resolving a social, economic or cultural issue (Bernard, 2006; Granville, 2002; McConnell *et al.*, 2009). Thus only planned intergenerational projects which fulfilled this criteria were considered for further study. The projects identified with limited contact would appear to coincide with low level contact in the continuum of contact. Low level contact ranges from the age groups learning about each other with no contact at Level 1 to one-off contact at Level 4. This new classification scheme proposed by the Beth Johnson Foundation recognises the contribution low level contact intergenerational activities makes to the area of intergenerational practice and offers a theoretical understanding more appropriate to the findings than the classification system developed by the researcher in the initial stages of the study (see page 79).

The projects identified for further investigation coincided with Level 5 to Level 7 contact on the continuum (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011). 'Log on, Learn' coincides with Level 5 contact which involves regular meetings with intergenerational dialogue, sharing and learning. Level 6 contact involves ongoing intergenerational programmes with the success of lower level contact leading to their integration into the general activities of the organisation. The collaboration between Dublin City Council and DIT on the intergenerational nutrition project has resulted in the establishment of an intergenerational nutrition programme being integrated into the teaching programme for second year nutrition students and in the development of a further collaboration between Dublin City Council and DIT Design Students. Although still in the early

stages of development, this collaboration appears to be developing into a programme of sustainable intergenerational activities. Level 7 is the highest level of contact and occurs when intergenerational interaction is embedded in the community. This would concur with what appears to be happening in Rathville. Based on the findings, intergenerational practice in Rathville has become embedded in and a way of working in the community. This developed from a joint project between the CDP and the local school which has evolved into a programme of intergenerational activities and has expanded to include the youth club and more recently a voluntary social care group. Many age specific activities in the community previously organised independently by the school, the youth club and the CDP are now jointly organised to ensure the participation of all ages.

Although the outcomes of the projects varied according to the level of contact, to some extent all levels have the potential to challenge negative stereotypes held by both young and older people, to encourage participants to engage in other educational and community activities, to provide opportunities for older people to be a positive influence over others and provide benefits for the wider community.

5.3.1 Challenging stereotypes

Well organised intergenerational projects can challenge negative stereotyping, as these often occur as a result of a deficit of intergenerational contact (Kuehne, 2003a; Stratham, 2009).

5.3.1.1 *Attitudes towards participants*

Research indicates that participation in well planned intergenerational activities or projects can reduce negative stereotypes held by both age groups (Bales *et al.*, 2000; Epstein *et al.*, 2006 ; Gilbert *et al.*, 2008; Kuehne, 2003b; Meshel *et al.*, 2004; Pain, 2005). The older participants interviewed on ‘Log on, Learn’ did not believe that the experience had an impact on their opinion of younger people as they expected them to be nice. However, at every opportunity they spoke with enthusiasm about the younger participants with frequent reference to their patience thus indicating that this experience amplified or reinforced positive views. The younger participants in ‘Log on, Learn’ initially had a negative opinion of older people in general but this became a little more positive as the interview progressed and they spoke about their ‘buddies’. However, the researcher found that it was necessary to prompt dialogue during the interview which allowed the younger participants to reflect on their experience and interaction with older people and reflect on the changes in their attitudes toward older people. This may suggest the value of adding in a reflective aspect to the ‘Log on, Learn’ project in schools.

The intergenerational nutrition project had a positive impact on the somewhat less positive attitude some of the older participants had towards younger people prior to the project, while it reinforced the positive attitudes of others. The experience changed the opinion of students who had no contact with non-familial older people and whose only previous interaction was in a helping or caring capacity. These students were surprised at the energy, liveliness of the older participants and their willingness to learn and change. It would appear that exposing young people to mostly passive nursing home

residents, results in an increase in negative attitude (Pinquart *et al.*, 2000) and the key to changing negative attitudes is to provide opportunities for young people to interact with a diversity of older people on equal terms.

Devlin (2006) in his study of young people and stereotyping found that young people felt stereotyped by association of youth with crime and deviance. Older people in Rathville did perceive young people hanging around as a threat and referred to them as vandals and abusive (CDP, 2008). The younger participants in the snooker and dart competition in Rathville were concerned about changing the negative attitudes older people had towards them and although they did not speak of any negative attitudes towards older people, they participated in the competitions because they were reassured that the older people would not give out to them. This together with their surprise at the ability, skill and wit of the older men would indicate perhaps that their opinion of the older men was indeed stereotypical.

5.3.1.2 *Attitudes towards wider society*

Pinquart *et al.* (2000) suggest that following participation in intergenerational projects positive attitudes are directed towards those on the project and not to the wider population of younger or older people. Many of the older participants interviewed spoke about the negative public image of younger people but were keen to point out that this did not relate to the younger participants on the projects. Although intergenerational activities in Rathville have helped build good relationships between the younger and older residents, it appears that this may only relate to those on the projects and not all younger and older residents. Many spoke of enjoying the company

of younger participants when they met in the community but she was afraid to talk to young people she did not know. She was involved in projects with pupils from the local primary school but she did not think she would have anything in common with young people in their 20's. One of the older men in the games room mentioned that when he meets the younger participants on the street he would chat to them now which he would not have done prior to the competition suggesting that the only interaction he has with younger people in the community are with those he has met through the competition.

5.3.2 Participating in other activities

Satisfaction with life in old age is often linked to involvement in worthwhile activities (Gallagher, 2008). Research suggests that following participation in intergenerational projects, participants often engage in other activities (Granville, 2002; Hatton-Yeo, 2007) especially if encouraged and supported to do so (Martin *et al.*, 2010; Morrow-Howell 2010; NYCI, 2011). Intergenerational projects can provide opportunities to socialise and network often leading to participation in a wider range of activities (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011; Kuehne, 2003b; Martin *et al.*, 2010). The older participants in the nutrition project were encouraged by the researcher to network and exchange information on social activities in their area. Two of the older people who had been specifically invited to participate in the nutrition project as they seemed to be somewhat socially isolated commenced courses following the project. All of the older participants have since participated in an initiative involving older people in art/cultural events organised by Dublin City Council with some bringing along friends.

The acknowledgement of the contribution they had made to the education of the

students in the nutrition project may have been a contributing factor in the older participants engaging in other activities following the project as according to Morrow-Howell (2010) achieving generativity is likely to be a motivational factor in participating in further activities. However, there is no doubt that the interaction with the younger people energised the older participants which contributed to their enthusiasm to exchange information and undertake more activities. Resig *et al.* (2006) found that “*older people reported feeling young while working with younger people*”. Feeling energised by their contact with young people was also reported by one of the older participants in Rathville. In Rathville, it appears that participation in intergenerational projects has resulted in the older participants coming up with new ideas for activities.

A number of older participants on ‘Log on, Learn’ participated in further activities following the project. Participants in intergenerational projects often want to learn more (Morgan *et al.*, 2007) and two of the participants interviewed registered on a follow-up course. However, the fact that this was available in the same venue and they were encouraged to register by the organiser may have been a factor in them taking up the course. One man has since joined the Board of Management of the resource centre associated with Scoil Brid and one lady in Rathville has since returned to formal education. This lady has also been co-opted onto the Board of the Community Development Programme. Some of the older women in Rathville have learnt to play the tin whistle and have taught the students basic sewing, while the students are reading *Treasure Island* following encouragement by an older participant.

However, the majority of the older participants interviewed were active prior to participating in intergenerational projects and continued to be so. It is unclear whether they engaged in other activities as a result of a combination of some or all of the factors mentioned above or whether they would have done so because they were already socially active.

5.3.3 Transferring knowledge and skills: A positive influence over others

Intergenerational projects provide opportunities for older people to access social roles to transmit culture, tradition, skills and experience which they have gained through life (Butts *et al.*, 2007; Hatton-Yeo, 2006; Horkan *et al.*, 1986; Martin *et al.*, 2010; Pinazo *et al.*, 2007) while facilitating what Cicero saw as their role in “*exercising a positive influence over others*” (Gallagher, 2008 p. 65).

The older participants on the nutrition project were informed prior to commencing the project of their contribution towards the education of the students. Their contribution was validated in the feedback from the clinical placements which they were informed about. The older participants recognised the contribution they had made to the education of these students and were delighted with the opportunity to contribute to the learning process. This concurs with Erikson’s concept of generativity which emphasises the wish of older people to contribute to society and to help the next generation. Self-esteem and confidence increases as participants’ knowledge and contribution to society is validated and they feel useful (Butts, 2007; Butts *et al.*, 2007; Newman *et al.*, 1995; Pinazo *et al.*, 2007; Resig *et al.*, 2006).

The older participants in Rathville were keen to contribute to the children's education by participating in the history project and subsequently teaching them basic sewing skills. They were also constantly suggesting new ideas for intergenerational activities. The sense of feeling worthwhile was also important to the younger participants interviewed in Rathville as they were keen to portray a positive view of younger people. They were concerned about the effect the negative portrayal of youth had on the older residents and the fact that the older men enjoyed their company and enjoyed chatting to them when they meet out in the community, validated their contribution to changing attitudes.

5.4 Impact on Education and Learning

The importance of the acquisition of knowledge and skills obtained outside the formal learning structure is recognised in the CSPE Programme and the Transition Year within the second level education system (Department of Education, 2004) and by many third level institutions such as DIT, NUI Galway and DCU. The success of DIT's Community Links Programme is testament to the benefit of the acquisition of skills and knowledge outside the formal learning environment. Reports from the clinical placements of the students involved in the intergenerational nutrition project indicated that these students were much more confident and capable than previous students as a direct result of their participation in the project.

While the students on the nutrition project spoke about learning for their professional development, the older participants emphasised learning for life. This would resonate with the philosophy of the University of the Third Age and perhaps a reason for its

continuing growth in Ireland. All older participants interviewed on 'Log on, Learn' participated because they wanted to learn computers and although it took place in some instances in a formal educational setting, the course is non-formal in that the project is designed to meet the needs of the individual participants. While no examinations were undertaken, certificates of completion were awarded to participants. In research conducted by Morgan *et al.* (2007) on the impact of an intergenerational learning programme in science, the majority of older participants indicated they had an interest in learning more. Two participants interviewed on the 'Log on, Learn' project participated in a follow-on course. In Rathville, the older participants have since learnt to play the tin whistle and one lady has returned to formal education. This research would indicate that older people are interested in learning and although some may be reluctant to return to formal education, intergenerational projects can be an important means of non-formal learning and have the potential to provide older people with the knowledge and confidence to undertake formal study.

5.5 Impact on the Community

Intergenerational practice has become a significant aspect of community work in Rathville. Community development is founded on the process of empowerment (Ledwith, 2005), empowering those who may be marginalised such as younger and older people. Younger and older people often feel misunderstood and excluded in decision making (Devlin, 2006; Gray *et al.*, 201). In Rathville, the empowerment of older and younger residents is achieved by their participation in intergenerational projects as equals and their input into the implementation of intergenerational activities which is actively sought and acted upon by key people in the community.

Research suggests that intergenerational projects result in positive outcomes not only for the participants involved but for the wider community as social cohesion is strengthened and younger and older people are more at ease with each other and more likely to stop and speak to each other in the community (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011; Martin *et al.*, 2010; Pain, 2005; Pinazo *et al.*, 2007; Springate *et al.*, 2008). The older residents of Rathville had complained of young people hanging around (CDP, 2008) resulting in fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. However, following the introduction of planned intergenerational activities in Rathville, the older participants spoke enthusiastically about the acknowledgement they received by the younger participants out in the community. This not only impacted on the participants but on the wider community as stories of these positive interactions spread further throughout the community. This interaction has improved social cohesion and alleviated some of the fear experienced by older residents from teenagers hanging around public areas.

Research indicates that this fear of crime by older people often results in self-imposed restrictions on activities and movements as they are less likely to participate in physical and social activities (Stafford, 2007 cited in Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2009, p.16). In Rathville where intergenerational projects were first introduced to combat fear of crime, the participation rate by all members of the community in events such as the Halloween and Spring Festivals continues to increase and surprise the organisers. The Halloween Festival was first introduced in 2009 to bring young and old together and make Halloween a positive experience. The activities available are varied facilitating all interests and levels of ability. At the time of this

study in 2011, two Halloween festivals had taken place with no incidence of arson which had not happened in Rathville in the previous 15 to 20 years during Halloween. Older people have also mentioned enjoying Halloween for the first time in their lives.

Intergenerational practice can have a positive impact on communities where community development and education intersect. There is some evidence to suggest that community facilities such as schools which are used for intergenerational projects often become available for other use by the community with educational institutes themselves becoming more involved in the community (Springate *et al.*, 2008). In all three 'Log on Learn' projects, the local schools appear to have become more involved in the community. Scoil Brid provided facilities for the local resource centre to run a follow-up computer course and Scoil Aine has since participated in a project on biodiversity with older residents from the Tidy Town Committee. The third school are using the expertise of the manager of RyeCRC to impart knowledge on running a resource centre as part of a project undertaken by TY students on voluntary organisations. The lecturers involved in the nutrition project have recently expressed their interest in producing an information booklet based on the project for distribution by Dublin City Council to older residents in the Council's administrative area. In Rathville, not only does the local primary school facilitate a computer course for older people but for the teacher interviewed, intergenerational activity is now part of her teaching programme.

The potential of intergenerational projects to impact on community and social capital appears to be in their ability to facilitate what Putman describes as bridging and bonding social capital by providing opportunities for cooperation among organisations working

in the community and the creation of networks. The success of the intergenerational projects in Rathville is due to the commitment of key people in the community: teachers, community development workers, youth workers and volunteers who work closely together and facilitate an easy transition between formal and informal education and community development ensuring sustainability. The nutrition project provided an opportunity for the older participants to network during the journey to and from the project which resulted in the majority of the participants becoming involved in other activities through sharing information. The positive experience of the older people on the intergenerational nutrition project impacted on the participants' families and the wider community with the researcher receiving positive feedback from family members of those involved. A number of requests from older people in the community to participate in future intergenerational nutrition projects have since been received. Two of the three 'Log on, Learn' projects studied were organised with the assistance of local resource centres and interest has been expressed in undertaking further intergenerational work.

Introducing intergenerational projects into communities is not always a straight forward task and although Gilchrist (2009) maintains that often people just need to be nudged to engage, it took five years to convince the older men in Rathville to participate in the dart and snooker competition. The Ceilí although seen as a success by the participants, who enjoyed the event, was regarded by some as a failure due to the low attendance. However, John thought it was a success because of the interaction between those present and he hoped to build on the experience. It is not always easy to find appropriate activities and ensure people will engage but it is necessary to focus on the

interaction rather than the uptake and build from the experience.

5.6 Towards an Understanding of Intergenerational Practice

The broader understanding recently proposed by the Beth Johnson Foundation (2011) has been a useful conceptual tool in clarifying some of the issues regarding different activities and outcomes which arose as this study unfolded.

VanderVen (2004) while recognising that multigenerational activities and projects can be problematic, questions the exclusion of other generations in light of the many benefits of intergenerational practice. The researcher in earlier phases observed a rural community festival involving multi-generations with very little interaction between the younger and older people being observed while each group interacted with the middle group. This was also observed at a multigenerational traditional Irish music session. At this session, the older musicians approached the parents of the younger participants to compliment their children but did not appear to approach the younger participants directly suggesting that multigenerational activities may not cultivate direct interaction between younger and older age groups. However in Level 1 contact proposed by the Beth Johnson Foundation, participants learn about the lives of other age groups suggesting that the middle generation such as a teacher is very much involved in the process of developing an understanding between the generations. At the highest level of contact, Level 7 intergenerational interaction is embedded in the community in which people of all ages are accommodated. This would indicate that the highest level is also multi-generational. This was observed in Rathville in the successful Halloween and Spring festivals with activities for all ages.

In the projects studied, the role of the middle generation was to organise, facilitate and encourage interaction and it is unclear from this research what impact the middle generation would have on the outcome of intergenerational projects if they were joint participants. However, the findings would indicate that having given the older and younger people in Rathville the opportunity to develop a relationship through intergenerational projects, the presence of the middle generation did not impact negatively on the relationship once it had been developed. However, the exclusion of the middle generation as equal participants in initial stages may be required to ensure a relationship between younger and older participants is developed.

A review of the literature would suggest that familial relations are not included in intergenerational projects as they can be less effective (Granville, 2002; Springate *et al.*, 2008). However, this recent broader understanding would suggest that there is a role for familial relations in intergenerational practice at both lower level and higher level contact. At lower level contact, projects involving grandparents participating in activities in schools such as the life and times biography or 'Grandparents' Day' may be both familial and non-familial while level 7 contact includes all members of the community. However, again it may be necessary to exclude familial relations among participants while relationships between younger and older participants are developing.

5.7 Conclusion

The findings of the initial phases of this study directed the researcher to projects/activities for further investigation which aimed to bring younger and older

people together “*in purposeful, mutually beneficial activities which promote greater understanding between the generations*” (Hatton-Yeo, 2006, p.2). However, recently the Beth Johnson Foundation broadened their understanding of intergenerational practice in recognition of the “*range of processes that build positive relationships between the generations*” and suggested that the implementation of intergenerational practice is a continuum of contact levels (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011, p.5).

Although low level contact activities were identified during the initial phases they were not considered for further study as they did not fall within the understanding of intergenerational projects initially identified in the literature. However, their existence did pose questions as to their positioning within the wider field of intergenerational practice and this new broader understanding validates their position in intergenerational practice.

The findings of this study revealed the importance of key elements pertaining to the organisation and logistics of intergenerational projects as these impacts on the experience and outcomes for participants and the wider community. The key elements which require particular attention are organisation and preparation, recruitment and participation, child protection, activities and informal interaction. To ensure good practice, it is essential that the organisers are familiar with the needs and abilities of all participants and issues such as venue, rest breaks, transport and the need for instructions/handouts are taken into account. To ensure success, it is essential that appropriate participants with the necessary skills and ability to engage in the activities are recruited. Towards this end, sufficient information should be available to allow potential participants to make an informed decision. Encouragement is also required as

the findings have indicated that many people volunteer to participate in community and learning projects, simply because they have been asked. Child protection issues require careful consideration by organisers who should be mindful of the need to protect children while encouraging informal interaction between young and old.

Careful thought must be given to the aims and objectives and the type of activities. Aims and objectives must be achievable with all participants having the necessary ability and skills to engage in the activities on an equal basis. Not all activities on offer will attract all participants and a variety of activities will have a better chance of attracting many participants. It is also essential to build on experience and to change activities as projects develop. Outcomes are correlated with levels and duration of contact. It is often necessary to encourage interaction during a project which can be best achieved where a break is scheduled in the programme.

Intergenerational projects have the potential to challenge negative stereotypes, to encourage participation in other activities, to transfer knowledge and skills and to positively impact on learning environments and the community at large. The type and duration of contact will impact on the degree to which negative stereotypes are reinforced or challenged. However, it is unclear if any change in attitude towards the other age group extends beyond the participants or indeed if the change is long lasting. It appears the combination of a pleasant experience, the enthusiasm and energy of the young people and the availability of information will encourage participants, particularly older people, to engage in further activities. Intergenerational projects also have the potential to provide opportunities for older people to use the wisdom of age as

proposed by Cicero's philosophy of ageing and to be a positive influence over others.

The findings have provided insight into the diversity of the field of intergenerational practice, the key elements necessary to ensure the success of intergenerational projects and the correlation between outcomes and levels of contact. Although lower level contact activities were not considered for investigation in this study, their importance in the development of intergenerational practice cannot be underestimated. The findings have also posed many questions. However, as intergenerational practice is an emerging field of study much more work is required which is discussed further in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to identify intergenerational projects in rural and urban settings, to describe models of good practice, to investigate the experience of participants and to suggest how intergenerational projects can be further developed for the benefit of all. Intergenerational practice has developed in different countries for different reasons and over varying time periods in the past half century manifesting in many approaches to intergenerational practice. In some countries like China and Singapore intergenerational practice is culturally and socially rooted. However, this research focused on planned intergenerational projects which were first introduced in the United States in the 1960's and 1970's to address the perceived growing distance between the generations and later developed to tackle social problems. In the United Kingdom intergenerational projects emerged in response to concerns about the social inclusion of older people. In Ireland, intergenerational interaction was traditionally fostered through helping and caring roles with young students visiting older people at home or in care settings, but planned intergenerational projects aimed to be mutually beneficial began to appear in Ireland in the late 1990's.

The initial data gathered identified a wide range of varied projects throughout the country in schools, youth groups, day centres, residential homes and resource centres which were initially classified according to the following themes: Social Inclusion, Social Awareness, Active Citizenship, Education, History and Reminiscence, Art and

Sustainable Communities. However, many of the projects identified could have been classified under more than one theme. Most of these projects did not appear to be part of an overall programme of intergenerational activity and were mainly once-off projects which came about through the interest of a key individual or an approach from an external organisation. The school based intergenerational projects were mainly linked to modules in the TY programme where external organisations encouraged or provided a template for the project such as the Young Social Innovators, Friends of the Elderly and 'Log on, Learn'. Information from the initial survey of intergenerational activities indicates that many activities listed as intergenerational in schools involve students working in residential homes or day care centres in traditional helping or caring roles and did not bring older and younger people together in "*purposeful, mutually beneficial activities, which promote greater understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities*" (Hatton-Yeo, 2006, p.2). These were not considered for further study as the aim was to study planned intergenerational projects that provided reciprocal benefits for both age groups involved. Due to the diverse nature of intergenerational practice, it was decided to select for further investigation intergenerational projects based in different settings. A study of three sites/projects was undertaken: an intergenerational nutrition project, 'Log on, Learn' and intergenerational projects in the community of Rathville.

Very little is known about the aims, processes, outcomes and benefits of intergenerational activities in Ireland and although NUI Galway published a report in February 2012 titled "Intergenerational Programmes in Ireland: An Initial Overview" (Finn and Scharf, 2012), it was largely a mapping exercise. This exploratory study

sought to achieve a more qualitative understanding of the nature and impact of intergenerational projects. Therefore this study required a creative approach to the research design which evolved as data unfolded. Multiple research methods were employed at different stages in the research. Quantitative research methods were employed to identify and classify the types and scope of projects while qualitative research methods were used to capture the experiences of those involved in projects.

6.2 Findings

The research highlighted key features of good practice which appear to lead to successful projects and programmes including careful attention to preparation, prior information, the recruitment process, opportunities for informal interaction and collaborative learning. It emphasised the need for organisers to be familiar with the participants' needs and abilities and to ensure agreed aims and objectives are achievable and all participants have equal ability to participate. It also highlighted the many benefits of intergenerational practice for participants and the community at large. The findings suggest that positive intergenerational interaction is an enjoyable experience for all participants. It can challenge negative stereotypes and help develop trust between the generations. It can improve the health and well-being of older participants, reduce social isolation and provide them with new skills and with a renewed sense of worth. This renewed sense of self worth is achieved from the opportunity to enjoy positive social interaction with young people, to pass on experience and knowledge to the next generation and to be a positive influence over others.

Intergenerational projects provide an opportunity for participants to network and

develop friendships. They also provide an opportunity for organisers to encourage participants to engage in other activities as it appears from the findings that the energy and enthusiasm of the young people together with the availability of information encourages older participants to engage in other activities. The provision of purposeful activities can contribute to the health and well-being of older people. This was highlighted by the community development team in Rathville who spoke about the positive impact the men's games room has had on the health and well-being of the older men in the community.

For young people, intergenerational projects not only result in the acquisition of a variety of new skills but can also increase self-esteem as the skills they have to offer are acknowledged as valuable and worthwhile. School based intergenerational projects provide young people who often feel marginalised in decisions which affects them, with an opportunity for democratic participation in the school programme if they have an input into planning such projects. The younger people in Rathville had a sense of satisfaction knowing that they had a positive influence on the poor opinion older residents had of young people due to anti-social behaviour in the area. They expressed their concerns that older people may stereotype them and indeed be in fear of them and spoke with enthusiasm of being able to acknowledge and chat to the older participants when they meet in the community. This also impacts on the wider community through improved social cohesion and the willingness of older participants to engage in other activities and roles in the community. The findings indicate that where educational institutions are involved in intergenerational projects, they become more involved in the community as they utilise the skills of the wider community and allow their facilities to

be used by the community. The involvement of educational institutions in the community has the potential to provide further learning opportunities for both age groups.

Although in recent years the literature on intergenerational practice has been linked to community development (Hatton-Yeo *et al.*, 2004; Keuhne, 2003a), the findings of this study suggest that intergenerational practice has the potential to make a significant contribution to community development. In Rathville the implementation of well organised enjoyable intergenerational activities have progressed along the continuum towards Level 7 with intergenerational practice becoming embedded in the community and indeed becoming a way of working within the community resulting in an increase in multigenerational community events. It also appears to have had an impact on reducing anti-social behaviour. This development resulted from lower level contact and a joint collaboration between the CDP and the school in an intergenerational oral history project which evolved into a programme of intergenerational activities that includes the youth club and more recently Care Local. Many age specific activities in the community previously organised independently by the school, the youth club and the CDP are now jointly organised and designed to accommodate all ages and recreational interests. However, the importance of lower level contact cannot be underestimated as the Beth Johnson Foundation (2011) maintains that higher level contact is a direct result of successful lower level contact.

The distinction between intergenerational projects, programmes and practice was not apparent from the early phases of the research and indeed the researcher used all three phrases interchangeably during the study. However, the findings of the study together

with the recent proposed classification scheme by the Beth Johnson Foundation (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011) have provided a clear distinction between the three and the evolutionary process involved in moving along the continuum from project to programme to practice. Although this new understanding of intergenerational practice asserts that embedded intergenerational practice is a result of successful lower level contact activities, this research would indicate that a number of key elements are required to ensure this progression takes places. These elements include the commitment of key people with an understanding of intergenerational practice who are mindful of the importance of equality between both age groups and have the ability to network. To ensure as far as possible that intergenerational practice is sustainable, the findings would indicate that there is a need for it to be embedded in an educational or community development context which would allow the practice to evolve along the continuum of contact levels.

6.3 Further Research

Although this research highlighted the many benefits of intergenerational practice in an Irish context, the projects studied were successful ones and a number of unsuccessful projects were identified during the research. It appears that these projects which were discussed briefly in chapter five were unsuccessful due to a lack of attention to the key elements of good practice identified in this study. While the initial phases of the research highlighted ambiguity and a lack of clarity in what is an area of emerging practice, as the study progressed and the researcher immersed herself in the literature, questions initially posed regarding the role of the middle generation and familial relations in intergenerational practice became clearer. The broader concept of

intergenerational practice proposed by the Beth Johnson Foundation (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011) appears to recognise the participation of familial relations and the middle generation, at least at the lowest and highest level of contact. Yet, where the aim is to bring older and younger people together to facilitate greater understanding of each other, the exclusion of the middle generation seems appropriate but further study is required to explore the impact their presence has on outcomes.

Issues relating to the impact of the age of the younger participants on the intergenerational relationships emerged requiring further research. The extent of attitudinal change as a result of intergenerational projects is not clear and also requires further investigation. Some interesting questions arose about the impact of gender on the success of intergenerational projects which deserve further study. The interaction of social class and prior educational experiences on intergenerational practice was observed and the role of secondary schools in facilitating life-long learning is an area worth further exploration. The impact of different settings on outcomes requires investigation as does the extent to which projects encourage the engagement in further educational and community activities.

6.4 Recommendations

‘Log on, Learn’ was introduced to teach older people basic computer skills. Although it contains many aspects of an intergenerational project, it was not established as one and a number of elements which would facilitate more intergenerational interaction were absent. The researcher would recommend introducing a module within the project which would allow students to explore their opinion of and attitude towards older

people before the project and provide time to reflect on their experience and any changes to their attitudes following the project. This was highlighted in the interviews with the younger participants who needed encouragement and time to reflect on their experience during the interview in order to comment on attitudinal change. There is also a need to set criteria for recruitment on this basic course to ensure participants with the appropriate skill levels are recruited. The careful matching of participants in terms of abilities is recommended. Given the success of 'Log on, Learn' and the fact that some older participants already possessed basic skills but want to learn more, developing the project further to an advanced course is worth considering.

The collaboration between Dublin City Council and the Dublin Institute of Technology has resulted in further projects and has highlighted the benefits of integrating education in the community. This was also evident in Rathville and should be explored further with the aim of encouraging other educational institutions to develop a community links programme similar to that in the DIT. While many third level institutions encourage civic engagement by students and provide information and/or opportunities to engage in voluntary roles, they do not integrate education in the community with equal participation by the students and the community. Given the development of intergenerational practice in Rathville and the contribution intergenerational practice has made to community development in the area, intergenerational practice should be more recognised as an aspect of community development work and opportunities to disseminate good practice in community development literature and various community fora should be sought.

The establishment of a forum to allow interested parties to share experiences and network with other agencies to find common ground and examine opportunities to collaborate on projects should be explored. Age Action and the National Youth Council have recently joined forces to provide information and training on establishing intergenerational projects for people working with older and younger people. However, given the role and contribution of educational institutions in all the projects/sites studied, their apparent independence from organisations working with older and younger people in the community and indeed community development programmes, their potential to contribute to the development of the practice further through much needed research and their capacity to disseminate information, the researcher would recommend that a third level educational institution be charged with responsibility or at least take the initiative in developing a lead role in the area.

While this study has focused on intergenerational projects which aimed to bring younger and older people together in mutually beneficial activities, more emphasis and encouragement should be placed on lower level contact between the generations in recognition of the contribution these activities make to the development of intergenerational practice in communities.

6.5 Conclusion

This study has contributed to our knowledge of intergenerational practice in Ireland by identifying the diverse nature of intergenerational projects and the key elements associated with successful projects in Ireland. While it has concurred with much of the literature on the benefits of intergenerational projects for participants, it has contributed

to our knowledge by identifying the elements or combination of elements that contribute to successful intergenerational practice in Ireland resulting in positive outcomes. This study has identified the significant contribution intergenerational practice has to make to community development. Furthermore it has demonstrated the key role played by educational institutions at all three levels from primary, second level and third level in embedding intergenerational practice in the community to the extent that it becomes a way of working.

While the focus of this research has been on planned intergenerational projects and the findings have suggested ways in which intergenerational projects can be further developed for the benefit of older and younger people and the community at large, it has also highlighted the need for further research in this emerging field.

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APPENDIX I

CONSENT FORM

Researcher's Name: CATHRINA MURPHY (use block capitals)	Title: MS.
Faculty/School/Department: COLLEGE OF ARTS & TOURISM, SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & LAW	
Title of Study: TRANSFERRING KNOWLEDGE AND LIFE EXPERIENCE BETWEEN GENERATIONS: THE POTENTIAL OF COMMUNITY BASED INTERGENERATIONAL PROJECTS.	
To be completed by the: subject/patient/volunteer/informant/interviewee/parent/guardian (<i>delete as necessary</i>)	
3.1 Have you been fully informed/read the information sheet about this study?	YES/NO
3.2 Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	YES/NO
3.3. Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?	YES/NO
3.4 Have you received enough information about this study and any associated health and safety implications if applicable?	YES/NO
3.5 Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from this study? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• at any time• without giving a reason for withdrawing• without affecting your future relationship with the Institute	YES/NO
3.6 Do you agree to take part in this study the results of which are likely to be published?	YES/NO
3.7 Have you been informed that this consent form shall be kept in the confidence of the researcher?	YES/NO
Signed _____ Date _____	
Name in Block Letters _____	
Signature of Researcher _____ Date _____	

APPENDIX II

INFORMATION SHEET

Project title

Transferring knowledge and life experience between generations: The potential of community based intergenerational projects.

Aim of the Project

I am a research student in the Dublin Institute of Technology conducting research on the transfer of knowledge and life experience between the generations –from old to young and from young to old. Small scale Intergenerational Programmes have been set up in schools, youth clubs and care settings which involve older and younger people working together on some activity. While participating in such projects is generally believed to be a positive experience for all participants, we do not know what the benefits are and what type of learning happens. This research aims to investigate the potential benefits of intergenerational projects and examine how intergenerational learning can be further developed as a resource in society.

I am hoping to speak to:

1. Younger and older people who have not participated in intergenerational projects or activities outside the family with younger/older people.
2. Younger and older people who have participated in activities with younger/older people but not Intergenerational Projects i.e. Community Gardens, GAA
3. Participants in Intergenerational Projects.
4. Organisers/Facilitators of Intergenerational Projects.

The interviews will last between 45 minutes and one hour approximately and will seek to explore the experiences of older people in relating to and communicating with younger people and vice versa in order to identify the nature of learning which takes places when both generations interact. The interviews will also explore the experiences of those who have participated in Intergenerational Projects in order to compare the experiences of participants in different types of projects.

Interviews with Organiser/Facilitators will explore their experiences of the projects and their views on what the projects mean for participants. Interviews will also investigate any challenges encountered and lessons learnt for future projects.

Details recorded will be treated in complete confidence and stored in a secure place. Access to the information recorded in the interview will be restricted to myself and my Supervisor. Extracts from the interview may appear in my research report but under no circumstances will your name or any identifying characteristics be included

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without prejudice or negative consequences. If there is any question which you are not comfortable in answering just let me know at anytime during the interview. I would be happy to provide you with a transcript of the recording for you to check and ensure an accurate record was taken. You can contact me at anytime for a copy of the

transcript.

This project has been approved by the DIT Research Ethics Committee. However, should you wish to make a complaint on ethical grounds please contact the Ethics Committee at the Graduate Research School Office, 143-149 Rathmines Road, Dublin 6 (01 402 7529)

Should you have any further questions regarding the research contact Cathrina Murphy (086-3455277) or my Supervisor, Dr. Carmel Gallagher, College of Arts and Tourism, Dublin Institute of Technology, 40-45 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1 (01-4024197)

APPENDIX III

PROTOCOL FOR CONDUCTING INTERVIEW WITH OLDER PEOPLE

Research Title: Transferring knowledge and life experience between the generations; the potential for community based intergenerational project.

Researcher: Cathrina Murphy

Protocol for Conducting Interviews

1. The objective is to obtain permission for and to carry out a comprehensive and complete interview.
2. Informed consent to take part in the study must be given by the interviewees. The rationale and purpose of the study must be explained fully. The right of the person to refuse to take part must be respected.
3. Appreciation should be shown for the time given by the interviewees to help with the research.
4. The nature of this study does not involve sensitive information or disclosure, but younger and older people's experience of learning and socialising together. However, should individual interviews bring up personal thoughts, reflections or experiences that result in the interviewee becoming upset, a short break should be suggested. The interviewee should then be lead back again to the questions, gently. However, it may be appropriate to suggest leaving a particular question until the end. The interviewer must always be aware that the interviewee has the right not to answer a particular question. If the interviewee becomes very upset, they should be given the option of terminating the interview at that time and given the option of continuing it at a later stage. No pressure should be put on a person to agree to continue the interview at a later stage.
5. If the interviewee has a tendency to go off the point, they should be guided back to the question.
6. All information given must be treated as strictly confidential. Avoid reference to other participants in the study.
7. No interview should last more than one and a half hours.

APPENDIX IV

FIELDWORK RISK ASSESSMENT

14.1 Researcher Details	
Name : CATHRINA MURPHY Title: Ms. Faculty/ School/Department: COLLEGE OF ARTS & TOURISM, SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & LAW	
14.2 Location(s) of Work	
THE FIELD WORK INVOLVES INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATION OF INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING IN PROGRESS. INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS WILL TAKE PLACE WHEREVER THE PROGRAMMES ARE BEING HELD SUCH AS SCHOOLS, YOUTH CLUBS, RESOURCE CENTRES, DAY-CARE AND LONG-TERM CARE SETTINGS.	
14.3 Title and Description of fieldwork	
THE RESEARCH IS AN INDEPENDENT PROJECT IN COLLABORATION WITH AGE & OPPORTUNITY. THE STUDY WILL EXPLORE THE EXPERIENCE OF OLDER AND YOUNGER PEOPLE LEARNING AND SOCIALISING TOGETHER.	
14.4 Proposed time-scale for completion of research	
THIS STUDY IS CURRENTLY REGISTERED AS AN MPhil. HOWEVER, SHOULD AN APPLICATION OF TRANSFER TO A PHD PROGRAMME BE SUCCESSFUL THE TIME-SCALE WILL CHANGE. Dates: From: RECEIPT OF APPROVAL To: DECEMBER 2011 (FOR MPhil) JUNE 2013 (FOR PHD)	
14.5 Hazards	
14.5.1 Physical hazards e.g. extreme weather; mountains and cliffs; quarries, marshes and quicksand; freshwater or seawater	RISK (High, medium, Low)
1. NONE	
14.5.2 Biological hazards E.g. Poisonous plants; aggressive animals; soil or water micro-organisms; insects	RISK (High, medium, low)
1. NONE	
14.5.3 Chemical hazards E.g. pesticides; dusts; contaminated soils; chemicals brought into site	RISK (High, medium, low)
1. NONE	
14.5.4 Man-made hazards E.g. Electrical equipment; vehicles; insecure buildings; slurry pits; power and pipelines.	RISK (High, medium, low)
1. NONE	

14.5.5 Personal safety e.g. lone working; attack on person or property	RISK (High, medium, low)
1. ATTACK ON PERSON 2. ATTACK ON PROPERTY	LOW LOW
14.5.6 Environmental impact e.g. Rubbish; pollution; disturbance of eco-system	RISK (High, medium, low)
1. NONE	
14.5.7. Other Hazards (specify)	RISK (High, medium, low)
1. NONE	
14.5.8 Steps taken to minimise risks identified above e.g. procedures; equipment; clothing; skills training; information	
1. N/A	
14.6 Emergency procedures e.g. first aid; survival aids; communication	
1. N/A	
14.7 Sources of information used for this assessment	
1. N/A	
14.8 Have the following been arranged for? Please answer yes, no or not applicable (N/A)	
1) Suitable travel arrangements and licensed drivers: Answer: YES 2) Adequate insurance cover: Answer: YES 3) Permission to work on site: Answer: N/A 4) Necessary training and information received: Answer: YES 5) Health and next of kin information given to field trip leader: Answer N/A 6) Provision for disabilities, health problems: Answer N/A	
14.9 Person(s) completing this assessment :	
Signature: _____ Print Name: _____ Title: _____ Date: _____	Signature: _____ Print Name: _____ Title: _____ Date: _____
14.10 Approved by Safety Officer (or Head of School) Signature: _____ Title: _____ Print Name: _____ Date: _____	
14.11 Approved by Head of School Signature: _____ Title: _____ Print Name: _____ Date: _____	

APPENDIX V

SURVEY LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE

By email

Dear

My name is Cathrina Murphy. I am a postgraduate research student in DIT. My research which is in collaboration with Age and Opportunity is on “The Transfer of Knowledge and Life Experience between the Generations: The Potential for Community based Intergenerational Projects”.

I am hoping you can provide me with some information on intergenerational projects or activities which you or your organisation/group may have been involved in by completing a short questionnaire which should only take **3 to 5 minutes to complete**. Intergenerational projects/activities vary from students visiting older people in a nursing home or day centre, to participating in programmes such as Log-on-learn, the GAA Oral History or Reading Buddies. They also include older and younger people participating together in activities such as Art Classes, Acting, Community Gardens or Tidy Towns. The aim of the questionnaire is to generate a broad overview of projects and activities in order to allow further investigation into the benefits of intergenerational projects and how intergenerational learning can be further developed as a resource in our society.

If you have any questions or suggestions or would like to learn more about the research, please feel free to contact me.

This research has been approved by DIT’s Ethics Committee.

Yours faithfully

Cathrina Murphy

Email:

Phone:

INTERGENERATIONAL PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of Organisation _____
 Address _____
 Contact Person & Position _____
 Contact Details phone _____
 Contact Details email _____
 Aim of Organisation e.g. education _____

Please "x" the appropriate box, where required.

Has your organisation been involved in intergenerational projects/activities? Yes No

If yes, please list the projects, their board aims, activities and approximate dates or year.

<i>Title</i>	<i>Broad Aims</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Dates</i>

Do you have any plans for intergenerational projects in the future? Yes No

If yes, please list the projects, their broad aims and activities and proposed dates or year.

<i>Title</i>	<i>Broad Aims</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Dates</i>

Are you aware of any intergenerational projects or activities elsewhere? Yes No

If yes, please give details: _____

Can I contact you at a later stage to provide more details on your projects? Yes No

APPENDIX VI

Intergenerational Projects identified from Survey 2010

School	Projects
Portumna Community School, Galway	Pramerica Spirit of Community Awards -Contribution to the Elderly Activity: Minding a relative who has cancer
St. Paul's Secondary School, Galway	Meet older people in local nursing home. Carol singing
St. Dominics College, Dublin	Log on Learn Community Care Week – help out in local nursing home Elderly Biography
Catholic University School, Dublin	Royal Hospital Intergenerational Project (Aosog) – help elderly residents Plans: Invite elderly speaker to develop an awareness of ageing issues
St. Raphael's Secondary School, Dublin	Log on Learn Plans: Grandparent Day
St. Colmans College, Mayo	Log on Learn Visitation – Western Alzheimers – Ballindine twice weekly
Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan	Community Care – regular visits to residential home Plans: Log on Learn
Castleknock Community College, Dublin	Log on Learn
Holy Faith Secondary School, Clontarf, Dublin	Log on Learn
Portmarnock Secondary School, Dublin	Log on Learn (An Gaisce)
Colaiste Chroi Mhuire, Spideal, Galway	Social Outreach Programme – visit and helping out in nursing home Plans: Carol Singing and Christmas Party in Nursing Home
Manor House, Raheny, Dublin	Log on Learn Community Action Programme – caring for elderly in community Toastmasters – retired members of toastmasters teach public speaking to students over 10 week period
St Columba's College, Ballinteer, Dublin	Carol Singing in local residential homes
Wesley College, Ballinteer, Dublin	Community Involvement - some students become involved with older people in their community
Jesus & Mary College, Goatstown, Dublin	An Gaisce – Visiting older people Plans: Friends of the Elderly Programmes i.e. befriending an older person, writing a biography

Community/Residential Centres	Projects
Corrandulla Nursing Home, Galway	Local School Children work with older people in the nursing home to create various art projects such as Wall Mural, Scrap Book of Life Stories and a Tree of Life
Bloomfield Care Centre, Dublin	None at present but due to commence Log on Learn in 2011 Take transition year students on placement
Donnycarney Day Centre, Dublin	Primary school children visit and interview older people about the past. TY Students – teach mobile phone Plans: DIT Computer Course TY Students assist with meals and helping with bus collection
Anne’s Community Nursing Home, Galway	TY Students – befriending and writing life story book An Gaisce – 2 nd yr students carrying out activities Primary School – carol singing also seanos dancing
St Brendans Community Nursing Unit, Galway	Day Centre – table quiz local school v older Day Centre – older print prayer books for communion class Residential – schools visits Residential & Day Centre – carol service
Holy Family Nursing Home, Galway	Trad Irish Music Nights and Christmas Party with community
Aras Mhuire CNU, Galway	TY Students – produced a book “Catch a Flickering Light” Gaisce and Ignatius Rice Awards – reminisce and share stories. Planning, designing and decorating memory boxes Plans: Adopt a Granny/Grandad by TY Students

Youth Group	Projects
Nullamore Youth Group, Dartry, Dublin	Age Action – helping older people with domestic and house maintenance Regular visits to old folks homes in the vicinity
Plough Youth Group, Santry, Dublin	It’s My Place Too: Young People in the Community – Visiting older people in the community. Invite older people to visit the youth club and give them a talk with further option of delivering some activity.
Localise, Rathmines, Dublin	Heroes in Hoodies – Clondalkin Village Back to School Day for the Elderly – Various Schools Day Care Centre and Hospital Visitation – Various Groups
East Wall Youth, Dublin	Intergenerational Dance Intergenerational Snooker Competition Mask making

Community/Res. Centre	Projects
Crumlin CDP, Dublin	Boxing Club
Claremorris Family Resource Centre, Mayo	Bridging the Gap – 8 week art workshop with Nursing home residents and TY students Plans: Conversations in Time – produce short story book by residents of nursing home and TY students. Will have writers workshops Plans: Drop in Service for Older People one day per week
Nascadh CDP, Dublin	Spring Clean – Arts and Environmental Project Halloween Festival – to help young and old have a more positive experience of Halloween. Monthly intergenerational activities with seniors group and primary school children Plans: Intergenerational Oral History Project
St. Andrews Resource Centre, Dublin	Talk About Youth Project – Now and Then (2005)
Baldoyle Family Resource Centre, Dublin	Log on Learn
Kilinardan Family Resource Centre, Dublin	Three events – a quiz, a gardening event and a game of dingbats

APPENDIX VII

Schedule of Interviews/Observations 2011

Phase III Action Research – DIT Nutrition Project

March	Informal conversations with older participants
22 March	Observation of project. In formal conversations with older participants
29 March	Observation of project Informal conversations with older participants
29 March	Distribution of questionnaire to older participants by hand
30 March	Distribution of questionnaire to younger participants by email
10 October	Observation of project. Informal conversations with older participants

Phase IV Log on, learn

1 April	Formal semi-structured interview with Facilitator (Barbara)
7 April	Formal semi-structured interview with Older Participant (Paddy)
8 April	Formal semi-structured interview with Older Participant (Paula)
8 April	Formal semi-structured interview with Older Participant (Tony)
26 May	Informal semi-structured interview with Older Participant (Ella)
2 June	Formal semi-structured interview with Facilitator (Katherine)
23 June	Formal semi-structured interview with Younger Participant (Eve)
23 June	Formal semi-structured interview with Younger Participant (Linda)
4 th July	Formal semi-structured interview with Older Participant (Denise)

Phase V Community based Intergenerational Practice

7 March	Observation and participation at an Intergenerational Quiz
25 March	Formal semi-structured interview with Primary School Principal(Sean)
7 April	Formal semi-structured interview with Primary School Teacher(Karen)
16 May	Formal semi-structured interview with Youth Worker (Aoife)

- 24 May Observation at an intergenerational Dart and Snooker Competition
- 24 May Informal unstructured interview with Youth Worker (Des)
- 24 May Informal unstructured interview with Community Worker (John)
- 15 July Formal semi-structured interview with Community Worker (Noel)
- 15 July Attendance at older persons summer project and informal conversation
- 22 July Attendance at older persons summer project and informal conversation with one participant (Peggy).
- 28 July Attendance at the men's games room and informal conversation.
- 29 July Attendance at older persons summer project and informal conversation
- 4 August Formal semi-structured interview with, Older Participant (May).
- 4 August Attendance at the men's games room and informal conversations
- 8 Sept. Attendance at the men's games room and informal conversation
- 10 Oct. Formal semi-structure interview with three younger people who had participants in the intergenerational snooker and dart competitions. (Ritchie, John and Seamus)

APPENDIX VIII

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

Intergenerational Activities/Projects Questionnaire

Name :

Organisation :

Please complete this questionnaire in respect of one project only.

Please "x" the appropriate box, where required.

Type your answer in the space provided, the space is not restricted and will expand as you type.

Background/Context

1. What is/was the title of the project?
2. a. When was the project established? b. Is/was this a once-off or continuous project? Once off <input type="checkbox"/> Continuous <input type="checkbox"/>
3. What was the aim of the project?
4. a. Who initiated the project? b. Did/do you have a partner organisation e.g. school or Day Care Centre? c. Why did your organisation get involved?
5. What was your role in the project?

Participants

6. a. How many participants were involved in the project? Please give approximate numbers for both the older and younger group. b. Who are your primary group i.e. younger or older participants? Younger <input type="checkbox"/> Older <input type="checkbox"/> c. What is/ was the approximate age of both older and younger groups?
7. How were participants identified and recruited? Please state for both younger and older participants.
8. Can you briefly state any preparations with participants prior to the project commencing?

9. Were participants involved in planning the project or activities? Explain briefly.	
10. Are/were the same participants involved throughout the project?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>Please explain...</i>	
11. Did any issues around Child Protection or Garda Clearance arise?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>If yes, please explain...</i>	

The Project

12. (a) Where does/did the project take place?	
(b) Over what period of time i.e. <i>1 hr per week for 3 weeks?</i>	
13. a. Describe the activities which take/took place?	
b. Did the activities change during the project?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>If yes, what changes were made and why?</i>	
14. Is /was feedback obtained from participants :	
a. During project?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
b. At the end of the project?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
c. Did the feedback result in any changes to the project?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
15. a. Did the participants work in a group, in pairs or both? Group <input type="checkbox"/> Pairs <input type="checkbox"/> Both <input type="checkbox"/>	
b. If they worked in pairs, were they matched with each other?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
c. If matched, what criteria were used to match the young and older participants <i>i.e. similar interests?</i>	
16. In your opinion, were the participants enthusiastic about the project?	
17. In your opinion, how successful was the project? Very Successful <input type="checkbox"/>	
Partially Successful <input type="checkbox"/>	Successful to some extent <input type="checkbox"/> Not Successful <input type="checkbox"/>
18. Were the aims and objectives achieved? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Outcomes

19. What, if any impact has the project had: (a) On the older people who participated? (b) On the younger people who participated? (c) On you?	
20. Has the project built good relations between the two age groups? Please explain.	
21. Were there any unexpected outcomes from this project? Please explain.	
22. Has the project had any impact on the wider community? Please explain.	
23. Have participants indicated their interest or willingness to participate in further activities involving younger and older people? Please explain.	
24. (a) Will the project take place again? <i>Why?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
(b) Will there be changes? <i>If so, what changes and why?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
25. In your opinion, what is the value of intergenerational projects/activities?	
26. Do you think there is sufficient information and guidelines available for organisers of Intergenerational Projects or activities?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Comment...</i>	
27. Please list any other intergenerational projects/activities you are or have been involved in?	
28. Are there any additional comments you would like to add in relation to activities with younger and older people?	

Can I contact you again, if I require any further information? Yes No

I hope to visit a small number of organisations/centres, to talk to some of the participants about their experience of the project. Would you be in position to facilitate such a visit, if required? Yes No

APPENDIX IX

DIT – DCC INTERGENERATIONAL NUTRITION PROJECT (MARCH 2011)

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

About this Questionnaire This questionnaire is being distributed to participants of the above project for two reasons. Firstly, it will provide feedback on the programme in order to assist in decisions on future initiatives with older people. Secondly, to feed into research on the "transfer of knowledge and life experience between the generations: the potential of community based intergenerational projects" which I am currently undertaking in DIT. The information obtained will be treated in complete confidence and will be used only for the purpose for which it is obtained. The information you provide may appear in my report on this initiative or in my research report but under no circumstances will your name or any identifying characteristics be included. If you would like further information please feel free to contact me on 01-222 8544 (Monday to Wednesday)

Cathrina Murphy

Please 'x' the relevant box or write a comment

1.	On scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is "very dissatisfied" and 5 is "very satisfied", please rate your overall satisfaction with the programme. <input type="checkbox"/>
2.	On scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is "very dissatisfied" and 5 is "very satisfied", how would you rate each of the following: Participants <input type="checkbox"/> Time Available <input type="checkbox"/> Venue <input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Did you feel you benefited from the programme? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Explain:
4.	Did the programme provide you with an opportunity: To practice your history taking Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> To assess diet of older person Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> To make recommendations Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Do you have any suggestions or comments on any aspect of the programme?

<p>6. Would you participate in an event, not for the purpose of your studies with older people? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Why?</p>										
<p>7. How often, if at all, do you interact with older people, who are not family members? Daily <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly <input type="checkbox"/> Less often <input type="checkbox"/> Never <input type="checkbox"/></p>										
<p>8. What type of interaction or contact do you have?</p>										
<p>9. In order to ascertain what, if any, impact this programme has had on your opinion/attitude of older people, please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is “Disagree strongly” and 5 is “Agree strongly”, with each of the following statements?</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">Old people are all the same</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Young People have talents and skills which can help older people</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Older have experience and wisdom that can help young people</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Young people are not interested in interacting with older people</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Older people are not interested in interacting with young people</td> <td style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>	Old people are all the same	<input type="checkbox"/>	Young People have talents and skills which can help older people	<input type="checkbox"/>	Older have experience and wisdom that can help young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	Young people are not interested in interacting with older people	<input type="checkbox"/>	Older people are not interested in interacting with young people	<input type="checkbox"/>
Old people are all the same	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Young People have talents and skills which can help older people	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Older have experience and wisdom that can help young people	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Young people are not interested in interacting with older people	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Older people are not interested in interacting with young people	<input type="checkbox"/>									
<p>10. Did you change your opinion/attitude of older people in any way following the programme?</p>										
<p>11. Do you think more intergenerational activities i.e. those involving young and old, should be available? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Why?</p>										
<p>12. Do you have any suggestions for future programmes which will bring younger and older people together?</p>										

Name: (optional) _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX X

DIT – DCC INTERGENERATIONAL NUTRITION PROJECT (MARCH 2011) QUESTIONNAIRE FOR OLDER PARTICIPANTS

About this Questionnaire: This questionnaire is being distributed to participants of the above project for two reasons; firstly to obtain feedback in order to assist in decisions on future initiatives with older people and secondly to feed into research on the "transfer of knowledge and life experience between the generations: the potential of community based intergenerational projects" which I am currently undertaking. If you would like further information please feel free to contact me on 01- 222 8544 (Monday to Wednesday)

Cathrina Murphy

Please tick the relevant box or write a comment

1. On scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is "very dissatisfied" and 5 is "very satisfied", how would you rate each of the following:
Transport Venue Students Presentation

2. Did you feel at ease in the College?
Yes No
If no, why? _____

3. Did the programme provide you with:
Sufficient general information on nutrition? Yes No
Specific personal nutritional information? Yes No
An opportunity to meet new people? Yes No

4. Are there other aspects of nutrition that you would have like the students to cover? Please state _____

5. Would you attend a similar event with younger people? Yes No
Why? _____

6. How often, if at all, do you interact with young people, who are not family members?
- Daily Weekly Monthly Less often Never
7. What type of interaction or contact do you have? _____
8. In order to ascertain what, if any, impact this programme has had on your opinion/ attitude of young people, please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is “Disagree strongly” and 5 is “Agree strongly”, with each of the following statements ?
- Young people are all the same.
- Young people have talents and skills which can benefit older people.
- Older people have experience and wisdom that can help younger people.
- Young people are not interested in interacting with older people.
- Older people are not interested in interacting with young people.
9. Did you change your opinion/attitude of young people in any way following the programme? _____
10. On scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is "very dissatisfied" and 5 is "very satisfied", please rate your overall satisfaction with the programme.
11. Do you have any suggestions or comments on any aspect of the programme?
- _____
12. Do you think more intergenerational activities i.e. those involving young and old, should be available? Yes No
- Why? _____
13. Do you have any suggestions for future programmes which will bring younger and older people together? _____

Name: (optional) _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX XI

Material Provided by ‘Log on, Learn’

1. Recruitment Material
 - Poster Template – to advertise
 - Registration Letter Template – to confirm places allocated to participants
 - Starting Profile Form – to complete during week 1 and used for evaluation purpose.
2. Guide for TY Student Tutors
3. Guide for Participants
4. Guide for Teachers
5. Train the Trainer Material
6. Instructions for tutors and handout for older participants on the following modules:
 - Week 1 – Basics about the different parts of the computer
 - Week 2 – Simple documents
 - Week 3 – Enhance documents
 - Week 4 – Search the web
 - Week 5 – e-mail
 - Week 6 – Shopping online
 - Week 7 – File management
 - Week 8 – Revision and Certificate Award Ceremony
7. Beyond the Basic material
 - Week 1 to 7 – Additional material for faster learners
8. Feedback Form for Student Tutors
9. Feedback Form for Participants
10. Feedback Form for Teachers
11. Certificate of Participation Template – for student tutors and participants
12. Photo Permission Form