The stereotyping of 'old people': A qualitative exploration of preschool children's constructions of older adults

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Abstract

Despite an ageing population, in Western countries, children and older adults are being provided fewer opportunities to spend time together. Intergenerational (IG) programmes were developed to intentionally bring these two groups together, for the mutual benefit of both parties. However, the voices of children, particularly preschool aged children, are often excluded from the research focussing on these programmes. The aim of the current research was to explore the experiences of the preschool children engaged in a shared-site intergenerational programme, based in New Zealand, and to explore the children's constructions of older adults. Seventeen children participated in the study, aged between 3 and 5 years old. Methodological choices were ethnographically informed, and included interviews, observations, photographs, and the children's drawings. Analysis of the data from all four methods produced two key themes. The first revealed that the relationships the children developed with the older adults were with this group as a collective, rather than with particular individuals. Although the children were able to experience individual connections with older adults, these were dependent on the context, and often temporary. The second theme detailed how the children understood what it means to be an older adult, which involved the identification of its group members. The children held a belief that old age was manifested physically, and each child used a singular physical feature of old age to identify older adults as a group. This focus on the physical highlighted the important role that observation played in the children's developing conceptualisation of older adults. These findings suggest that the children were stereotyping the older adults, but that there was no positive or negative judgement placed on these stereotypes, they just simply existed. They also support a discursive understanding of stereotypes, as opposed to a cognitive one, which is how much of the existing literature conceptualises stereotyping. Finally, the findings demonstrate that very young children are capable of participating in qualitative research, and that they have important and interesting contributions to offer. Future research should prioritise the inclusion of these voices and would benefit from the use of multiple methods to engage children.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Intergenerational (IG) programmes were developed with the intention of bringing together children and older adults to provide a space for meaningful interactions for the benefit of both parties. This intentional interaction is important, as children and older adults are two groups that are typically separated from one another. This separation is due in part to the geographical mobility of families, as well as children being more likely to be enrolled in formalised childcare than to be cared for by a family member. IG programmes are also believed to be a way to help combat the ageism or negative stereotypes of older adults that children are widely reported to have developed.

While there is a body of research exploring the impacts of participating in an IG programme, these studies typically focus on programmes involving school-aged children, commonly aged nine and ten years old. There are far fewer studies that focus on programmes that involve the participation of pre-school aged children, and those that do often exclude the children's voices from the research, despite them being key participants in the programme. In a New Zealand context, there are currently no published studies focussed on children, of any age, participating in IG programmes, despite there being media coverage of these programmes existing. It is important that regardless of age, children from all contexts and worldviews are given the opportunity to have their voices heard in the research that concerns them.

Research Aim

This gap in the literature led to the development of the current study. The research aim is the following:

> To explore the experiences of the children engaged in a shared-site IG programme being carried out in New Zealand, and to explore the children's discursive (language and imagery) constructions of older adults.

This will be addressed by using a qualitative, ethnographically-informed multi-method approach, within a social constructionist framework. This allows for the importance and value of the children's social contexts to be included. Through our social interactions, the children explored what the older adults mean to them, as well as how they have come to conceptualise this group.

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, the foundation for the study has been broadly outlined, and the research aim has been stated. **Chapter Two** discusses the segregation of generations, particular children and older adults, and locates IG programmes within this context. **Chapter Three** explores the current understandings of children's ageism and the negative stereotyping of older adults. **Chapter Four** discusses a discursive perspective of stereotypes, in contrast to the commonly use cognitive framework, and offers a critique of some of this mainstream research. **Chapter Five** outlines the methodology for the study, which includes the social constructionism basis, the argument for including children in qualitative research, and the reasons for making ethnographically informed methodological choices. **Chapter Six** presents the method, which includes the setting, the IG programme, participants, recruitment, ethical considerations, data collection through observation, photographs, drawings and interviews, and the analytic process. **Chapter Seven** presents the findings, which include two main themes. "Relationships with Older Adults" and "What it Means to be an Older Adult." **Chapter Eight** offers a discussion of the findings that links it to the wider literature. It also discusses the strengths and contributions of the study, its limitations and possible directions for future research, and the implications for working as a clinical psychologist. A conclusion is then presented. Finally, **Chapter Nine** offers reflections on the research process, and discusses the wider implications of this process on my work as a clinical psychologist.

Chapter Two: Segregated Generations and Intergenerational Programmes

Western countries around the world are experiencing significant population ageing, with the percentage of individuals aged 75 years and older expected to soar dramatically between now and 2030 (Gaymu et al., 2010). An increase in life expectancy is a key contributor to this trend, with the average life expectancy being 48 and 50 years for men and women respectively in 1900, 75.6 and 80.9 years in 2008, and a predicted general life expectancy of 83 years by 2050 (Antonucci et al., 2011; Seltzer & Bianchi, 2013). In the early 1900s the population structure resembled a pyramid; a large base representing children, tapering into a narrow tip to represent adults aged 65 years and older (Bengtson, 2001). This pyramid structure is projected to change to a "beanpole," being long and thin, reflecting similar numbers of individuals in each age category, and with multiple generations of a family still alive (Antonucci et al., 2011). Population ageing, as well as a shift from a pyramid to a beanpole, is also being observed in New Zealand. In 1901 the Census of Population and Dwellings reported that those over the age of 64 years old made up 4% of the population. By 1999 this had risen to over 12% (Statistics New Zealand, 2009) and it is projected that by 2061 this group will make up 22-30% of the population (Bascand, 2012). As the population of those aged 65 years and older rapidly increases in Western countries, including New Zealand, these changes will likely lead to increased pressure on the healthcare system, superannuation, and the ways in which these people can continue to be active and contributing members of our communities (Bousfield & Hutchison, 2010). These changes are also currently impacting the intergenerational structure of families and will continue to do so.

The changes observed in Western demographics worldwide have been connected to changes in the intergenerational nature of families. Increases in life expectancy have resulted in it being more common for families to have three, four, or five generations alive at the same time, as well as children being more likely to have a surviving grandparent into young adulthood (Blasinsky, 1997; Seltzer & Bianchi, 2013). At the same time, family members are becoming more geographically

separated, as evidenced by older adults becoming increasingly mobile, nuclear families being more likely to move away from their extended families, and adult children moving away from the area where their parents live (Linda, 2009; Myers & Agree, 1994). Within the family home there is less age diversity, due to both a decrease in family size, and a decrease in the number of three-generation families living together (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005). For example, in the United States, between 1910 and 1980 the number of older adults who lived with one of their children dropped from 61% to 16% (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005). Other suggested factors influencing the family structure and geographical dispersion include both decreases and postponement in marriage and childbearing, increases in divorce, increases in both blended families and single parents, and increased births outside of marriage (Antonucci et al., 2011; Glaser et al., 2008; Margolis, 2016). Crawford and Bhattacharya (2014) argue that despite the increasing diversity within Western societies, particularly the United States of America, many children are growing up in homogenous communities, having very little interaction with those from different cultures and ethnicities. They also reason that due to the geographical separation of family members, children are less likely to have contact with older family members, contributing to the homogenous nature of their communities.

The changing nature of families, as well as the distance created by geographical mobility, can result in decreased contact between intergenerational family members, specifically grandparents and grandchildren. However, the development of new technologies is likely to change the ways in which these family members can communicate. Traditionally communication between grandchildren and grandparents has been through direct contact or landline telephone, and the frequency of this contact has been moderated by factors including the actions of the intermediary generation, the educational level of the grandparents, the gender of both parties, the ages of both the grandparents and grandchildren, and an urban or rural context (Hurme et al., 2010). While face-to-face contact is still found to be the most common form of communication between grandparents and grandchildren, the use of new technologies, including email, text messaging, and services such as

Skype is increasing (Hurme et al., 2010; Linda, 2009; Meshel & McGlynn, 2004). Unsurprisingly, regardless of whether the contact is through traditional methods or new technologies, proximity is repeatedly identified as a key predictor of contact (Hurme et al., 2010; Uhlenberg & Hammill, 1998). For example, Hurme et al. (2010) explored the contact between Finnish grandparents and their teenage grandchildren, and found that there were fewer landline, face-to-face, and mobile phone contacts the further apart the groups lived. Some of the suggested consequences of decreased intergenerational contact include less opportunity for older generations to pass on their stories and history to those younger, and family members being less able to access the resources and support which can be provided by family members outside of the nuclear unit (Barnard, 2014; Karimi et al., 2014; Uhlenberg & Hammill, 1998). Despite the technological advances which have resulted in new methods of communication, proximity continues to play an important role in the frequency of this contact, particularly between grandparents and grandchildren. Given this trend of reduced contact between children and their grandparents, it is important to explore whether children are given other opportunities to engage with the older adults that live in their communities, or if this separation between young and old exists on a societal, as well as familial, level.

One way of considering the contact between young and old in our communities is to look at how these groups are spending their time. In Western countries, these two groups are often engaged in social services that are developed specifically to care for their age group alone, which may decrease the likelihood of these groups having contact in the community. For older adults in New Zealand who live in residential care facilities and retirement villages, these services are populated with other adults of a similar age, and often the only contact residents have with those younger is through the staff who work in the facilities. Similarly, childcare centres provide children the opportunity to spend time with their peers, and their only interaction with an older adult is likely to be limited to the occasional older staff member. In New Zealand, children aged between three and five years old qualify for 20 funded hours of formal early childhood education (ECE) which has meant parents are more commonly turning to childcare centres, rather than informal childcare

options (Statistics New Zealand, 2010). The use of formal ECE has become more popular over the years, and the amount of time children spend engaged in these services increases as they age (Statistics New Zealand, 2011). This indicates that children are continuing to be separated from older adults on a societal level, by the services that are designed to support their development. A possible method of bringing together these two populations, to mitigate some of their isolation from one another, is intergenerational programmes.

Intergenerational Programmes

Intergenerational (IG) programmes have been given many definitions, but they all have the same core principle. This is the purposeful bringing together of the young and old, to engage in a common activity, for the mutual benefit of both parties (Babcock et al., 2016; Biggs & Knox, 2014; Radford et al., 2016). They are promoted as a vehicle to enable the exchange of learning and resources between old and young, to reduce the social and physical barriers between these groups, to allow for the development of new relationships and meaningful interactions, and to encourage social inclusion and greater understanding between both parties (Cumming-Potvin & MacCallum, 2010; Cummings et al., 2003; MacCallum et al., 2010; Statham, 2009). IG programmes can be long or short-term in a variety of settings, and they often develop organically (Alcock et al., 2011; Jarrott et al., 2011). Shared-site IG programmes involve children and/or young people and older adults, receiving IG activities, as well as their own services, in the same location. This allows these groups to engage in formal IG activities as well as spontaneous informal interactions (Carson et al., 2011; Hayes, 2003).

Theoretical support for IG programmes can be found in intergroup contact theory. Developed by social psychologist Gordon Allport (1954), it proposes that contact with members of the “other” or the out-group may result in more positive attitudes and feelings towards that group as a whole (Schwartz & Simmons, 2001). Allport (1954) argues that four conditions are necessary in order to maximise the impact on already held prejudices towards the out-group. These conditions

include equal status between the groups, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and the support of institutions and authorities (Pettigrew, 1998; Tam et al., 2006). The intergroup contact theory has been the subject of much research since its development, and there has been good support for its core suggestions (Brown et al., 2007; Pettigrew, 1998). Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of 515 studies focusing on intergroup contact, involving a quarter of a million participants from 38 countries, and found that 94% of the studies reported contact leading to a decrease in prejudice. They go on to suggest that the research indicates that intergroup contact serves to decrease prejudice by decreasing threat and anxiety towards the out-group and allows individuals to develop and take on the perspective of those in that group. While this theory was not developed specifically with ageism in mind, there is supportive research from this field. Caspi (1984) showed that children between the ages of three and six years old who attended a childcare facility with mostly elderly support staff, were better able to discriminate between age-categories than their peers who did not attend this facility. Teater and Chonody (2017) argue that it is important to ensure that the contact between children and adolescents and older adults is positive, as otherwise this contact may serve to reinforce the ageist attitudes that they already hold.

The first IG programmes were developed in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States of America, and mostly connected older adults with school-aged children, with a focus on supporting the academic performance of the children (Jarrott, 2011; Statham, 2009). By the 1990s IG training manuals and institutes were being developed, and by the 2000s there was much greater distribution of both IG programming and policy (Jarrott, 2011). The first scholarly journal dedicated to IG relationships was published in 2003, the *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, and since then the number and variety of IG programmes, as well as IG related research, has increased significantly (Jarrott, 2011; Villar & Serrat, 2014). Villar and Serrat (2014) argue that part of this dramatic increase in both research and programming in the IG field is related to pressure from the political arena. Internationally there have been many calls for more attention on intergenerational issues, and organisations such as the United Nations have recognised the importance of encouraging

intergenerational relationships (Schindlmayr, 2006; Villar & Serrat, 2014). With an increased focus on IG programmes comes a body of research arguing the benefits for both young and old, when they participate in these programmes.

As the interest in IG programmes grows, so does the research on these programmes, and consequentially the reported benefits for both the young and old participating. Some of these benefits include; being part of an ongoing community, companionship, the exchange of affection and information, and the development of a community (Alcock et al., 2011; Hannon & Gueldner, 2008; Peacock & Talley, 1984; Teater & Chonody, 2017). Alcock et al. (2011) argue that these benefits can extend to the wider community, when older and younger people are brought together and work together in a collaborative fashion towards a common goal. While not the focus of the current study, some of the reported benefits for older adults participating in IG programming include; increased self-esteem and life satisfaction, opportunities to make valuable contributions and experience both acceptance and friendship, as well as less depression and less negative self-perceptions (Isaki & Harmon, 2015; Teater & Chonody, 2017). Some of the commonly reported benefits for children and young people who participate in IG programmes include the development of leadership skills, social skills, and communication skills, the growth of feelings of being respected and valued, increased self-esteem and confidence, as well as preventing young people from engaging in problem behaviours (Alcock et al., 2011; Teater & Chonody, 2017). Dunham and Casadonte (2009) highlight that the majority of IG research is on programmes that include the participation of school-aged children (typically nine and ten years old) and that the number of studies focusing on other groups of children, such as adolescents and pre-schoolers, is much smaller. It is important when considering the impact of these programmes on "children," that a small subset of this population does not become the voice for all children and young people.

While much smaller than the focus on school-aged children, there is a small body of literature that focuses on programmes that include preschool-aged children. Heyman et al. (2011)

and Dellmann-Jenkins et al. (1991) both explored the experiences of preschool children, predominantly between the ages of three and four years old, participating in IG programmes. They reported finding that the children viewed older adults in a more positive light, specifically as healthier, than their peers who did not participate in an IG programme (Heyman et al., 2011), and that contact with older adults fostered prosocial behaviours towards this population, and that these children were more willing to share and cooperate with older adults (Dellmann-Jenkins et al., 1991). Holmes (2009) interviewed the older adults and the children (aged three to five years old) participating in a shared-site IG programme. Her findings showed that when the children were asked how they knew someone was old, approximately a third responded with a physical characteristic, with other common answers including the person living a long time, and the person being bigger or longer than themselves. When asked what old people do, some common responses included bringing presents and hugs to children, being poor or ill or hanging around, sawing, planting or working in the kitchen. Approximately a quarter of the children did not know what old people do (Holmes, 2009). Holmes (2009) reported that when asked if older adults were different than them, over 80% of children responded yes, with physical difference being the most common example of difference given. Most significantly, at the beginning of the year when asked "What do old people do?" 50% of the children used positive descriptors. When this same questions was asked at the end of the year, all of the children shared a positive descriptor (Holmes, 2009).

Child development offers a possible framework for understanding this focus on the physical, as outlined in Holmes (2009) findings, through Piaget's theory of cognitive development. Piaget posits that from the ages of three of six years old, children are in the preoperational stage (Arnett et al., 2019). Some of the key features of this stage include a focus on what is visible, a belief that 'what you see is what you get', and a limited capacity to understand that objects or people can be part of more than one group at the same time (Arnett et al., 2019). According to Piaget, children are making sense of their world through what they can see, and once a person or object has been understood or classified, this understanding will remain consistent and rigid while they are in this stage.

While the research on IG programmes, both with school and preschool-aged children, is showing multiple benefits, these studies and the programmes themselves have some limitations. One critique of many IG programmes is that children and older adults are often excluded from the development and implementation of these programmes, and these processes are predominantly designed by the staff working in the services. While staff will play an instrumental role, it is important that they not make assumptions about what these groups might enjoy in an IG programme. During the development of the programme that was the focus for Holmes (2009) study, older adults were included in the planning of the programme, but children were not. There is an argument to be made that IG programmes, which by their definition are intended to mutually benefit both children and older adults, should seek the input of both groups in the development and planning phase of the programme. Another limitation of the IG research, specifically that focusing on programmes with preschool-aged children, is that despite the focus of these studies being this population, their voices and experiences were not included. Gigliotti et al. (2005) reported that they included the key stakeholders of a summer IG programme in their research. Unfortunately this only included administrators, staff, and parents, and both children and older adults were excluded. Similarly, the project by Jarrott et al. (2011) was based at a shared-site IG day-care programme, but again, children were not included in those who were interviewed and surveyed. Heyman and Gutheil (2008) made an attempt at including children, carrying out focus groups with older adults, caregivers, staff, and children between the ages of 8 and 12 years old. However, these children were only a small sample of a much wider population, as the IG programme they were focusing on served children from infancy through to the age of 12 years old. Again is it important to highlight that by their own definition, IG programmes are intended to mutually benefit both young people and older adults, and so at any stage where input is being sought, whether it be during planning and development, or during research, it is crucial that older adults and children/young people are invited to participate in the conversation.

A final limitation of this research is that the majority of published studies come out of the United States of America. The result is that our understandings of IG programmes come from a relatively homogenous context, compared to the wider world landscape. In order to consider a more local context when it comes to IG programmes, the literature from Australasia was explored. In Australia, IG programming is only in its infancy, meaning that there is significantly less published research available from this context at this time, although some does exist (Radford et al., 2016). As with the international IG research, most of the studies coming out of Australia are focused on primary school aged children, and show similar benefits to children and young people (Barnard, 2014; Cumming-Potvin & MacCallum, 2010; MacCallum et al., 2010).

At present there are two published studies focusing on preschool children in IG programmes but unfortunately neither of these studies included the voices or experiences of the children. Low et al. (2015) carried out an evaluation of Grandfriends, an IG programme which brought together preschool children aged between three and five years, and older adults living in an aged-care facility. Initially, they interviewed children to evaluate their attitudes towards older people, using a version of the Children's Attitudes Toward the Elderly (CATE) measure, which had been adapted for use with 3 and 4 year olds by Middlecamp and Gross (2002). This adapted version of the CATE was also used with preschool children by Heyman et al. (2011). Low et al. (2015) decided that the data from the children would not be valid, in part because the children struggled to understand the questions, and there was a belief that the children were answering "yes" to please the interviewers. Given that this measure has been successfully used in previous studies with preschool-aged children, Low et al. (2015) may have benefited from reflecting on their beliefs and processes around the interviews with the children, rather than eliminating their data from the study. Skropeta et al. (2014) also carried out research on an IG programme in Australia that included the participation of children between the ages of zero and four years old. They made the choice to collect data from the older adults and the child carers participating in the programme, but again the voices of the children were missed from the study. Of interest for the future, is a paper by Golenko et al. (2020) which has a focus on an IG

programme with preschool aged participants in Australia. This paper presents the research protocol, rather than findings, for the evaluation of the programme, which involves interviews with the children in small groups.

While Australia is often used as a comparable context to New Zealand, it is important that New Zealand's context is also explored and understood in relation to IG programming. A literature search of New Zealand and IG programming reveals that there are currently only two papers published, with only one of these being a research article. Macfarlane et al. (2019) explored the perspectives of older adults engaged in an IG programme in Wellington, the same programme that was the focus for the current study. Nicholls (2004) presents an argument for the ways in which Te Whāriki, New Zealand's early childhood curriculum, is an intergenerational curriculum, and the ways in which this can be applied. It involves the bringing together of the traditional Māori analogy of the harakeke, the flax plant, and an outline of the intergenerational connections that could be used as a foundation for an IG curriculum in New Zealand. By looking at the New Zealand media, we can see that IG programmes are occurring more frequently across the country than is reflected in the research (Health Central, 2019; Stewart, 2016). It is important that the experiences of New Zealand's children, young people, and older adults, are included in the wider, international conversation regarding IG programmes and their impact.

Summary

There is a significant population ageing currently happening, in which the structure of the population is moving toward a more even distribution of age groups across the population. These changes mean that it is now more common for a family to have multiple generations alive at one time. However, families are also becoming geographically separated. Proximity is commonly highlighted as an important factor in the amount of contact between grandparents and grandchildren, regardless of the method of contact. Consequently it is likely that despite the increased chance a child has of having living grandparents, the geographical separation of families

may be negatively impacting the opportunity for contact between these two groups. On a wider societal level, children and older adults are also experiencing fewer opportunities for interaction, and children are growing up in relatively homogenous environments. One method of counteracting this separation is the development of IG programmes which involve the intentional bringing together of young and old to engage in common activities for the mutual benefit of both. While the research that has been carried out on this topic highlights the many benefits to both older adults and children/young people who participate in these programmes, much of this research is focused on school-aged children, with programmes involving preschool children being in the minority. When preschool children are involved in the programmes, their contributions are often excluded from the development of, and research on, the programmes that are meant to be benefiting them. Unfortunately very little is known regarding IG programming in New Zealand as there are currently only two published journal articles in this area, and only one of these researches the impact of IG programmes.

Chapter Three: Ageing and Ageism

One of the key motivations behind the development of IG programmes has been to foster opportunity for contact and connection between older adults and children/young people. There have been suggestions that the lack of contact between these groups is playing an important role in the development of ageist beliefs and attitudes in children and young people (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Ageism, a term first used by Robert Butler in 1969, is often used to describe the stereotyping and discrimination of older adults, based purely on their chronological age (Babcock et al., 2016; Davidovic et al., 2007). According to Cherry et al. (2016) ageism grows out of cultural and social ideas about ageing and can influence both an individual and groups' views and behaviours towards older adults. When these views exist they may impact the opportunities available to older members of society. If they are seen as a burden it may limit the way problems related to ageing are conceptualised and understood, which can then affect the development of public policy for ageing and health (Kornadt & Rothermund, 2015; Officer et al., 2016). In social psychology, it is argued that the simple use of the term "elderly" comes with a negative value placed upon it, particularly when it is compared to the perceived glamour of the term "youth" (Ng, 1998). These ways of understanding ageism rest heavily on the concept of stereotypes of ageing.

For several decades the dominant understanding of stereotypes came out of contemporary social psychology, and was developed within a cognitive framework (Augoustinos & Walker, 1998). This perspective posits that stereotypes are fixed cognitive beliefs, which serve as schemas to guide both the retrieval and encoding of information, with the purpose of categorising groups of people based on information which has often been overgeneralised (Augoustinos & Walker, 1998; Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005). They are seen as being both an inevitable and normal consequence of people's need to label and simplify their world, and the stereotypes are believed to have developed and solidified over time (Augoustinos & Walker, 1998; Teater & Chonody, 2017). This cognitive conceptualisation of stereotypes presumes that they are things that can be identified and measured,

with the implication that they are internal cognitive entities that can be automatically activated, regardless of the context (Augoustinos et al., 2014). This way of understanding stereotypes, in which they are fixed cognitive beliefs developed for the purpose of categorising others, falls under a realist epistemology; a belief that there are knowable facts about the human experience (Augoustinos & Walker, 1998).

According to much of the research focused on the stereotyping of older adults, old age is often characterised as being a time of deterioration and loss in an individual's life (Teater & Chonody, 2017). Bousfield and Hutchison (2010) argue that once an individual is perceived as being "old" by those around them, people start to assume they have an understanding of this individual's competencies and abilities. In recent years there has been an increase in research on ageism, particularly in the field of psychology, with much of the focus being on the apparent negative stereotypes that Caucasian children and young people hold about older adults. Several themes can be identified throughout this literature, including physical decline; cognitive decline; being dependant on, yet unwanted by others; a decrease in activity participation; and being separate from the rest of society. Within the theme of physical decline, older adults are stereotypically identified as being unattractive, tired, sick, frail, and experiencing negative changes to their appearance (Hoe & Davidson, 2002; Levy & Macdonald, 2016; Teater & Chonody, 2017). In regard to cognitive decline, descriptions of older adults in the research often portray them as being forgetful, having memory loss and presenting as cognitively slower overall (Hoe & Davidson, 2002; Teater & Chonody, 2017).

Older adults can also stereotypically be portrayed as relying on others; for example needing to be "pushed in a wheelchair" (Seefeldt et al., 1977, p. 303) and this reliance is often perceived as an irritation, with the word "burdensome" repeatedly appearing throughout the research (Levy & Macdonald, 2016; Officer et al., 2016). There is also repeated mention of older adults being viewed as incompetent, unable to be participating members of society, and being financially poor, and isolated (Babcock et al., 2016; Cuddy et al., 2005; Falchikov, 1990; Hoe & Davidson, 2002). Children,

in particular, appear to see older adults as being less adept when it comes to engaging in the same kinds of activities as themselves (Robinson et al., 2007). For example, Seefeldt et al. (1977) set out to explore children's attitudes towards the elderly by administering questionnaires to 180 children in the USA who were between the ages of 3 and 11 years old, two thirds of whom were white. One finding was that a large proportion of children in the study held a belief that older adults "couldn't do anything but sit, rock, and go to church" (p. 303). Another theme of stereotypes found in the research is that of older adults being viewed as separate from the rest of society. Some common descriptors include older adults as being out of touch, as being acquiescent and ready to die, and as disposable members of society (Babcock et al., 2016; Falchikov, 1990; Officer et al., 2016; Rich et al., 1983).

There are multiple sources that claim that the views held regarding ageing can impact an older adult's health and functioning outcomes, specifically cardiovascular health, memory, engagement in health behaviours and activities, and one's overall experience of ageing (Kornadt & Rothermund, 2015; Levy, 2009). Kornadt and Rothermund (2012) and Sargent-Cox et al. (2014) both report that holding negative stereotypes regarding ageing increases ones cardiovascular response to stress, increases risk for cardiovascular disease, and can negatively impact recovery from a cardiovascular event, and Brunton and Scott (2015) report that negative age stereotypes are linked to a reduced will to live. These stereotypes are also believed to have a significant impact on memory, as reported by Haslam et al. (2012) who showed that participants who were encouraged to self-identify as "older" performed significantly worse on a variety of cognitive functioning tests than those who were not. They concluded that their finding adds to a body of research which repeatedly demonstrates that categorising oneself as older can have a negative impact on memory performance (Haslam et al., 2012). Coudin and Alexopoulos (2010) primed older adults with negative or positive age-stereotypical words and asked participants to complete multiple memory performance tasks before and after the priming. They suggest that their results showed that the

negative primes had a harmful effect on performance, whereas the positive words improved performance on the majority of tasks (Coudin & Alexopoulos, 2010).

Negative and stereotypical perceptions of ageing have also been linked to a decreased likelihood of performing preventative health behaviours, and a decreased likelihood of engaging in activities such as sports (Sargent-Cox et al., 2014; Wurm et al., 2010). Ageing stereotypes have also been reported to have an effect on the overall functioning and experience of older adults, with participants from a study by Coudin and Alexopoulos (2010) reporting more loneliness, being more risk-averse, adopting a dependant state, avoiding behavioural initiative, and a decrease in help-seeking behaviour, following a negative stereotype priming. When it comes to physical appearance, Ng (1998), a social psychologist, argues that the impending burden of ageing may threaten younger members of society's sense of self and lead to them feeling the need to hide their age-based social identity as they grow older. This practice which can be observed through the estimated $114 billion dollars spent in America in 2015 on products designed to hide the physical effects of ageing (Nelson, 2016). Given the reported implications of internalised stereotypes of ageing, there is a strong argument to be made for the development of interventions, such as IG programmes, that will serve to decrease these negative stereotypes and help children develop into healthy adults who accept and engage positively in their ageing (Gilbert & Ricketts, 2008). When it comes to stereotypes of older adults and ageing, it is important to understand the context within which these stereotypes were developed.

Sources of Information Regarding Ageing

All members of society will gain information regarding ageing throughout their lifetime from a variety sources and contexts; a process that begins in childhood (Klein et al., 2005). There are some key sources of information that children engage with regarding older adults, including their families, literature, the media, and wider society (Gilbert & Ricketts, 2008; Klein et al., 2005). Within the family, adult members of a child's family serve as a primary means of information when it comes to

ageing and older adults, with children observing how these family members treat older adults, their attitudes towards ageing, as well as the interactions between themselves and older family members (Gilbert & Ricketts, 2008; Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005). These relationships with older adults are important, as they are believed to provide children with more understanding of this group, and decrease the likelihood of a child developing negative stereotypes about older adults (Hollis-Sawyer & Cuevas, 2013). This is supported by evidence that children are likely to judge older family members less stereotypically when compared with members of the general public who are of the same age (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005) likely due to repeated exposure and a more nuanced understanding of the individual beyond the label of "old." While the family may provide the initial information to a child regarding older adults, there are several other sources of discourse that they will come into contact with. Understanding these additional sources is particularly important as many intergenerational families are separated, and regular contact between children and older adults may be challenging or impossible.

Children also receive information about their world through the literature they consume, from the stories they are read by parents and caregivers, and the books they will eventually read to themselves. Traditionally children's literature has portrayed older adults through a small set of physical characteristics and behaviours, and there is criticism that this literature often presented older adults and grandparents as being ill, disabled, and incapable of resolving any difficulties that arise without the help of others (Crawford & Bhattacharya, 2014). Seefeldt et al. (1977) argue that the negative attitudes held towards older adults in Western society are so pervasive that these attitudes are appearing in children's literature. Hollis-Sawyer and Cuevas (2013) analysed 106 children's picture books to examine the extent of older adults stereotyping in their content. They showed that older adults were frequently depicted as having exaggerated physical features, wearing glasses, and with wrinkles and white or no hair. Older woman, in particular, were portrayed as having minimal mobility and a bent frame, and were described as being weak, frail, and too old. Similarly, Crawford and Bhattacharya (2014) analysed 220 picture books published between 1989

and 2008, and reported that grandparents were frequently depicted as being among the very old, as opposed to the more typical grandparent age of young children, and that while the activities these grandparents were engaging in weren't negatively stereotypical, they were lacking in variety. For children who have little or no interaction with older adults, books and their characters may be their only source of information about this population, and so it is important that children are being presented with a variety of images, including positive, and not stereotypical caricatures (Hollis-Sawyer & Cuevas, 2013). If a child does not have regular contact with an older family member, and are solely exposed to stereotypical and homogenous representation of older adults, this may negatively impact their motivation to engage with and understand the ageing process, as well as to participate in intergenerational contact (Hollis-Sawyer & Cuevas, 2013). This may play a role in maintaining any negatively held stereotypes they may have.

Television and film are another source of information that children engage with, so like literature, it is important that the contents are providing children with a varied perspective about what it means to be an older adult, and the ageing process. Robinson et al. (2007) examined the content of 34 classic animated Disney films to explore their representation of older adults. Their analysis presented some mixed findings. They found that the two most common personality traits given to older characters were "friendly" and "angry/grumpy." Nearly 75% of characters were given a limited number of wrinkles, while 16% of characters were defined as being "overly wrinkly," and while Robinson et al. (2007) reported that a large number of older characters were portrayed in a negative manner, the majority of characters also appeared to have good health and be physically active. On a positive note, the number of older adults present in Disney films has increased over time, however these numbers remain small in relation to the general population, and older characters are often portrayed as being male and white, and existing on the outskirts of the story. Taking a different approach to the issue, Robinson and Howatson-Jones (2014) carried out a literature review of 69 articles published between 1980 and 2011, examining what is known about children's views of older adults. In regard to media, they found that over the past 30 years the

number of older adults represented has been low in comparison to the proportion of the general population they currently make up, and as with Disney films, their roles are often on the periphery. Unfortunately, the literature suggests that much of what children are exposed to through literature, film, and the media is offering a homogenous, and often negative, portrayal of older adults and this information will be playing a role in the development of the stereotypes they hold regarding older adults.

A commonly held desire for both adults and children alike is to experience the acceptance and approval of those around them, which may involve adapting their beliefs to match the people they are seeking approval from. When a child becomes aware of the beliefs and feelings of those around them, they are likely to adopt these beliefs as a way to gain approval and fit in, particularly if they look up to those individuals (Babcock et al., 2016). According to Gilbert and Ricketts (2008), a person's beliefs and outlook develop based on the value systems held within their culture and family. These beliefs are then reinforced by the information society presents them from sources like books and film, observations of others, and finally their own interactions and experiences. If children are having early experiences and observations of negativity towards ageing and older adults, regardless of the source, this information, it is argued, will be processed and play a role in the development of ageist beliefs (Hollis-Sawyer & Cuevas, 2013). When it comes to the first signs, and the progression of ageism, the literature presents common themes around this process.

Are Children Ageist?

When exploring the literature on ageism, a common narrative can be observed regarding the development and progression of these attitudes and beliefs, beginning with the claim that negative beliefs, as well as signs of ageist language, have been found in children as young as three years old (Klein et al., 2005; Teater & Chonody, 2017). The narrative continues that many children, by the time they have reached between five and eight years old, will have developed well-defined attitudes regarding older adults, which are commonly found to be negative, and they will have

begun internalising these attitudes (Hoe & Davidson, 2002; Rich et al., 1983). The narrative then continues into adolescence when the negativity in biases towards older adults increases (Babcock et al., 2016). Klein et al. (2005) and McGuinn and Mosher-Ashley (2002) argue that by the age of 12 these ageist beliefs have become resistant to, or more challenging to, change which would arguably fit within a cognitive framework of stereotypes, in which they are fixed and rigid beliefs. While a common narrative is presented throughout the literature on the development of ageist beliefs, the evidence in support of this narrative is not as clear.

Despite the narrative presented in the literature around the way in which ageist beliefs develop in children, and by what age, a deeper look shows that the evidence as to whether or not ageism is identifiable in children is not as consistent. The first perspective seen in the literature is that children are ageist. Davidson et al. (1995) showed 240 children, between the ages of six and eleven years old, drawings of older adults and asked them to rate six bipolar adjectives on 5-point scales, and were then asked to rate how much they liked this group on a scale. The children were then given a list of eight activities, both passive and active, and asked if they would participate in these activities with older adults. They reported that the children were more likely to rate older adults as being poor, sad, sick, and unattractive; to identify activities such as sitting around as being typical for this age group, as opposed to active activities; and to have negative feelings about being old. Burke (1981) showed 102 children, between the ages of four and eight years old, photographs of older adults and younger adults and asked the children questions like “Who’s nice?” and “Who’s sad/lonely?”. The children were then interviewed to explore their understandings of older adults. The findings were that older adults were seen as sadder and less busy than younger people, and very few of these children placed any positive value on ageing. Presenting the counterargument, that children do not hold ageist beliefs, Davidovic et al. (2007) asked 56 children, aged ten to sixteen, three simple questions, including “Is an old age unattractive?” with over half of the children giving a negative response to this question. The study conducted by Robinson et al. (2015) had 141 children aged eight to twelve years old, who were asked to draw a picture of an old person they see in real

life, before participating in a brief interview to clarify the details of their drawings. Coders then looked for stereotypical personality traits of older adults, including sad, loving/caring, and senile/crazy. They reported that the most commonly seen trait was happy/content, and that over two thirds of the drawings were portrayed positively.

A third perspective in the ageism research is that children hold stereotypes about older adults, but that these stereotypes aren't inherently negative. Falchikov (1990) and Villar and Fabà (2012) both asked children, between the ages of eight and twelve, to draw four pictures; a younger man and woman, and an older man and woman. These drawings were then content analysed, which involved noting what was seen in the drawing, for example hair style and facial characteristics. Both studies showed that older adults were represented in a stereotypical manner, particularly in regard to physical features such as wrinkles and walking sticks, but argued that this did not mean the children held clearly negative beliefs regarding older adults. The differences across these perspectives may, in part, be accounted for by their methodological differences. The studies reporting that children hold negative or positive beliefs about older adults have made methodological choices that constrain the children's answers to a set of already constructed categories. They also introduce language that may prime how the children think about this group. While Falchikov (1990) and Villar and Fabà (2012) have still imposed categories on the children, differentiating people by age and gender, no explicit value was placed on these categories; there was no priming of how the children should think about these groups.

Summary

Ageism is a term that is used to describe the stereotyping and discrimination of older adults on the basis of their age. A cognitive understanding of stereotypes, that comes out of contemporary social psychology, presents them as being fixed, inevitable, and internal. According to much of the research focused on the stereotyping of older adults, it is often seen as a time of physical and cognitive deterioration, a loss of dependence, as well as a separation from wider society. It is argued

that if children hold these stereotypes, that it will affect their own health and functioning as older adults, specifically cardiovascular health, memory, and engagement in health behaviours. When it comes to children engaging with information regarding ageing and older adults, this will likely come from multiple sources including, family, the media, literature and wider society. Interestingly, the research presents a common narrative of the ages in which children have developed ideas regarding ageing and older adults, specifically ageist beliefs, however the research does not present a clear picture as to whether or not these beliefs can be found in children. Given that the majority of the research on IG programmes and stereotypes comes from a realist perspective, which suggests that there is one observable truth to be found in the human experience, it is important to consider other perspectives.

Chapter Four: A Discursive Perspective

Discursive psychology is interested in talk and language, or discourse, and its role in the social construction of the human experience (Augoustinos & Walker, 1998). It challenges the positivist epistemology and offers a different conceptualisation of stereotypes. Whereas a cognitive framework portrays stereotypes as being fixed, within a discursive framework they are argued to be inconsistent and even contradictory at times, demonstrating variation across situations and contexts (Augoustinos et al., 2014). Instead of stereotypes being seen as a natural result of people's desire to simplify and label their world, they are understood as something that is done in social talk in order to perform a social action, such as to blame, explain, or justify (Augoustinos et al., 2014). While cognitive stereotypes are seen as being internal, discursively they are understood to be dependent on the context in which judgments about others are being made, including the historical, political, and cultural context, and what the purposes of the judgements are (Augoustinos et al., 2014). Interestingly, Augoustinos and Walker (1998) highlight that some stereotypes are so common that they give the appearance of reality or fact, which results in people understanding these stereotypes as representing reality, as opposed to representing a version of reality. While a discursive framework for understanding stereotypes is relatively new compared to the cognitive framework proposed by mainstream social psychology, support for this conceptualisation can be found within the research.

There is an argument to be made that if stereotypes were cognitive in nature, that this would be demonstrated by the observance of a repeated set of core descriptors in the talk regarding a particular set of people (Augoustinos & Walker, 1998). Haslam et al. (1992) interviewed Australian undergraduate psychology students to gain understanding of their descriptions of American people, within the context of the Gulf War, to explore the relationship between stereotypes and context. They reported finding that between interview 1, during the Gulf crisis, and interview 2 in the final week of the war, participants were less likely to describe Americans as scientifically-minded, and more likely to describe them as tradition-loving, as well as a shift from characterising Americans as

straightforward to arrogant. This study demonstrates a variance in the descriptors and characterisations across contexts, supporting a discursive conceptualisation that stereotypes are inconsistent and contextually influenced, as opposed to the cognitive conceptualisation that they are fixed and internal. Augoustinos et al. (2014) discursive framework of stereotyping sits in contrast to a cognitive framework, and therefore challenges a positivist epistemology. It therefore provides an appropriate background for the use of a social constructionist epistemology in the current study, which is discussed further in the next chapter.

Given this shift in framework, it is important to look at the mainstream research of ageism and stereotypes through the lens of a discursive framework of stereotyping. The mainstream research exploring the stereotypes held of older adults' reports that this group is seen as experiencing physical decline, cognitive decline, engaging in less activities, as being dependant yet unwanted and separate from society. A closer look at the methods of this research highlights that questionnaires are the most commonly used form of data collection. For example Teater and Chonody (2017) administered a 58 item questionnaire to participants, which involved the rating of bi-polar terms on Likert scales, and similarly Cuddy et al. (2005) provided participants with a description of a specific older adult, and then asked them to rate particular traits on a Likert scale. Another example can be seen in the study by Babcock et al. (2016) which involved providing participants with pictures of older adults and children, and asking them to categorise them as old or young, and good or bad. This method of collecting information around stereotypes falls in line with a cognitive framework, in which stereotypes are things that can be identified and measured. However, these methods serve to create the context within which the participants are able to view older adults, and provide participants a very limited scope that older adults can exist in. This research likely leads to a very homogenous understanding of participants' experience and decreases the variability in responses that would likely occur if more natural discourse were included in the research exploring the stereotypes held regarding older adults. The use of these restrictive methods

can also be seen in the research exploring whether or not children hold ageist beliefs, a body of research which presents an inconsistent picture.

While a common narrative is presented throughout the literature on the development of ageist beliefs in children, the evidence in support of this narrative is not as clear, with Davidson et al. (1995) and Burke (1981) reporting that children do hold ageist beliefs, and Davidovic et al. (2007) and Robinson et al. (2015) showing that children do not . Robinson and Howatson-Jones (2014) suggest that this could be due, in part, to the development of better research methods. As with the research exploring the stereotypes, Davidson et al. (1995) and Burke (1981) presented children with questionnaires that were narrow in the terms they offered when it came to older adults, whereas the methods used by Davidovic et al. (2007) and Robinson et al. (2015) involved children and young people being asked open-ended questions, or the use of drawing. Considering a discursive framework for understanding stereotypes, we know that the context within which the discourse occurs will shape the stereotype itself, and it could be that the more restrictive research methods were creating a context that was more likely to result in children developing a stereotype, particularly negative, of older adults. Another important area of consideration is the context that cannot be shaped by research methods, which is the historical, political and cultural contexts that children grow up in. These have likely seen changes over the time in which these various research projects were carried out.

Another reflection on the body of research focusing on ageist beliefs in children, is that while children are commonly reported as depicting or discussing older adults in a physically stereotyped fashion, whether or not these stereotypes are presented as being negative or neutral appears to be at the discretion and interpretation of the authors. For example, Robinson and Howatson-Jones (2014) carried out a review of 69 articles published between 1980 and 2011, the majority of which came from the United States of America, to explore what had been published regarding children's views of older adults. They reported that when children are presented with an

open-ended question around the description of an older adult, they will commonly focus on physical appearance, and that their descriptions reflect the reality of ageing, with older people being seen as weak, slow and less active. Robinson and Howatson-Jones (2014) make the argument that these children's views of older adults are not ageist, but stereotyped, and that these stereotypes are based in the biological reality of ageing. It appears that there is an assumption, for many, that for a stereotype to be linked to ageism, it needs to be negative. However, while ageism in itself is the action of using stereotypes involving age, against individuals, the definition of ageism itself does not mandate that the stereotype must be negative. Regardless of whether or not the stereotypes children have in different moments, regarding older adults, are positive or negative, it can be argued that if these views of ageing and older adults are homogenous, this could still result in the development of ageist actions.

The Current Study

It is clear from the research that the population is ageing, and at the same time the generations are being segregated, which in particular means older adults and children are provided less time to interact and learn from one another. In an attempt to counteract this segregation, intergenerational programmes are being carried out around the world, with the overall goal of providing mutually beneficial interactions for both parties. Unfortunately, the majority of these programmes and associated research projects are focused on school-aged children, particularly those aged between nine and ten years old, and when pre-school aged children are engaged in IG programmes, it is rare for their voices to be included in the development, evaluation, or exploration of these programmes. The research on IG programmes also predominantly focuses on children living in the context of the United States of America, and there is very little from countries such as Australia and New Zealand. It is important to involve all children in the participation of IG programmes and research, as it is argued that these opportunities for contact and connection play an important role in ageism, which describes the stereotyping and discrimination of older adults on the basis of their age.

The majority of the research exploring stereotypes of older adults and whether or not children have ageist beliefs, comes out of contemporary social psychology, which takes a cognitive perspective of stereotypes. This results in restrictive questionnaires being used in data collection, and likely constructs a narrow/more constrained/limited understanding of the way older adults are understood by society, and specifically by children. One way to allow children to discuss and explore the stereotypes of older adults that have been constructed in their context, is by taking a discursive framework, and not viewing stereotypes as something that can be identified and measured, but as something that is developed through talk and interaction, and for a purpose. The aim of the current research project was to explore the experiences of the children engaged in a shared-site IG programme being carried out in New Zealand, as well as to explore the children's discursive (language and imagery) constructions of older adults. By approaching this exploration from a social constructionist framework, the importance and value of the children's context was able to be included.

Chapter Five: Methodology

This chapter begins by outlining the epistemological underpinning of the current study, social constructionism. It then explores the theory behind engaging children in qualitative research, before outlining ethnography and the rationale behind using ethnographic techniques.

Social Constructionism

Social constructionism is critical of modern psychology and contemporary social psychology, rejecting the belief that there is a singular objective truth of human experience which is just waiting to be discovered, and that the categories we assign human beings translate into impartial divisions (Crotty, 1998). One simple way of conceptualising social constructionism (Burr, 2015) is any approach that is linked to the following assumptions; holding a critical stance to the traditional ways in which we understand knowledge, the inclusion of historical and cultural relevance, knowledge as being developed and maintained through social processes, and knowledge being connected to social action.

Social constructionism views knowledge and meaning as being constructed, rather than discovered, specifically through the interactions we have with objects and other people (Crotty, 1998). Due to the idea that knowledge is held in interactions, social constructionism is interested in these actions and believes that the knowledge developed within these interactions is neither fixed nor certain (Burr, 2015; Coyle, 2016). Furthermore, these social interactions are occurring in historical and cultural contexts, and the changing nature of these contexts means that the categories, concepts and knowledge constructed are provisional (Chamberlain, 2015). For example, if a research project were to gain information on emotions, an objectivist stance would be that this information reflects the truth of emotions, whereas a social constructionist approach would see these as accounts of emotions constructed in a particular way, and in a particular social, historical and cultural context (Coyle, 2016). The final point made by Burr (2015) is the relationship between knowledge and social action. The constructions of knowledge that we make each bring with them, or

invite a social action from others, and some constructions of the world will serve to sustain certain patterns of social action, and others will serve to exclude certain social actions.

As highlighted by Crotty (1998) the epistemological assumptions held by the researcher will be grounded in a theoretical perspective, which will inform their choice of methodology and method, and ultimately their research findings. The belief that there is no objective truth to be discovered independent of human consciousness, means that both researchers and research participants are making their own constructions, and that these constructions cannot be objectively verified, as there is no objective reality with which to compare them (Chamberlain, 2015). It is important for researchers working within a social constructionist epistemology to remember that when participants provide an account of their constructed knowledge, they are doing so for a purpose, and in a context. The knowledge developed in an interaction with the researcher may be different than that constructed with their friends, and different again from those constructed with their family. As previously highlighted, an epistemological choice will inform the choice of methodology and method, and qualitative research is an area of research that is commonly underpinned by the assumptions of social constructionism.

As discussed in the thesis introduction, the current research project is critical of much of the research concerning children and ageism, as it predominantly comes from an objectivist epistemology and relies on the use of dichotomous questions and surveys, which leaves little space for children to construct and share their experiences. Given this criticism, the current study is grounded in social constructionist epistemology. The resulting choices of methodology and method sought to allow the children the freedom to construct their own understandings of older adults with the researcher, rather than the researcher seeking to evaluate whether the children's ideas conformed to, or contradicted, the existing literature.

Involving Children in Qualitative Research

Taking into account the social constructionist perspective that knowledge is constructed through social interactions, and that a participant's account of their constructed knowledge may differ depending on who they are interacting with, it is important that researchers engage directly with children themselves, in order hear their constructions of their own experiences. Unfortunately, when it comes to the inclusion of children in research, particularly qualitative research, the traditional view has been that children are incapable of understanding and conceptualising their world, and that even when they do have an understanding of their world and their experiences, they lack the skills to articulate this to researchers (Docherty & Sandelowski, 1999; Kirk, 2007; Spratling et al., 2012). Because of these beliefs about the abilities of children, a culture emerged where researchers did not engage with, or include, children in their research, and for a long time children were seen as objects of inquiry; something to be studied. Childhood research was predominantly done *on* children, rather than *for* and *with* children (Dockett & Perry, 2005; Fargas-Malet et al., 2010). Ceglowski and Bacigalupa (2007) argue that this trend of ignoring the voices of children means that our understanding of children-oriented services is incomplete because the perspectives of key stakeholders are being excluded.

The traditional perspective of children being research objects rather than participants, serves to privilege the knowledge and experiences of adults, but there has been a shift in this perspective in recent years. This shift involves seeing children as research participants, and debunking the idea that adults hold the authority on all knowledge and lived experiences, which Breathnach et al. (2018) argue will hopefully result in a shift towards an equalisation of power between adult researchers and child research participants. Darbyshire, Schiller, et al. (2005) emphasise that this does not devalue the contributions of adults in research, but rather acknowledges that their perspectives are not the only ones of importance.

Many attribute this shift to including children in research to the Children's Rights Movement and the emergence of a new sociology of childhood (Breathnach et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2005). The United Nations Convention on Children's Rights, originally adopted in 1989, acknowledges that children are contributing members of society who have opinions that deserve to be heard and valued. This empowers children to participate in all aspects of their life (Darbyshire, Schiller, et al., 2005; Palaiologou, 2014). Breathnach et al. (2018) highlight that the term "participate" can have many meanings. It can include the process of children talking, thinking and deciding about the activities and issues that impact their lives, and for adults to listen and integrate this feedback. Alongside this movement, the 'new' sociologies of childhood were emerging, with a shift away from the perspective that children are incapable of contribution, to conceptualising them as co-constructors of the social world, as social actors who have their own opinions and who are actively creating their own reality, not just passively existing in their schools and families (Breathnach et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2005). Given these movements, it is no longer appropriate to dismiss a whole section of the population from participating in research by simply labelling them as 'too young,' or deeming them incapable of sharing their experiences and their lives (Darbyshire, Schiller, et al., 2005). Instead, James et al. (1998) suggest an alternative perspective in which children are not seen as lacking in comparison to adults, but rather as possessing a different set of competencies.

The changes in the understanding of children and their rights has resulted in an epistemological shift in the field which has moved away from an objectivist stance, in which children were solely understood and categorised according to developmental stages, into a social constructionism framework, in which children are considered in their historical and cultural contexts, with the goal of allowing each individual childhood experience to be acknowledged (Dockett & Perry, 2007). Consequently this has methodological implications. Darbyshire, MacDougall, et al. (2005) emphasise the growing belief that while quantitative studies have their place, if used alone they cannot provide the insight and information needed to develop an understanding of children's lived experiences. This desire to value the experiences of children, and the belief that quantitative

methods alone cannot gain the understanding needed, has led to the development of "participatory methods" which aim to meet the skills and needs of children, and include diaries, writing, drawing, and sentence completion (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010; Punch, 2002). It is also important that researchers take time to explore and acknowledge their own beliefs about childhood, children, and their abilities. The way that they conceptualise children and their status in society, compared to that of adults, will be a driver for the methods they choose and the way they interpret the data gained from interacting with children (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010; Kirk, 2007).

It is also important to acknowledge the obstacles that may be preventing the inclusion of children in research. According to Curtin (2001) the three main obstacles are; that adults and children have different ways of communicating, researchers' belief that children are less capable participants than adults, and the power imbalance between adults and children that may negatively affect a child's willingness to share their thoughts and feelings. It should be acknowledged that communication, assumed competence and power imbalances in relationships are key issues which should be considered in any research project, not just those involving children. These three significant issues played an important role when it came to selecting methods in the current study and will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

Ethnography

At its core, ethnography can be understood as participant observation (Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2008). It is not defined by its methodology, which is commonly qualitative, but by its core focus which is ethnos, or culture (Chambers, 2000). Tedlock (2000) argues that ethnography is more than just the research data produced, with importance equally placed on how the data becomes the written or visual text through which it is presented. This makes ethnography both a research product and a research process. Ethnography is a holistic approach to research, one that considers and values context, and uses this context to aide and guide its pursuit of a deeper understanding(Foster, 2015; Ward, 1999). The voices and experiences of those existing in the group of interest are of equal

value in ethnography, and the approach seeks to bring together individuals and their context, allowing our understandings of, and encounters with, an individual to be placed into a wider and more revealing context (Foster, 2015). At the most basic level, in order for research to be considered "ethnographic" it must involve; the development of trusting relationships, spending time with participants in their natural environment, and the development of an understanding of the culture and environment in a deeper and more complex way (Carroll & Mesman, 2011). These three features were central to choices of method for the current project, as well as a data collection and analysis.

The relationships between the researcher and those existing in the culture of interest is discussed by Foster (2015) who argues that these relationships are central to the success of an ethnographic approach. A good relationship is one that should involve reciprocity which encourages collaboration between both parties. Foster (2015) suggests that when a researcher and research participant can work collaboratively, data can be sourced from a deeper level. An established and collaborative relationship can also make the process of engaging in research less taxing for participants and may even bring a level of enjoyment(Foster, 2015). Equally important are the relationships with those members of a group who did not consent to participating in the research. The continuation of a relationship and interactions reminds these individuals that their participation in the research is not mandatory, and it is important that their decision to not participate does not lead to any distress for them (Foster, 2015). To mitigate this possibility, the researcher engaged with all of the children in the preschool room at the Park, regardless of their participation in the research. If a child became upset that they were not part of the interview process, a teacher would support them by finding an alternative activity that they enjoyed.

The relationship the researcher has to the research project itself, and their role in this project, is also an important part of an ethnographic approach. Given that ethnographic approaches are commonly grounded in a social constructionist epistemology, the researcher cannot be viewed

as an objective and neutral observer (Ward, 1999). Social constructionism views knowledge as being constructed through social interactions, therefore the knowledge or information that an ethnographic researcher is seeking is being constructed by the interactions between the researcher and research participants. It is also impossible for the researcher to hold the role of objective observer, as their presence in the participant's natural setting automatically changes the context within which the participants are constructing their accounts and understandings of themselves and their group (Foster, 2015). Instead of the neutral and objective observer, the researcher is considered one of the many tools used to gain the research information and data (Ward, 1999). The researcher is there to engage and learn from the participants in their natural context and in their own words (Ward, 1999).

An interesting dynamic of an ethnographic approach is that while the researcher is there to engage with and learn from participants, they still hold the primary responsibility for what constitutes field data, how this data will be recorded, and the eventual end product of the research (Goodwin et al., 2003). These dual responsibilities mean that throughout the project the researcher will act as both a participant and an observer, but Foster (2015) notes that distinguishing which role the researcher is holding at which time does not bring much value. Given these dual responsibilities, and that an ethnographic approach is not restricted to a series of interviews or observations, Atkinson (2015) highlights that a researcher's participation involves both an intellectual and personal commitment, and requires the use of their own capacities to reach an understanding of the social world presented to them.

When it comes to the ways a researcher can try to understand a group or situation, the ethnographic approach is known to be multi-modal; employing multiple methods which acknowledge the complexity of the lived everyday life, and prevent a social world or experience from being condensed into a single dimension (Atkinson, 2015). Methods may include, but are not limited to, informal conversations, relevant documents, interviews and visual images (Bloustien,

2003; Foster, 2015). It is important that the researcher is reflexive in their developing understanding, and that as the research progresses they ask themselves what they are observing, what their role in the learning is, and what it means, with the goals of extending and refining their ideas of the social environment, noting both specific examples and more general patterns (Atkinson, 2015). Throughout the process of data collection I made field notes of my observations and also reflexive notes of my own experiences and learning.

Given the multi-modal approach, the importance of relationships, and the reflexive nature of this type of research, time plays a significant role in the ethnographic approach. It allows for the development of trusting relationships between researchers and research participants, and time provides the researcher the reflexive space needed to develop a deeper understanding. While there is no specific time frame outlined, much of the literature outlining an ethnographic approach mentions long-term engagement (Carroll & Mesman, 2011). Griffin and Bengry-Howell (2008) argue that true ethnography involves at least six to twelve months of participant observation, and that any project with less than this is not ethnography, but is just using ethnographic techniques. There are multiple examples of researchers applying ethnographic techniques to studies with shorter time frames. Alcock et al. (2011) argue for a focused ethnographic approach which they suggest takes on the qualities of more traditional ethnography, but involves less time in the field, with a focus on a specific issue or idea. Similarly, Carroll and Mesman (2011) carried out an ethnographic approach focused on an emergency department handover in an Australian hospital, with data collection taking place over 4 days. They highlighted the core features of an ethnographic approach (trusting relationships, time in the field, and deeper and more complex understanding of context) and argued that this can be achieved in shorter time frames. The current research project had both time and resource constraints so set out to use ethnographic techniques rather than to achieve true ethnography. Regardless of the time spent with participants, Jeffery and Troman (2004) highlight than when using an ethnographic approach and techniques, the research is never complete. The

ethnography, or participant observation, ends but the insights gained should be thought of as provisional and tentative.

In the context of the current research, ethnographic techniques have been highlighted in intergenerational (IG) research as being a methodology that could yield useful information in this area. Some of the characteristics of ethnographic approaches that have been highlighted as a good match for IG research include; a focus on the insider perspective, the researchers' personal involvement in the research and role as a research tool, and the naturalistic setting and focus on context (Alcock et al., 2011; Ward, 1999). IG programmes mostly serve children and older adults, both of which are groups whose voices are often overlooked in research and society. The value that an ethnographic approach places on the insider perspective, values and empowers the voices of children and older adults, which combined with a focus on culture and context, may provide those setting-up and running IG programmes a more in-depth understanding of their programmes, than they might get from more traditional research approaches (Ward, 1999).

Ethnographic techniques were chosen for the current research project partly because they appeared to address two of the obstacles identified by Curtin (2001) in including children in research. The first of these was that adults and children have different ways of communicating. Given than ethnography is multi-modal in nature, the provision of a variety of methods allows children to engage with, and construct, their knowledge in a way that meets their current abilities. The second obstacle is the power imbalance between the adult researcher and the child participant, which may result in the child's unwillingness to share with the researcher. As (Foster, 2015) highlights, ethnography is about reciprocity between the researcher and the participant, and encourages collaboration between the two parties. This approach is also about valuing the perspective of the insider. By using techniques that invite active collaboration from the children, and by placing their experiences at the centre of the research, the power imbalance may shift allowing the children to feel more empowered to engage with the adult researcher.

The current research project is grounded in a social constructionist epistemology, with the goal of allowing children to co-construct their experiences with, and understanding of, older adults. With this goal in mind, ethnographic techniques and traditions, including a multi-modal approach, guided the choice of methods.

Chapter Six: Method

The following chapter details the steps and considerations that were taken from the initial conception of the current research project through to the data analysis. It begins with the research setting, which includes both a childcare centre and a retirement village, as well as the development and running of the intergenerational programme. This is followed by details of the research participants and their recruitment and the ethical considerations for the current research. Finally, the various stages of data collection and the methods chosen at each stage are discussed before a description of the data analysis process.

Setting

The research was conducted at The Park Early Learning Centre (the child care centre) and Village at the Park (the retirement village) in the suburb of Newtown in Wellington New Zealand. The childcare centre and retirement village are located on a shared site, with each facility separated by approximately 100m of car park. The Park Early Learning Centre offers high quality care and education for 150 children up to the age of six. It is separated into three areas that provide care and learning opportunities that are age appropriate. The childcare centre currently caters for children from 19 ethnic groups, including 62% New Zealand European, 10% Māori, 6% Indian, 6% British and 5% Chinese. The remaining 11% identify as American, Cambodian, Dutch, European, Filipino, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin American, Middle Eastern, Polish, Samoan, South African and Sri Lankan (Hamill, 2020). Village at the Park is a retirement village that offers a full continuum of residential and care options for older adults, including a specialised dementia unit, a hospital, a rest home, apartments and independent living villas. The average age of residents is 81 years, and they identify as 79% New Zealand European, 9% Māori, 5% Chinese and 4% Greek with the remaining 3% identifying as Pacific Island, Hungarian, Scottish, Indian, Polish or Romanian (Leighton, 2016).

Intergenerational Programme – iPlayed

Not only are Village at the Park and The Park Early Learning Centre proximally close, they also share a family connection in that the village owner's son is the founder and director of the company that owns the childcare facility. The physical proximity, paired with the family connection, means that there is a history of interaction between the two facilities, which led to the formalisation of the iPlayed programme in 2015. iPlayed, which stands for "Intergenerational programme to learn, appreciate, yield, engage and dream," was developed by the Centre Manager of The Park and the General Manager of Village at the Park. In its early conception, and in the initial research meetings, iPlayed was presented as involving both planned and spontaneous interactions between village residents and children that would bring enjoyment to all parties. Proposed activities included music therapy, the At the Park choir, shared morning teas, nature walks, developing and tending a community garden, a book club, bowling lessons, Tai Chi, volunteering in the childcare centre and participating in community projects together. Prior to the commencement of iPlayed's formal activities in 2016, all volunteers underwent a police check to meet the requirements of the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014. However, at the time of the research data collection for the current project, Book Buddy Reading was the only component of iPlayed that was consistently being undertaken. Consequently, the research is predominantly focused on those interactions.

Buddy Reading took place every Wednesday morning at 10am, and involved between 10 and 20 children and two to five village residents. Each week a different childcare room selected the children to attend so that all children had an opportunity. Children did not have to attend if they did not wish to and if a child was unwell they were not selected.

At 9.45 am the children were put in high-visibility vests and, with their teachers, walked over to Village at the Park to meet the residents in the communal lounge area. The children walked in two lines through the village and were reminded by their teachers to be respectful and quiet as this was somebody's home. When the children arrived a selection of children's books had been laid out and

the residents were waiting for them. The children chose the books they would like to read and went and sat in the lounge with a resident, where they spent the next 30 minutes reading, talking and often standing at the window looking at the fish in the pond outside. Group size varied, with some children spending one-on-one time with a resident while at other times groups of children were sitting with one resident. At the end of the 30 minutes the children and residents said goodbye and the children returned to the childcare centre.

Participants

Participants in the current research study were children enrolled at The Park Early Learning Centre. They needed to be between the ages of 3 and 5 years, participating in iPlayed, and to have attended a minimum of three sessions of the programme. In total 17 children participated and were interviewed. 21 interviews were completed with four children being interviewed twice. Two of the children's interviews were conducted before the interview guide was formalised, and so they were interviewed again to include the new questions. The other two children terminated their interviews part-way through but agreed to be interviewed a second time at a later date. Of the 17 children interviewed, ten were boys, seven were girls, and none of the participants were related to one another.

Information about their families was collected from 14 of the 17 children, as three of them were not in attendance when these demographic questions were asked. The children's self-reports showed that 13 of them lived with two parents; 12 being with mum and dad, one being with dad and dad, and one with one parent, their mum. The self-reports also showed that 10 of the children reported living with siblings, one was an only child, one was an only child with a baby on the way, one had older siblings who lived in a different country, and one refused to answer the question. Only one child reported having other adult family members living with them; an aunt and uncle. None of the children lived with a grandparent. No other demographic information was collected.

Recruitment

Recruitment of participants was primarily managed by the childcare centre staff. Once a child of the required age had attended a minimum of three iPlayed sessions, a teacher gave their parent or caregiver the information sheet (see Appendix A) and consent form (see Appendix B). The parent or caregiver was encouraged to take the documents home and read them over, and if they consented to their child participating in the study, to sign the consent form and return it to the childcare centre. The staff then notified me. Consent to participate was sought from 17 families and all agreed.

Ethics

The research project was given ethical approval by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, Northern (Application 16/28). Children are identified as a vulnerable population and so extra care and consideration was given when developing the research.

The Park Early Learning Centre is a licensed early childhood education (ECE) centre, which means that it must comply with the regulatory standards and criteria laid out in the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008. Given that the research was carried out within the centre, the design of the research had to fit within their regulations which accounted for many of the standard ethical issues that apply when working with children. For example, in accordance with the centre's regulations, I required a police check before being able to spend time with the children, and as I am not a registered teacher I was never left alone with a child.

The interview stage of the research was not expected to cause discomfort, embarrassment or psychological or spiritual harm to the participants. However, as outlined in the information sheet provided to parents and caregivers (see Appendix A), if a child became upset or agitated during the interview the audio recorder would be turned off and the interview would end. If a child did not want to answer questions they did not have to, and if a child or their parent/caregiver was unhappy

with the interview, they had the right to withdraw the child from the study at any time up to two weeks following the interview.

The children were not formally informed of their participation in the study, however I sought their assent before each interview, and if a child declined to participate they were not forced to by me or the childcare staff. The moment a child decided that they no longer wanted to participate in the interview it was stopped.

To protect the identities of the children who participated in the study, and the adults they discussed, pseudonyms were used in analysis and any identifying information was removed from the transcripts. Information regarding confidentiality and the storage of transcripts, photographs and audio files is outlined in the information sheet (see Appendix A).

Photographs were taken of the children and older adults interacting during the iPlayed sessions, and written consent to use these photographs in the current doctoral thesis, as well as in any publications related to the research, was sought from both the older adults and the parents/caregivers of the children shown in the photos (see Appendix C, see Appendix D). Consent was given for all of the individuals shown in the photographs. All of the children shown in the photos were participants in the research.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred across multiple stages and settings, using a variety of ethnographically-informed methods, observation, photography, drawings and interviews. The use of multiple methods was chosen to allow children to engage in the research in ways that were in line with their competencies, and with the intention of providing the children with choices while acknowledging their role as an active social actor (Darbyshire, MacDougall, et al., 2005). The role of the researcher and the power dynamics between adults and children played an important role throughout all the stages of data collection, and are discussed in the context of each.

Observation

The initial stage of data collection involved me spending time in the childcare centre with the children, as well as attending iPlayed sessions. The general procedure involved me arriving at the childcare centre the day before the interviews were due to take place, and simply spending time with the children and observing their interactions with each other and the interactions they had with me. I did not attempt to engage the children in any particular activity or conversation, but simply joined in alongside whatever activity they were engaging in. The following day I returned to the centre, attended the iPlayed session, again simply observing and taking photographs, before carrying out interviews in the afternoon back at the centre. Fargas-Malet et al. (2010) conceptualise participant observation as "watching, listening, reflecting and engaging with children in conversation" (p.186) and Clark (2005) highlights how it values the context in which interactions and actions occur. Observation has longed been used as a tool to aid in the understanding of young children and can play an important role in informing other participatory methods (Clark, 2005).

One key driver behind the decision to spend time with the children outside of the iPlayed sessions and the interviews was that meeting and engaging with children could foster familiarity, an important part of rapport development which is particularly important at the interview stage (Koller & San Juan, 2015; Spratling et al., 2012). It also provided me with the opportunity to learn about the children's naturally occurring routines and interactions (Fossey et al., 2002) with the acknowledgement that my presence would have an impact on their environment and therefore their interactions.

While much of the children's day was spent in free play, there still existed the traditional dynamic between teachers and children in which the teachers set the rules and expectations, and the consequences if these expectations were not met. I entered the childcare centre with the goal of differentiating myself from the teachers, with the hope that this would result in a shift towards a more equal power dynamic between me and the children, although it is unlikely that a completely

balanced dynamic can ever be achieved in this context, as the children are used to adults being in an authoritative role. The easiest way for me to differentiate myself from the teachers was through clothing, as all the teachers wore navy blue uniforms. By wearing different clothing the children could see that this new adult was not a teacher. When the children asked me who I was and what I was doing there, I responded by telling them my name was Kate and that I was there to "hang out and learn about old people and book reading." This strategy was also employed by Breathnach et al. (2018) during their research with 5 year old school children, in which the researchers highlighted that they were there to learn from the children, putting them into the role of experts, a stance that was repeated in the current study during both the observation and interview stages.

Across my research visits I noted that the children invited me to join in their games, and I was given a role in their imaginary play, something that was less common with their teachers. This suggested that I was having some success in differentiating myself from the teachers. I also made the choice to not engage in any form of behaviour management with the children, unless there was a safety issue and no teachers were in sight, which was not a situation that arose. For example, I was sitting with a group of children doing a craft, and child one refused to share pipe cleaners with child two, which upset child two. I chose not to intervene as it was important that I stayed at the same level as the children. Child two "told on" child one to me, and I encouraged them to speak to a teacher, while still trying to be empathetic. Mauthner (1997) warns that when working with children the researcher role is a complicated one that can take on components of both parent and teacher, both of which I wanted to avoid in the current study. Breathnach et al. (2018) sum up the complexities of working with children under an ethnographic framework by acknowledging the researcher's attempt to assume many roles including the "non-authoritarian adult, adult, least adult and detached observer" (p. 395) as well as engaging with children in their play spaces, all with the goal of attempting to manage the space between an adult, who is a person of authority, and the children.

Throughout all the stages of data collection, beginning with observation, I kept notes which are an important component of an ethnographic approach and form the foundation of the upcoming data analysis (Kirk, 2007). In total, 15 pages of handwritten notes were taken. Notes were taken regularly and systematically, covering the settings, participants and their actions and interactions. The notes did not offer any explanation of the observations, or form any opinions or perspectives (Dockett & Perry, 2005). Kirk (2007) advises that note writing while engaging with participants can be distracting, but it is important that they be written up as soon as possible. I chose not to complete any note writing in front of the children, but instead completed this during meal breaks in the staff room.

Photographs

During each iPlayed session that I attended, I took photographs of the children and older adults. In total, 96 photographs were taken across the research visits, and of these, consent was sought for the use of the 19 that I felt best represented the wider set. Originally, I had planned for the teachers to take the photographs, but it was decided that this was not a normal part of the iPlayed sessions, so it made sense for me to take them as my presence alone had already changed the context of the sessions. Another important decision regarding who would take the photographs was whether or not the children would participate in this. Commonly, research projects involving children have involved them taking photographs of people and places in their settings, to provide an alternate method of communication (Clark, 2005). It was decided that this would be too disruptive to the iPlayed sessions and would prevent the children from participating in them, and that it would be unfair and possibly cause distress to the children who were not participating in the study, as they may have felt that those selected children were gaining an experience that they did not have access to. While taking the photographs I attempted to be as unobtrusive as possible, never asking the children or older adults to pose for photographs but simply documenting their time together. The choice was made to use a mobile phone instead of a camera as children more commonly see adults carrying around mobile phones than they do cameras. Throughout the iPlayed sessions I attended

and documented, none of the children appeared to notice me taking photographs, and if they did, they made no response to it.

In the current research the photographs played multiple roles. The first of these was as a method of capturing the children's experiences, which is a common use for photographs in research focused on children. The photographs were also used as a way to develop rapport, through providing a common point of interest or focus between me and the children. The third role of the photographs was their use as a prompting tool in the interviews, or photo elicitation (PEI) which at its most basic involves the inclusion of photographs during interviews to prompt responses from participants (Pyle, 2013). While many understand PEI to involve the participants taking the photographs themselves, Pyle (2013) highlights that there are researchers who use photographs to elicit the views of participants without involving them in the taking and collecting of the photographs. As previously discussed, this second option was chosen for the current research as it was felt that the first option, the children taking the photographs, would be too disruptive. Finally, the photographs were also used in the data analysis, which is discussed in more detail in the section below.

Drawings

At the outset of the interviews the children were invited to draw a picture of an 'old person'. The drawings were part of the data collected during the current research project. All of the children engaged in the activity and in total 21 pictures of older adults were drawn. The children were asked if it was okay for me to record their drawing in a photograph that I could keep and 13 of these were included in the analysis. Not only are drawings a fun and creative activity, they allow children an element of control over information and can provide time for them to organise and present their narratives in a manner which is different to verbal questioning, as this requires an immediate response (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010; Punch, 2002). An important part of using drawing is that the adult researcher does not put their own meaning onto the drawing, but that they ask the child what

this drawing means to them (Kirk, 2007). As with the photographs, the drawings were also used in the data analysis which is discussed further below.

Interviews

The final stage of data collection involved interviewing the children. Interviews lasted between nine and 28 minutes (with 18 minutes being the average) and were carried out in the childcare centre following an iPlayed session. The interviews were conducted over six visits to the centre, with between two and five children being interviewed each time. Interviews were carried out in a variety of locations in the childcare centre, and a teacher was always nearby with the goal of increasing the comfort and decreasing the anxiety of the child (Spratling et al., 2012) as I was still a relatively unfamiliar adult. When possible, the interviews were carried out in a location that was quiet and had minimal distractions, and the child and I always sat on the same level (Curtin, 2001). The interviews were semi-structured in nature, with each interview following the same general format and the questions being guided by key topic areas (see Appendix E). Semi-structured interviews were selected as they enable a focused exploration of specific topics, as well as having the ability to follow up on novel ideas or issues that may arise during the interview (Fossey et al., 2002).

The interview procedure generally went as follows. The first step involved gaining the assent of the child. Assent is commonly used in reference to gaining approval or agreement for an individual who is unable to enter into a legal contract on their own, i.e. children (Ford et al., 2007). Gaining assent provides the children with a shared decision-making role in the research, which is important to the power relationship, as well as acknowledging that although legal consent has been given by the parent or caregiver, the child's viewpoint in the central focus of the research (Ford et al., 2007). Children may revoke their assent to participate at any point during the interview, and this may be done verbally or non-verbally, so it is important that the researcher pays close attention to the child throughout the interview (Breathnach et al., 2018). Some common signs of revoking assent

may include crying, refusing to go with the researcher, or refusing to engage with the research material (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010).

In the current study I approached the child and asked them if they would like to go to the appointed interview spot and talk about book reading and draw pictures together. Two of the children declined the initial invitation, with one replying that they were "too busy," requesting that I ask them again on a different day, at which time they agreed to participate. The other child initially declined, but upon seeing their friends participate, asked me on a following visit if they could still come to talk and draw. Once the child and I were seated, I explained that I wanted to learn about old people and book reading, explained the purpose of the audio recording device and asked if they were okay with being recorded. Two children revoked their assent part-way through the interview, at which time the interview was ended. On a follow-up visit I invited these participants to repeat the process and they both agreed.

As discussed, the interview began with me inviting the child to draw a picture of an 'old person'. During this phase of the interview the child and I sat side by side working on our drawings, with the hope that the activity would serve as a non-threatening icebreaker as well as helping to focus the child on the general research area. The meanings and language that the children offered as they discussed their drawing of an 'old person' formed the foundation of the remainder of the interview. This section of the interview was generally focused on the physical descriptions of older adults and their related abilities.

The next part of the interview involved the use of the photographs for PEI. During the interview the children were presented with several of the photographs that had been taken during the iPlayed session that morning. They were invited to tell me about each photograph; what was going on in each one and their experience of the captured moment. This part of the interview was focused on the iPlayed programmed and the interactions and relationships the child had experienced. The remainder of the interview commonly focused on any topics the child brought up,

as well as their interactions with older adults outside of the childcare centre. At the end of the interview the children were thanked for helping me to learn, and they returned to spending time with the other children.

In regard to the power dynamics in the relationship between the researcher and participants, Mauthner (1997) suggests that allowing children to guide research interactions can equalise this dynamic, and in order to facilitate this the researcher needs to have open-ended research goals and be reflexive and responsive. Given the ethnographic approach used in the current research project, I made notes after every interview, and after each research visit would reflect on these notes and adjust subsequent interviews as appropriate. In order to keep the interviews open-ended, allowing them to be in line with the competencies and interests of the children, key topic areas were originally included but were eventually dropped as none of the children engaged with these ideas. One example was exploring the children's own ageing, which was a concept many of them struggled to engage with.

Another important component of conducting interviews with children, as with all research participants, is the development of rapport and trust. While not explicitly stated as a requirement of rapport and trust building, in a review of research involving children Spratling et al. (2012) noted that experience with children was evident in the researchers in these studies. Some adults have less experience in building these relationships with children (Hill, 2006). My personal experience with children includes running support groups for children experiencing grief, 4 years of working as a nanny and over 15 years working as a babysitter. This has provided me with significant experience in developing rapport and trust with children from different backgrounds, from ages zero to 15, and in various contexts which required both short-term and long-term relationships between me and the children to develop.

The selection of methods chosen for the current study successfully provided the children with various opportunities to engage with the project, as each child presented with differing

competencies, and interests. This engagement, combined with the mix of observations, interviews, and visual data, contributed to an in-depth data set and informed the analysis.

Analytic Process

Familiarity with the data was a key part of the analytic process. By conducting and transcribing all of the interviews, making the observations and taking all of the photos myself, I was familiar with the data from the outset. Analysis began during my visits to the childcare centre, throughout which I would make note of any topics or stories that were being repeated, events that were particularly interesting, and moments that surprised me either in the children's talk or observed behaviour. After the completion of the data collection, the interviews were then transcribed with the same transcription process being repeated for each one. The process involved playing each interview and typing them up verbatim, regularly pausing and rewinding to check that the transcript was accurate. Transcripts were then printed and checked for accuracy against the audio recordings. Once the transcripts were finalised, a final read through with the audio was carried out. The careful transcription process and the repeated listening to the audio recordings also served to deepen familiarity with the interviews and the nuances of the talk. Again, throughout this process I kept notes of any emerging topics or stories, any comments that surprised me or seemed to contradict these stories, and any points that stood out as being of particular interest.

Following transcription, the software programme Atlas.ti was used to code the transcript texts. While I had begun to develop some initial ideas about the story that the data would tell, analysis was not approached with a set of codes to apply from my notes or from the literature, but rather codes were developed through the close reading of the transcripts. Each transcript was coded line-by-line and I sought to code the content of the interviews in a literal manner. The next step in my analytic process was to code my field notes in the same way as the transcripts, using the same software. Following this my focus turned to the photographs, which were also loaded into Atlas.ti

and coded in a literal manner. For example, I would code for the behaviours that I could see, including touching and smiling.

Once coding was complete the analytic process involved moving between the codes, the individual data, and wider ideas discussed in the literature, using an inductive approach, and allowing the data itself to be the driver of emerging topics and stories. The focus of the analysis was the children, their words, drawings, and my observations of their behaviour. All of these were used in the construction of the children's experiences of older adults. As I began to notice repeated topics and stories, these were written up into a bullet point structure, with "Relationships" and "Learning" emerging as the two core ideas. As I continued to explore the various topics and stories that I noticed, I was questioning what these meant and how they fitted together. Examples of the questions I asked myself while looking at the data included: Why is this interesting? How have I influenced the data? Why are the children telling me this? What are the similarities and differences between the stories the children are telling me through both their words and behaviour? In particular, a significant part of the analysis involved looking at whether the stories and topics from the transcripts, photographs and field notes were complementing each other, or whether there were contradictions within the different types of data. Analysis was an ongoing process that continued as drafts of the findings were written up.

Chapter Seven: Findings

Analysis of the photographs, observations, drawings and interviews led to the identification of two key themes. The first, 'Relationships with Older Adults,' explores the connections and relationships the children formed with the older adults, and how these compare to the other relationships in their lives. The second theme, 'What is Means to be an Older Adult,' tells the story of how the children identify and understand what makes someone an older adult. The final section is not a clearly identified theme in the data, but rather explores suggestions from the data regarding the children's social context. These are discussed in turn below.

Relationships with Older Adults

The analysis revealed that, while the children had personal interactions with older adults, the relationships they formed appeared to be with older adults as a collective, rather than with any particular individuals. This relationship with the collective was demonstrated in several ways; their expressions of familiarity, the language they used, and the way the responded to questions about favourites. Interestingly, while most children repeated this pattern, there was one child who was seen to have developed two personal relationships with the older adults, as well as still holding a relationship with the wider collective. Within this relationship with the collective, the ways the children related to the older adults differed from how they engaged with other adults. Specifically, the children had different boundaries with older adults, and many of the children saw this relationship as solely existing for the benefit of the older adults. While the children had not developed individual relationships, it did appear that they were able to form individual connections in the moment. These connections often grew out of sharing personal experiences; they were reliant on the child's wider context and they were temporary.

Older Adults as a Collective

The relationship with the collective was shown through the children's expressions of familiarity with all older adults, regardless of whether an established relationship existed or not.

Familiarity was expressed in the way the children greeted the older adults, their physical contact, and by contrasting to the way they greeted and physically interacted with other adults.

On their walk to the room in which the book buddy reading took place, the children passed a number of residents, many of whom were not involved in the iPlayed programme. Field notes detailed the children greeting any older adult they met with the same level of enthusiasm and familiarity, waving, smiling and saying hello, regardless of whether they had met them before or not.

> *As we walked the halls the children were waving and saying "hello" to all of the residents we passed. These residents were not participating in iPlayed today, and I haven't seen them participate before. The children showed no fear or hesitation. Looked happy/excited to get a response, a head rustle, a wave (Field notes, 15/11/2016).*

This suggests that the children had some level of a relationship with all older adults living at VAP. This observed behaviour also raised the question of whether the children simply cannot tell the difference between individual older adults, whether it speaks to their level of familiarity with the collective, or whether both are at play.

This question can be answered by looking at the way the children talk about older adults, both the residents of the retirement village and their own grandparents. Much of their talk in the interviews was focused on the physical appearance of the older adults, and the children would repeatedly use a physical feature they had observed in one older adult and apply it to the group as a whole.

> *George: Maybe an old person's arms are like my Nana's.*
>
> *Kate: What are your Nana's arms like?*
>
> *George: They're probably like old people's arms, my Nana's.*
>
> *Kate: So can you tell me about your Nana's arms?*
>
> *George: They're like all stripy and like that (referring to drawing).*

Kate: Is it kind of like how we get these? (pointing to lines on the palm of George's hand)

George: Yeah it's kind of like that on there.

George has identified that the arms of his Nana have a quality that is different to his own, namely her "stripes" or wrinkles. He also has an understanding that his Nana is old, so has concluded that all members of the collective of older adults will have the same physical difference as his Nana. This excerpt from George's interview is one of many examples which illustrate that the children can see the individual features of the older adults they come in contact with. They then apply this information to the collective of older adults, leading to an understanding that all older adults belong to one homogenous group. It is possible that this understanding of homogeneity extended beyond the physical appearance of older adults into a relational aspect. The children's belief that the older adults in their lives that they already have relationships with, like their Nanas, are physically the same as all other older adults, could be playing a role in the observed familiarity in their greetings. They may be identifying some of the physical features they have seen on their loved ones in other older adults, and this may have led to a sense of connection.

Familiarity with older adults as a collective was also expressed through the physical contact observed between the children and residents in the iPlayed sessions. While many of the children stated that they had no preference for which older adult they spent time with, and did not know the names of the individuals they had been reading with earlier that day, they were repeatedly observed sitting close to, and cuddling, with the older adults during the iPlayed session. Most of the children were never observed selecting a particular older adult to read with and were happy to be assigned someone by their teacher, and yet they were comfortable with a level of physical closeness, regardless of the individual, suggesting that they felt a sense of safety with all members of the group or collective. This level of comfort might have been expected to have developed over time, and with particular individuals, rather than with all members of the group regardless of personal connection and familiarity.

Figure 1. Joan reads with the three boys.

The child in the photograph above can be seen leaning on the older adult reading to him, and just by looking at this interaction one might assume that there was a personal relationship between the two of them.

Kate: But what did you do at the visit?

Child: Both reading some books.

Kate: You were reading some books. With who?

Child: With that girl.

Kate: What happens after you've chosen the book?

Child: Take it.

Kate: You take it to someone. Who do you take it to?

Child: Just to someone.

Despite this perceived connection, when the boy was interviewed later that day, he refers to the woman as both "that girl" and "just someone." There is a contrast between the intimacy observed in the photograph and the impersonal language used when talking about this interaction in the interview. This highlights a lack of relationship with the individual, while speaking to an apparent comfort and familiarity with the wider group of older adults.

The familiarity expressed through the children's greetings and physical contact with older adults at the retirement village was noticeably different to the way they greeted and interacted with adults who were not part of this group. While the children were observed being warm and welcoming, and making physical contact with the adults they did know (such as their teachers and parents/guardians) this changed when they interacted with an adult they had not met before or did not know as well as their teachers. My own interactions with the children serve as one example of this difference. Field notes detail how upon my arrival at the childcare centre for my first research visit, the children were sceptical of who I was and why I was in their space. There were a lot of "Who are you?" and "Why are you here?" questions asked of me, which contrasted with the way these same children would interact with the residents they saw at the retirement village, many of whom they'd never met before.

> *First visit today. There were lots of questions from the children, "Who are you?" "What's your name?" (Field notes, 15/11/2016).*
>
> *Today Harriet recognised me and asked me to read books with her. Other children have also started including me in their activities (Field notes, 18/01/2017).*
>
> *More of the children I have interviewed recognised me. Noticing that children are becoming comfortable with me faster, asking me to play with them, sitting in my lap etc. (Field notes, 04//04/2017).*

Over the span of my visits I developed relationships with many of the children, which was demonstrated by them beginning to recognise me, inviting me to join their play, and some initiating physical contact with me. The familiarity we developed was not consistently maintained in the way it was with the older adults, as at the beginning of every visit there would still be a period when the children were a little more distant before warming up to me, rather than being immediately open and friendly.

During my visits to the childcare centre the field notes also detail my observations of both a student teacher and a relief teacher working with the children. The way the children interacted with these individuals was similar to the way they interacted with me; cautious and curious but building up to a sense of familiarity. While I observed the children greeting all older adults with whom they came into contact in a consistently warm and familiar manner, their behaviour with adults who were not members of this collective varied depending on the established relationship. With unfamiliar adults, familiarity had to be developed over time and it was not guaranteed.

Through their behaviour and interviews, the children repeatedly demonstrated a level of familiarity with all older adults they encountered, irrespective of whether they had previously met them or developed an individual relationship. From the warmth they expressed in their greeting of the retirement village residents, regardless of their participation in iPlayed, to the comfort they displayed while making close physical contact despite an apparent absence of personal connection, all older adults appeared to be met and engaged with in a similar fashion. When the children met with other adults, their behaviour differed depending on the level of relationship they had with that individual. All of this signals that the children seem to have a relationship with all members of the collective of older adults, whereas with adults outside of this group, individual relationships were necessary to receive the same type of interaction.

The relationship between the children and the collective of older adults was also seen in the language the children used when discussing this group.

Kate: Do you have a favourite old person?

Noah: No.

Kate: Oh so you like all of them?

Noah: Yes.

Kate: Are there any people you don't like?

Noah: Mmm, I love all of them.

Kate: You love them! What do you love about them?

Noah: I love them because, I love them because they read me books.

Noah's use of the word "love" is an indicator that a relationship of some form has developed, but this love is not for any older adult in particular, but rather for "them."

Kate: Do you think it's a good idea for children to spend time with old people?

Hunter: Not all of the time.

Kate: Not all just sometimes. Do some visits?

Hunter: Yeah.

Kate: What's good about it for the children?

Hunter: Because they've known them a long time and they like, they like to, they like to go there.

Kate: Oh yeah.

Hunter: Cause to meet their old friends.

Similarly, Hunter's use of the term "friends" speaks to a deeper and more long-term relationship between these two groups. It is encouraging to see that the children are developing these relationships with the older adults, relationships that they are putting into the categories of friendship and love, and for Hunter, relationships that have existed for a long time in his four years of life. When considering the language used, it is important to acknowledge that I introduced the

concept of “old people” as a group at the beginning of the excerpt, and so this was not a concept that Hunter came up with without prompting.

Conversations with the children about whether they had favourite older adults they liked to spend the iPlayed sessions with, was another way in which a relationship with the collective of older adults was illustrated.

Kate: What’s going on in this picture?

Elliot: We’re reading.

Kate: Who’s this? Do you know her name?

Elliot: No.

Kate. Do you get to choose which old person you go with?

Elliot: Yeah.

Kate: Do you have a favourite old person?

Elliot: Mmm, I don’t really.

Kate: Are there any old people that you don’t like?

Elliot: Mmm, I like lots of them.

Elliot’s response was common among the children, in that he did not have any favourite older adults he liked to read with, nor did he know the name of the individual he had spent time with just that morning. Despite the lack of an individual relationship, Elliot still shared a fondness for “them,” the collective. There is a lack of knowledge about the individual, but still a warmth towards the group.

Kate: Do you get to choose which person you go with?

Dylan: Yeah.

Kate: Do you have any favourite people?

Dylan: Yeah.

Kate: Who’s your favourite?

Dylan: Harriet and Ellie and Sophie and Gillian.

Kate: What about the old people, do you have a favourite old person?

Dylan: Yeah, it's a girl.

Kate: Do you remember her name?

Dylan: (Shakes head no).

For Dylan, while she initially identifies that she does have favourite people, these turn out to be other children from childcare centre with whom she had attended the iPlayed session that morning. Her favourites are her friends, whom she is able to name one by one, and not any of the older adults. When specifically asked about older adults, she stated that she did have a favourite, but there was no further information provided beyond the person's sex. The difference in detail provided suggests that there is a personal relationship between Dylan and her peers, and that this type of relationship does not exist with any individual older adult. It is also interesting that despite the context of the conversation being on the older adults, Dylan's mind automatically goes to her friends when asked about favourite people. It is interesting to see that while the children's language would suggest a level of deep or personal connection, they actually hold minimal or no personal information about the members of this group.

From the physical expressions of familiarity observed, to the use of words such as "love" and "friends" to describe their relationship with older adults, it is evident that the children have developed a relationship with the older adults at the retirement village, and that they have, at times, connected their own grandparents to this group. Despite this, the children don't appear to know any individual information about the older adults, nor have any preference for who they might spend their time with. One can take from this that while relationships exist, they are with the group of older adults as a whole and not with any particular individual.

A Different Story. There was one exception to this story, a young girl who had developed two personal relationships with individual older adults, as well as still holding a relationship with the

collective. One of these relationships was with a woman whom she spent time with at the iPlayed book reading sessions. This relationship was expressed through the child's behaviour in both of the iPlayed sessions I observed her attending. Field notes talk of how she intentionally selected the same woman at the beginning of each session, a behaviour that was not observed in any of the other children, and as can be seen in the photograph below, she spent much of the session cuddling with this woman.

> *XXX had her favourite and she picked her immediately. The other children did not, they were more focused on choosing books. XXX and her buddy cuddled up on the couch for much of the session (Field notes, 15/11/2016).*

Figure 2. Child and Bess cuddle on the couch.

Kate: So how old do you think they are? (referring to the woman in the photograph above)

Child: So, I know how old they are because I ask her.

Kate: Oh, you ask.

Child: And I just looked at her and said, "What's your, what's your, what's your, how old are you?" And she said, should I tell you? Well how old she is, is 25.

While she didn't recall the woman's name, the child used the above photograph in the interview to help her reference this same woman as one of her favourites, and she told the story of seeking to gain some personal information from her, specifically her age. This speaks to an individual relationship, as the desire to seek out personal information about the older adults was not discussed by any of the other children in their interviews.

The other individual relationship she had formed was with Peter, another retirement village resident who didn't participate in the book buddy reading sessions but would make regular visits to the childcare centre to play with the children.

Child: We love Peter.

Kate: Do you?

Child: When he comes, we run up and say "Peter, Peter, Peter!" And do you know what? Somebody, but not me, took Peter's hat.

Kate: Oh no!

Child: And do you know what happened?

Kate: What?

Child: They found it, and do you know what he had to do? What the teacher had to do? He had to go to Peter's house and give him his hat.

Kate: Oh did they! So what do you love about Peter?

Child: Because he plays with us.

This individual relationship was shown through her referring to him by name, highlighting the excitement and joy the children experience when he arrived, recalling a specific memory about Peter and reflecting on what she loves about Peter. These details were also offered largely unprompted.

While some of the other children recalled Peter's visits, none of them spoke about him without being questioned first. It was rare for the children to share any personal details beyond his name, and none of the children's language or stories expressed the same level of fondness for Peter as did the child above. This could mean that outside of their grandparents, none of the other children had developed personal relationships with individual older adults.

While the child in the photo above differed from her peers by talking about her individual relationships with older adults, this did not exclude her from understanding older adults as a collective.

Child: There's so many people at Village at the Park. Because I know that Village at the Park is a fun place and they make it a fun place.

Kate: Do you think they have fun when you come to visit?

Child: I think they have fun all the time because they all have fun and we all have fun. Because they like it when we come and we like it when we come.

Kate: And do all the old people like it when you come and visit?

Child: Yeah. But not all of them come.

Following her stories about Peter, her language shifted from the individual to pluralising, suggesting a conceptualisation of the older adults as a collective. When I clarified that she meant all older adults she did not correct me and return to the individual, instead affirming that all members of this group gained the same enjoyment from engaging with the children. Even when a child has established individual relationships with older adults, it appears that there is still an understanding that these individuals belong to a wider collective.

Ways of Relating

Another characteristic of the children's relationship, which was illustrated through both their behaviour and talk, was how they related to the older adults and how they made sense of their relationship with them, which differed from how they related to other adults they interacted with. This was seen in the different boundaries the children had with the older adults, and the belief that their visits to the retirement village were for the emotional benefit of the residents.

A lack of boundaries was exhibited in some of the children's interactions with the older adults, which was a difference from how they interacted with other groups. During my time at the childcare centre the majority of the children were repeatedly observed being respectful, and even deferential, to the teachers and any other adults who came into the centre, but this same behaviour was not always observed when they were interacting with the older adults. For Dylan, a lack of boundaries was observed in the way she physically interacted with Henry, one of the residents involved in iPlayed. During one session, while Henry read to Dylan and Bonnie, field notes detail my observations of Dylan standing up on the couch and rubbing Henry's bald head. Despite Dylan's actions, Henry did not offer a reaction, nor did he ask her to change or stop her behaviour, he just continued to read the book while Dylan continued to rub his head and talk over him.

> *Henry was sitting between Dylan and Bonnie reading to them. Dylan appeared very distracted today. She stood on the couch and started rubbing Henry's bald head, loudly exclaiming how smooth it was and giggling, while looking around the room. Neither Henry nor the teachers reacted (Field notes, 16/11/2016).*

While it did not appear that Dylan's actions had any hurtful intent, her behaviour could be interpreted as crossing boundaries that she would normally respect. For example; physically interacting in a way that could be seen as demeaning or patronising, standing on the furniture in what the children had been told was someone else's home, and ignoring Henry's attempts to engage her in the story. This differed significantly from Dylan's observed behaviour at the childcare centre,

in which she was respectful and for the most part listened to the adults and followed their instructions. It is probable that the behaviour of the adults she is engaging with is playing a role in her behaviour. Henry's lack of intervention or reprimand may be reinforcing this difference in boundaries and sending the message that her behaviour is appropriate. Based on my observations at the childcare centre, if Dylan were to behave this way towards her teachers, there would likely be some feedback which would discourage that behaviour in the future. The role that the adult plays in the relationship will be having an impact on the child's behaviour towards them, and in the case of Henry, it is possible that his lack of reprimand may result in Dylan interacting with other older adults in a similar manner.

John was also observed interacting with an older adult in a way that seemed to have different boundaries than his interactions with other adults. During his interview, while drawing a picture of an older adult, John highlighted that the skin of an older adult changes as they age, which signposts that they are going to die soon.

John: This guy's gonna die soon.

Kate: Is he?

John: Yeah.

Kate: How do you know that?

John: Because they're changing colour. Their skin's changing colour.

During a book buddy session, John was observed holding the arm of one of the female residents and pointing out her age spots, while explaining to her that these spots mean she is getting older and will die soon. John also ignored her attempts to re-engage him in the story they were reading.

This difference in boundaries can result in the children interacting with older adults in a similar way to how they might interact with their peers, rather than in the way they interact with other adults. This could be, in part, due to the behaviour of older adults versus their

parents/guardians and teachers, and how they establish these boundaries. It may also be influenced by the way the children see older adults as a group.

Another aspect of the relationship between the children and older adults that is different in nature to other relationships the children hold, is demonstrated through the way the children talk about this relationship. For many of the children, there is a belief that this relationship is important to, and emotionally benefits, the older adults. The children repeatedly made the comment that their visits to the retirement village made the older adults happy.

Kate: If a new kid came to The Park and they said to you "Hunter, why do you go to Village at the Park?" what would you tell them?

Hunter: Because there's old people wanting to read stories to us.

Kate: Oh the old people want to read you stories do they?

Hunter: Yeah they do.

Hunter's belief seems to be that the children attend iPlayed sessions as a favour to the older adults, as reading the children books is something they really enjoy and have a strong desire to do. There is no mention of how he feels about these sessions or the impact they have on the children. There is also an implication that the older adults who are "wanting" to read the children books are waiting for them to arrive; there is a sense of need and importance around the children's presence.

For Layla, this aspect of the relationship is highlighted when she is asked what she enjoys about older adults, and her response is that she is nice to them.

Kate: Can you tell me what the best part about old people is?

Layla: Uh, that I'm nice to them.

Despite the question being about what Layla takes away from a relationship with older adults, her response speaks to the perceived emotional benefit for the older adults.

Harriet holds similar beliefs to her peers when it comes to the emotionally beneficial nature of the relationship for the older adults.

Kate: Do you think it makes them happy or sad when you come visit them?

Harriet: Happy, because they get to see someone when they're at home.

Kate: How does it make you feel when you go see them?

Harriet: It makes me feel. On the old days the people were bored and they're old now.

Kate: So why do you think you go visit them?

Harriet: Because, because those people are old and they love us and they want us to come. But if we did do that, we would come, that's something that we need to do it.

Kate: You need to go? Why do you need to go?

Harriet: Because they'll miss us and then they won't have fun.

Kate: Do you think they would like it if you came more?

Harriet: Yeah but we can only come once a week because we have lots of stuff to do.

According to Harriet, if it weren't for the children's visits the older adults would be alone and bored at home, which is similar to Hunter's implication that the older adults were waiting for them, and that there was a need for, and importance to, the children's visits. Harriet also identifies that the visits are something children "need" to do. She notes that while it would be beneficial to the older adults if they came more often, and in fact she suggests that a lack of visits could also be detrimental to them, she is also clear that the children are at their visiting capacity due to the other things in their schedule.

It is important to note that while the children do talk about their teachers, friends and family members in their interviews, none of them make any reference to these relationships being beneficial to the other person, highlighting that this is a unique feature of their relationship with older adults. This may be influenced by the way that their parents/guardians and teachers talk about these visits and what they mean to the residents of the retirement village. It is important that when

adults have these conversations that they acknowledge and explore how these visits impact both the children and the older adults.

While many of the children suggested that their visits to the retirement village were of great emotional benefit to the older adults, there were some who acknowledged that the children may also benefit from the iPlayed sessions. However, this benefit was more on a practical rather than emotional level.

Kate: So you go over there to get your books read to you?

Harry: Yeah.

Kate: And why do you do that?

Harry: Cause we need someone to read books to us.

As Harry points out, the children are not able to read books to themselves; they require someone else to do it for them, a role which the older adults are able to fulfil. The older adults are meeting a practical need for the children, while the children see themselves as emotionally benefiting the older adults.

Kate: What happens once you've chosen the book?

Elliot: You go down and sit on a chair or the couch.

Kate: Oh, with who?

Elliot: Some people that reads the book to you. The old people.

Referring to the older adults as "some people" whose purpose is to read books, suggests that Elliot sees no other benefit to his relationship with the collective of older adults, other than providing people who can read him stories.

Noah's interview was one of the rare times in which a child acknowledged that they may benefit emotionally from spending time with older adults.

Kate: So this morning, where did we go?

Noah: Village at the Park.

Kate: And why did we go to Village at the Park?

Noah: Cause be happy, and we need to be happy, and the people were good. They have to be happy because, because we don't wanna be grumpy and punch people and that's how, that's why we always go to Village at the Park.

Kate: So going to the Village makes you happy?

Noah: Oh yeah.

Kate: So what would happen if you didn't go to Village at the Park?

Noah: Then you'll be grumpy.

Noah appears to see the older adults as a source of happiness and emotional regulation for the children, not solely as people who read you stories. His belief is that if the children didn't get to engage with this source of happiness then they would be negatively affected in an emotional sense, which would have a negative flow-on to their behaviour.

The ways in which the children relate to the older adults seems to differ from how they engage with other adults in their life, which is expressed through the boundaries that exist in these relationships, and the children's beliefs about who benefits from these relationships. It is important to acknowledge that the behaviour of the adults involved, and the information that the children have heard about these relationships, will likely be impacting how they navigate these relationships.

Individual Connection

Despite the apparent overarching relationship with the collective, there were still moments of connection observed between the children and individual older adults. These connections involved the sharing of personal experiences, they were dependant on the child's wider context and they were temporary in nature.

Individual connections between children and older adults were often experienced through the sharing of personal experiences. During my third research visit to a book buddy session I observed Hunter reading alone with a female resident. After the first story Hunter spent some time showing her a cut he had on his foot and explaining to her how he had got it. It appeared important to him that this woman know about his injury and that she shared in his personal experience. In return, the woman shared a physical injury of her own, about which Hunter had many questions. Their exchange of shared experiences allowed Hunter to form an individual connection with this woman.

> *Hunter was alone with a female resident today. He had a cut on his foot and showed her his toe. It was a lengthy discussion. In return she showed him an injury on her arm (Field note, 22/03/2017).*

A similar exchange was observed between another female resident who was reading with Bonnie and Parker on my fifth visit. The three of them were attentively reading a book in which one of the characters was a monkey. The woman commented that she once had a pet monkey, a revelation that the children were very excited about. They asked her questions about the monkey, and she told her story of growing up in a different country and the exotic pets that people owned. The children then shared with her the pets they had at home, and again, the exchange of shared experiences allowed Bonnie and Parker to form individual connections with this older adult.

While the relationship the children had with the collective of older adults remained across my research visits, which was demonstrated through their consistent friendliness towards all retirement village residents, the development of individual connections appeared to be more dependent on the wider context of the children's day. Context affected the children's interest levels and focus during the iPlayed sessions, which seemed to therefore affect their ability to form any individual connection during that session.

On my first research visit, there had been a significant earthquake two days prior and schools had been closed the day before. The teachers informed me that many of the children hadn't slept well, and during the iPlayed session, I observed the residents struggling to get most of the children to focus and engage in the reading. Similarly, on my fourth visit, it had been raining for three days and the teachers had observed the children starting to get restless. Once we arrived at iPlayed, there were fewer residents than usual to read to the children and so they had to go in bigger groups. Again I observed the residents struggling to engage the children and many children were moving around the room.

> *Children were less focused today. They asked to watch TV. Residents were firm and asked children to sit down and listen. It's been a rainy couple of days prior (Field notes, 05/04/2017).*

On the days when the above individual connections were observed, there had been no significant changes to the children's routine, that I was aware of, and the number of residents present at iPlayed meant that the children could go in groups of three or smaller. Throughout both of these sessions I observed that the children were much more physically still, and that there was also a lot of talking and engagement between the residents and children. These observations suggest that the context plays an important role in the children's ability to have individual connections with older adult.

The context of the fifth session, in particular, in which Bonnie and Parker learnt about the woman's pet monkey, facilitated multiple connections and I observed all of the groups of residents and children sharing personal stories about their lives and families. At the end of the session, when all the other groups had finished, one woman was still reading, as can be seen in the photograph below. The children all gathered around her and quietly listened to her tell the story. It was the only time I saw all of the children quiet and still and connected with one individual in this manner. Again,

this shows the importance of the context of the day and how it impacts the children's interest in the programme, and their openness to forming individual connections with the older adults.

Figure 3. All of the children listening to Joan reading the final story.

Another important feature of the individual connections that the children formed with the older adults is that they were temporary. Despite my observing these connections during the iPlayed sessions, none of the children made any mention of them in their interviews, even though they were carried out only several hours after the session.

The temporary nature of these individual connections can also be seen in Dylan's connection with Peter. As has been previously discussed, Peter was a retirement village resident who did not participate in the buddy reading sessions, but he would make regular visits to the childcare centre to play with the children in the preschool room. In my first few visits to the centre several of the staff

members spoke about Peter, emphasising how important he was to the children and how much they enjoyed his visits. In particular, it was repeatedly mentioned that Peter had a special friendship with Dylan, one of the girls attending the childcare centre. On one of my research visits I observed Peter come over for a spontaneous visit and saw how excited the children were, and in particular, the attention Dylan paid him. Peter's relationships with the children, and in particular Dylan, supports the argument that the children did develop individual connections with older adults, but the temporary nature of these connections is highlighted in Dylan's interview. Peter used to play a game with the children in which he pretended to be the Cookie Monster, however the staff had recently had to tell the children that they could no longer play this game, as several of them were getting too rough and the staff were concerned about Peter's physical safety. While Dylan would participate in this game, it was not the only way she and Peter interacted.

Kate: Do you know any other old people?

Dylan: No.

Kate: What about your friend Peter?

Dylan: Who's Peter?

Kate: Don't you have a friend called Peter who comes to visit you here?

Dylan: Peter.

Kate: Yeah.

Dylan: No.

Kate: The old man that comes to visit you guys here?

Dylan: No.

Kate: And he used to do the cookie monster.

Dylan: Oh yeah.

Kate: Did you forget him?

Dylan: Yeah.

Kate: Oh.

Dylan: He's not coming back.

Kate: Isn't he? Oh why not?

Dylan: He's staying there.

Kate: Oh the cookie monster. But Peter will come back won't he?

Dylan: Maybe.

Kate: What does Peter do when he comes to play with you?

Dylan: Why did you turn that on? (referring to audio recorder)

Even though Dylan was observed by both me and the teachers having multiple one-on-one interactions with Peter (to a degree that led the staff to make note of a special connection between the two of them) once Dylan was out of that context she appeared to have no recollection of who Peter was. It took persistent and multiple prompts for her to remember him. Even when she did remember, she only spoke of Peter in the context of the Cookie Monster and appeared to show more interest in the Cookie Monster no longer coming back, than she did in Peter himself. Towards the end of our discussion about Peter, Dylan completely lost interest in talking about him, and instead had questions about my audio recorder. There is a significant contrast between Dylan's observed behaviour with Peter, and the way she spoke about him outside of the immediate context of their connection. This contrast highlights that, while the children develop individual connection with older adults, the connections may only exist in the moment, and once the moment has passed the individual is forgotten and only the collective of older adults remains.

Another way of illustrating the momentary nature of the connections the children developed with individual older adults, is by contrasting these relationships to the value the children placed on the goldfish at the retirement village. As can be seen in the photograph below, outside of the room where the book buddy sessions were held was a pond full of goldfish, that the children would often spend time looking at following their reading session.

Figure 4. Four children watching the goldfish pond.

The goldfish were a topic that many of the children brought up in their interviews, and as demonstrated by Gillian and Elliot, often the goldfish were discussed in the context of the child's favourite part of the programme or the best parts of the older adults themselves.

Kate: Do you like going to Village at the Park?

Gillian: (nods head yes)

Kate: And you like seeing the old people?

Gillian: Cause you can see fishies there.

Kate: And what's the best part about going? What do you like the most?

Gillian: Fishies! Everyone likes the fishies!

Kate: What do you like about the old people Elliot?

Elliot: Mmm. Because they have the fish.

The relevance of the children's focus on the goldfish is that for many of these children, they were observed forming individual connections with the older adults they spent time with during iPlayed, however, upon returning to the childcare centre and doing their interview, there was no mention of the older adult, or their connection and interactions. Only the goldfish received a personal mention. While the children's fascination with the goldfish is important, it does not discount the connections the children made with the older adults; rather it highlights the temporary nature of these connections.

Another example of this can be seen by comparing Tasman's observed engagement during an iPlayed session, with his interview at the childcare centre later that day. In the photograph below, the three boys, one of whom is Tasman, can be seen actively engaged in reading the story with the older adult. I observed the woman asking each of the boys to point out different words and animals, and when they got the question right she would praise them. The boys seemed to respond positively to this and became eager for it to be their turn. As their individual connection with the woman started to grow, the book about a zoo became a platform for personal story telling. Each of the boys, including Tasman, and the woman, started sharing their own personal experiences of visiting zoos. These stories included the people they had gone with and the entertaining things they had seen the animals doing. Throughout these conversations all four individuals were observed laughing and smiling, suggesting a level of connection between them.

Figure 5. Joan and the boys enjoying a story.

Despite the fact that Tasman was observed engaging with the woman in the photograph, laughing and sharing stories, once he returned to the childcare centre and sat down to talk with me, there was no mention of this connection.

Tasman: Yeah well, it's just a bit boring.

Kate: Oh, why was it boring?

Tasman: I just don't know.

Kate: Was it this book that was boring or the whole thing that was boring?

Tasman: The whole thing that was boring.

Kate: Okay.

Tasman: Well it wasn't boring when I looked at the fishies.

Kate: What do you like about the old people?

Tasman: That they have fishies sometimes. I like when I looked at the fishies.

Although I observed Tasman having fun and connecting with his peers and the older adults, his review of the iPlayed session was that it was actually quite boring, which is the first indication that his observed connection was temporary. For Tasman, the only part of the session that wasn't boring was the goldfish. The goldfish were also the only redeeming feature of visiting the older adults, despite the interaction he was observed having with the retirement village residents and his friends.

The children were repeatedly observed forming momentary individual connections with older adults while participating in iPlayed sessions, however once they returned to the childcare centre and were interviewed several hours later, most of them had forgotten this connection and the individual they had spent time with. Despite these individual connections, the children were more likely to reference the goldfish as being the best part of their experience, the part they missed they most, and their favourite part of visiting the older adults themselves. While connections appeared to form with individual older adults, they did not last beyond the situation. What remained was a fondness for the goldfish, which suggests that the children do have the ability to make longer lasting associations or connections.

The goldfish also served as a way in which individual older adults and children could develop connections with one another. Following the book reading, it was common for the children to go and stand at the window and watch the fish, and as can be seen below often the older adult would join them. I observed the particular interaction below, and the fish provided an opportunity for the children and the older adult to engage and connect. The five of them were working together to spot the fish and discuss their movements, while also making jokes and laughing together. Again, a connection was formed, even if just for this moment.

Figure 6. The children and a resident looking at the goldfish together.

Once we returned to the childcare centre for their interviews, the gentleman was not mentioned by any of the children, despite the interactions I had observed only several hours prior. A repetition of the pattern of temporary connections between children and older adults.

Another aspect of these connections is that it seems that they could have developed between any combination of child and older adult, which brings us back to the idea that the children have a relationship with the older adults as a collective. There appears to be a certain level of comfort with all of the retirement village residents, and a connection could be formed with whomever they happened to spend time with on a given day.

Despite a lack of individual relationships between the children and older adults, individual connections were observed during iPlayed sessions, predominantly through the sharing of personal experiences. Unlike the relationship with the collective of older adults which was stable, the children's ability to focus and form individual connections was greatly impacted by the wider context of their lives. If there were disruptions in their external context they seemed to be less capable of forming individual connections. Finally, these connections were temporary, which was particularly seen in the way the children quickly forgot their interactions with the older adults and yet remembered the fish they had seen at the same place.

The children's behaviour and language revealed a relationship with the older adults of the retirement village, however several features of these relationships led to the conceptualisation of these relationships as being with older adults as a collective, rather than with any individual. These notable features were the children's consistent expressions of familiarity regardless of the individual, and the warm language they used when talking about the older adults despite a lack of favourites and a lack of personal information about them. It is important to highlight that one of the children did sustain individual relationships. Within the general relationships the ways in which the children related to the older adults differed from how they related to other adults and to their peers, particularly in their boundaries and who they saw the relationship as benefiting. Although it was rare to see individual relationships between the children and older adults, the children were observed forming individual connections through the sharing of personal experiences; however these connections were dependent on the wider context of the child's life that day and were temporary.

What It Means to Be an Older Adults

The analysis also showed that the children had developed their own individual understandings of what it means to be an older adult. The first part of this was the children identifying the members of this group and making sense of any differences that they noticed between themselves and older adults. The children presented an understanding that being an older

adult involves an experience of physical decline, with death being the eventual consequence. The children also shared that old age is not just about what is lost, as well as insights into the lives of older adults.

Identifying Older Adults

The identification of older adults was predominantly done through physical markers, with an understanding that the 'oldness' of this group would be physically manifested. This focus on the physical highlights the significant role that observation plays in the process.

Elliot highlighted an essential part of the children's understanding of how old age would present itself physically, namely that it would be through a feature that made this group "different" from the children.

Kate: What else do you know about old people? How do they look?

Elliot: They look a bit different than us.

The children also saw older adults as being different to the other adults in their lives, including their parents/guardians, teachers, and me, and they could distinguish which group someone belonged to through a physical marker.

Kate: Are your teachers' old people?

Harry: Um there's one teacher old person. Her name is Karen.

Kate: Okay. And how do you know that she's an old person?

Harry: She has wrinkles.

Despite the fact that all of the teachers at the childcare centre wear the same uniform, and are present in the same context, Harry was able to identify that one of his teachers was different in her physical appearance. Her wrinkles were the sole indicator that Karen was different to his other teachers and part of the group of 'old people.'

Across the children, a variety of physical features were talked about as a marker of old age, from wrinkles, to changes to the skin or hair, to the addition of a walking aid. A pattern was observed in which the children would detect a physical difference in an individual older adult and would apply this information to the collective. There appeared to be an understanding that all members would bear the same physical marker of their membership to this group. Regardless of the physical marker a child identified, the process of noting this marker in an individual and applying it to the collective applied.

Kate: What are other things that the old people have?

Harriet: They have like a big thing at their neck. They have like that (pointing to Adam's apple area of neck).

Kate: A big thing at their neck?

Harriet: They have like that at their neck, when they talk.

Harriet saw that being an older adult is physically manifested through the sagging and wrinkling of the skin on the neck, which she introduced while we drew pictures of two individual older adults. Later in the interview, while discussing the differences between children and older adults, Harriet brought up the sagging neck again, but this time in the context of the collective, stating that "They get more skin on their neck so that a little triangle comes there and then it goes like that. When they talk it firstly pops up and when they breathe down it goes down." When asked for clarification she was clear that this physical feature is something that can only be identified in older adults and reaffirmed that it is present in all members when she let me know that "both boy and girl old people" have it. Harriet returned to this physical manifestation of old age for a third time when we turned to the topic of her Granny's appearance.

Kate: What does your Granny look like?

Harriet: She has wrinkly cheeks. And she has (points to neck).

Harriet repeatedly referred to the sagging neck of older adults as she shifted from talking about two hypothetical individuals in her drawing, to older adults as a group, and then back to her Granny. There appears to be a well formulated belief that this physical change is indicative of old age, and that all individuals who are part of this group will bear this marker.

John also demonstrated a firmly held belief that older adults could be identified simply by looking at them, and he too returned to this feature many times throughout his interview.

Kate: Let's draw a picture of an old person together.

John: If they are old they turn brown.

Kate: Is there anything we need to draw on an old person's face so that we know that they're old? Ooo what is that? (referring to drawing).

John: That's when they're old.

Kate: So when you look at a person, you know they're old by looking at them?

John: Yeah. Their skin is kind of blacky colour or brown.

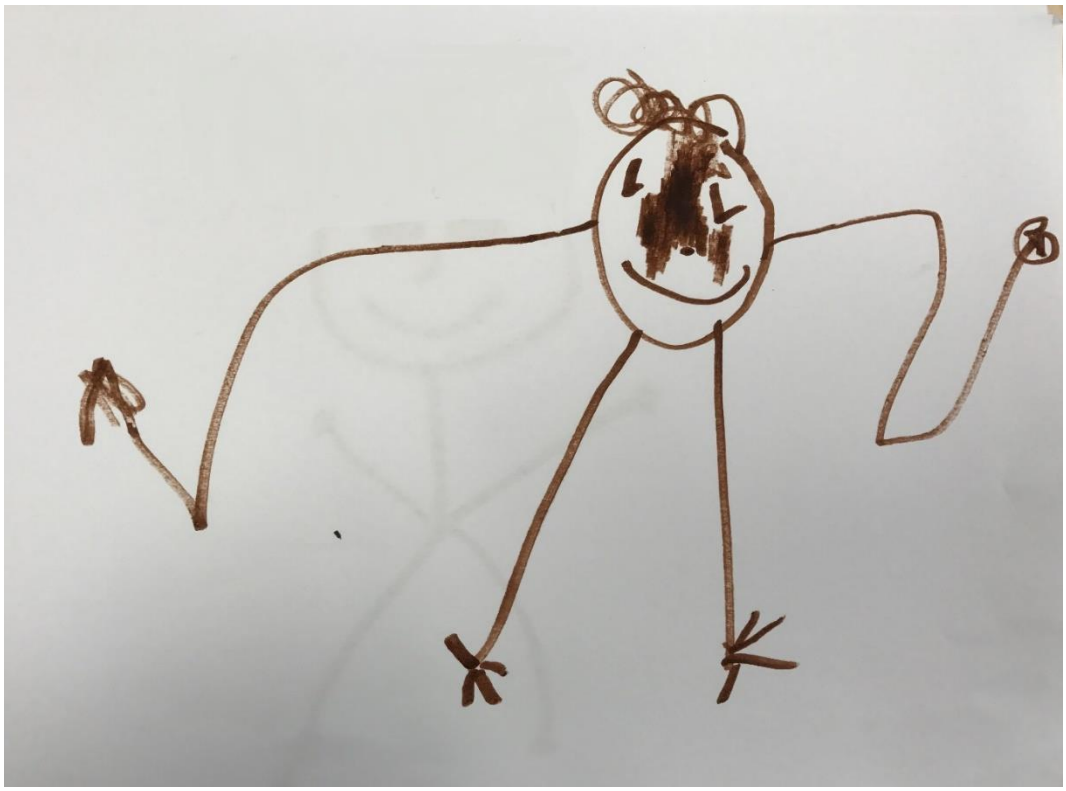

Figure 7. John's drawing of an older adult.

The above image shows the picture that John was drawing while discussing the physical manifestation of old age that he has observed; the changing or darkening of the skin, which he demonstrated on the face of the individual he drew. During the interview John spoke of the difference between older adults and children, namely that children's skin is "not brown," which he said while he pointed to his own arm. John also used the photographs of the iPlayed session we had attended that morning to illustrate his point, by identifying the liver spots on the arms of a retirement village resident as the changes to the skin of an older adult.

This physical manifestation of old age was also used as a way to exclude me from this group, as he did not observe the necessary feature on my body.

Kate: Am I an old person?

John: No because your skin didn't change.

Kate: So how old are you when your skin changes?

John: So old.

In the same way that Harriet had, John repeatedly returned to the physical feature of changing skin colour as the conversations shifted between individuals and the wider group of older adults.

The idea that old age is physically manifested, that it is something that can be seen, suggests that observation has played a very important role in how the children have come to these conclusions about how to identify an older adult.

Both John and Harriet offered specific details about the physical features they had observed in older adults and they seemed firm in their belief that this was an important part of being an older adult. Despite this conviction, they both appeared to lack the necessary language to label the physical feature, signifying that this may have been an emerging idea they were developing themselves rather than one that had been taught to them. The contrast between the detail

provided, and the lack of language available to label the physical marker, suggests that observation played a key role in the development of their idea. The multiple interactions the children had with the older adults allowed them to repeatedly observe their appearance and the details of any differences that were noted. Had the importance of these physical markers been taught to them, rather than these being ideas that the children had developed themselves, we might expect to see some more specific language around the labelling of these markers. Instead the children attempted to describe these features using words, gestures, and references to external examples.

The role of observation can also be seen in that, while on an individual level, the children repeatedly offered one physical feature as a way of identifying older adults, as a whole, the children presented a range of features. An assumption can be made that if the children's meaning making had simply come from the books and media they consume, or the way their teachers and parents/guardians talked about older adults, that there would be a more cohesive presentation of what makes someone 'old.' Similarly, while wrinkles were a commonly identified physical marker of old age among the children, the labels used to identify them ranged from "bumps" to "stripes" to "the bits that go up," and also "wrinkles." Again, if the children had been taught about wrinkles being a part of old age, we might expect to see more consistency in the labels they used to talk about them. It seems likely that the children observed wrinkles in a variety of older adults, and through their own individual process of making sense of this difference, each child came up with their own label which would allow them to communicate this physical marker they had observed.

The children also spoke directly to the role that observation played in their understanding of older adults.

Layla: Sometimes I stare at old people.

Kate: What do you see when you stare at them?

Layla: Wrinkles.

Kate: Wrinkles. Anything else?

Layla: A lovely face.

Observation allowed Layla to identify and categorise people into the group of "old people," but it has also allowed her to develop a deeper understanding of these people, as she placed a positive value on something that she sees when looking at them.

Unlike Layla, Tasman and Dylan were unable to offer a specific identifier for older adults.

Kate: How do you know that they're old?

Tasman: Just because I look, and when I see them they always look old.

Kate: How do you know if someone is old?

Dylan: Because they just look old.

Kate: Is Peter an old person?

Dylan: Yeah.

Kate: How do you know?

Dylan: Because we have seen them.

Despite the lack of specific information about what they were observing, there was still a clear understanding that you can identify an older adult simply by looking at them.

The role of observation was also seen in the children's unwillingness to answer some of my questions.

Kate: What else do old people like to do?

Jett: Um they like to, I don't know.

Kate: You don't know? What do old people do when you guys aren't there?

Jett: Um I don't know because I can't see them.

Kate: What do old people like to eat?

Gillian: I don't know.

Kate: Do you know what old people like to do in the day?

Gillian: No because we only go over there for two minutes.

When I asked Gillian about what old people eat and do in the day, she looked confused before letting me know that they only go to the retirement village for a little bit (Field notes, 18/01/2017).

Both Gillian and Jett were clear that their knowledge and understanding of older adults is limited to what they can observe, and Gillian appeared confused that I could think otherwise. They simply had not seen the older adults engaging in the phenomena that I asked them about. Again, if the children were predominantly learning about older adults from their experiences outside of the retirement village, we might expect them to offer an answer to my questions. Instead they are clear that they have only seen a limited part of the lives of these older adults.

Through the process of working to understand what made someone "old," the children had taken the physical differences they had observed in the residents of the retirement village and their grandparents, and conceptualised these as being the physical manifestations of old age. While a variety of physical markers were discussed, each child typically only used one to consider whether someone met their criteria of being "old." Given that the process of deciding whether someone was an older adult seems to be based solely on physical criteria, the children's observations are an important part of this process.

Making Sense of the Differences

The children sought to understand how these physical manifestations of old age came to be, and for some this involved using their own bodies as a source of reference. They also expressed an understanding that while older adults may be different in appearance, there are still similarities across the bodies of these two groups.

Kate: What does your Grandma look like?

Noah: She always does this dressing gown with purple flowers. And she always wears these like little stripes on her, like these ones here. (Pointing to the lines on the palm of his hand).

Kate: Oh she has those on her skin.

Noah: There. (Pointing to the lines on his palm).

Kate: On her hands, like your hands?

Noah: Like on, and they're on shes neck and shes face and stuff.

Kate: So they're all over her body?

Noah: Yep.

Noah has observed that his grandmother's body looks different, in that it is covered in "stripes" or wrinkles. Through the process of making sense of this physical manifestation of old age, Noah has noticed that the "stripes" on his grandmother's body are very similar to the "stripes" or lines on his own hand. His own body has provided the source of context that allows him to understand the changes to his grandmother's body. It also suggests a sense of connection between Noah and his grandmother. While they are members of different groups, her observable physical marker is something that exists in a smaller way on Noah himself. It is also interesting that Noah sees his grandmother's marker of old age as something that she chooses to wear, just as she chooses to wear her dressing gown with purple flowers.

Kate: So these creases in the skin, are those something that old people get?

Noah: Yeah they always get them.

Kate: Okay. So is that something that only old people have?

Noah: Yeah.

While Noah has observed the "stripes" or wrinkles on his grandmother, he also expresses a recognition that this marker will be identifiable on all older adults. He takes an individual observation and applies it as a rule to the collective.

Billie also explored the physical differences she had observed in older adults by connecting them to her own body.

Kate: Is old people's skin like children's skin?

Billie: Nah. They're a lot wrinkly.

Kate: Oh they have wrinkles.

Billie: Because my Grand, my Great Grandma, and my Grandma's skin, and my Grandad's skin is wrinkly.

Kate: Wrinkly. Okay.

Billie: Because every time when I go swimming my fingers and toes get wrinkly.

Kate: Oh is that what your Grandma's skin is like?

Billie: Yeah. Even when her skin is dry.

Kate: It's still wrinkly?

Billie: Yeah.

Kate: Oh wow that's so interesting. Why do you think that is?

Billie: Because they've been in water so much.

Billie has noticed that the physical difference in her grandparents is similar in nature to the changes that she has observed in her own skin when she goes swimming. Her own body and experiences are the only point of reference she has to make sense of her grandparents' wrinkles, so the logical conclusion for Billie is that they have simply spent more time in the water throughout their lives.

The process of noticing that the physical marker of old age was directly linked to a physical experience of their own, suggests that while part of identifying older adults involves labelling them as the 'other', there is still an understanding that children and older adults are connected. There appears to be an understanding that their bodies come from the same origins but are at different stages of the ageing process. It also continues to emphasise the importance of observation in the

children's sense making. Observation allows the children to notice the physical differences in older adults, but also how these connect to their own physical being.

Seeing older adults as different, or the 'other', while acknowledging that they're still part of the wider collective of human beings, is also shown through the physical features that some of the children initially thought of when asked to draw a picture of an older adult.

Hunter: That's her heart.

Kate: Oh nice. What about that?

Hunter: Well, is our brain inside our head?

Kate: Yes.

Hunter: That's the brain. And those are the legs.

Kate: Anything else?

Hunter: Arms! I forgot about that, and hair. We actually forgot something else on our persons.

Kate: What?

Hunter: Ears! Like that. I forgot that persons have ears.

My opening request of the children to draw an older adult required them to call upon their own memories or experiences with older adults, which were then articulated through the pictures they drew and the accompanying explanation and conversations around these pictures. While many of the children immediately recalled features such as wrinkles or bald heads, Hunter's drawing suggests an initial acknowledgement that older adults are human beings, sharing many of the same features as him.

Parker: You draw two feet on the side of the legs, like that.

Kate: What are those?

Parker: Those, those are shoes. Trainers.

Kate: Oh he's got trainers on?

Parker: And a big smile. Two eyes, just like. This is how you make an old man.

Similarly, Parker's initial response to a request for a picture of an older adult was to draw an "old man" wearing sneakers with a smile on his face. The physical features that Parker called to mind are those that could be found on an individual from any stage of life, speaking to the underlying idea that while older adults are different in many ways, there are still many similarities.

In their quest to make sense of the physical differences they had observed in older adults, many of the children had returned to their own bodies to find an explanation. By connecting the physical changes older adults experience to their own bodies, and by acknowledging the parts of our bodies that are present across the life span, the children were recognising that while older adults are different, their physical experience is still connected to their own.

Physical Decline

Another aspect of the children's understanding of what it means to be an older adult, was that this group is in a state of physical decline which impacts their ability to engage in a range of physical activities, and may require permanent changes to their environment.

Kate: Is there anything else that children can do that old people can't?

Jett: Children can swing on bars.

Kate: Okay, can old people do that?

Jett: No because they have sore arms and they will just fall off.

Kate: Oh no.

Jett: On the bark.

Kate: Anything else that children can do that old people can't?

Jett: Um they can squirt water.

Kate: Can old people squirt water?

Jett: No because their hands are so soft and they can't squirt it from the water balloon.

Kate: Oh so are old people a little bit weak?

Jett: Yeah.

Kate: Oh okay. Can old people do running?

Jett: No.

Kate: Why not?

Jett: Because they will just, when they're running, they'll just fall over.

Kate: Oh they'll fall over!

Jett: On concrete!

Kate: Ooo yeah that would hurt. Can old people do jumping?

Jett: Nope because they'll just fall over.

Kate: Oh they'll fall over again. Is there anything else that old people can't do?

Jett: Um they can't, um they can't do, copy teachers.

Kate: Why not?

Jett: Because they can't cut out water drops.

Kate: Is it too hard for them to cut out water drops?

Jett: Yeah because look, they can't do that (using the scissors).

Kate: Why can't they do that?

Jett: Because they don't have strong hands to cut the paper.

Jett's understanding of the physical decline experienced by older adults is that it is global in nature, affecting a wide variety of physical activities, all of which they once had the capacity to participate in. There is a belief that this decline means they are no longer capable of participation, or that participation would lead to an injury. The list of activities that Jett provided suggests that he sees older adults as being unable to participate in any activity with the slightest physical component, even down to the much less intense task of using scissors. According to Jett, the physical decline that accompanies old age is significant and very restrictive.

Gillian also highlighted the physical decline that older adults experience, by including a walking stick in her drawing of an older adult (which can be seen below) underneath the left arm of the person.

Figure 8. Gillian's drawing of an older adult.

While working on her picture, Gillian talked about how walking sticks are something exclusively used by older adults, as they have lost their ability to walk "properly."

Gillian: Walking stick.

Kate: Yeah. And what do they use that for?

Gillian: Walking.

Kate: And is it just old people who use walking sticks?

Gillian: Yes.

Kate: How come old people need walking sticks?

Gillian: Because they can't walk properly.

Kate: Oh why not?

Gillian: Because when you're old, you might, your legs might get forget how to walk

The statement that older adults can no longer walk "properly" suggests that this decline is being viewed in a negative way. This is not just about an observable difference, but the implication is that there is a correct way of doing something that older adults are no longer able to comply with. When asked why older adults are no longer able to walk "properly," Gillian uses the word "forget" in her explanation, which might suggest a belief that both a physical and cognitive decline are part of the ageing process.

While Gillian is clear that walking sticks are only used by older adults, this belief has not been extended to all members of this group.

Kate: Woah that's huge. Does your old person need a walking stick?

Gillian: Yes.

Kate: Do all old people use walking sticks?

Gillian: Some people, some ones don't, some ones do.

While it was less common to see the children applying flexibility to the beliefs they had about older adults and their ageing, this use of the rule would fit with Gillian's own observations of older adults at the retirement village. My own observations of the residents who participated in the iPlayed sessions was that while some of them used walking frames and sticks, there were those who walked without aide. Gillian's understanding that older adults have a variety of experiences with walking sticks may come directly from observing this for herself during the iPlayed sessions she attended.

Noticed a variety of physical abilities in the village residents. One woman uses a walker to get around, and another uses no aide, but walks quite slowly and slightly hunched over. The other two residents, along with the programme facilitator, all appear to walk with ease (Field notes, 26/04/2017).

Some of the children expressed an understanding that older adults were limited in their physical abilities, but unlike Jett and Gillian, they were unable to offer any insights into why these limitations existed.

Kate: What kind of things do you like to do when you come to daycare?

George: I like playing on the pole and slide.

Kate: Can old people play on the pole, or the slide, or the swing?

George: No.

Kate: Oh, why not?

George: Um because I think they can't. I think they cannot.

Kate: What would happen if they went on the pole or the swing?

George: I don't know.

For George there was an understanding that older adults are not physically capable of some of the same activities as children, but he had not yet formulated why this lack of ability is present.

Kate: Can old people do running?

John: No because if old people run, they'll just trip over.

Kate. Oh! Why will they trip over?

John: Um I don't know.

As with George, John was unsure about the why of the physical limitations of older adults, but he did express that there would be negative consequences if they did participate in activities that they no longer were capable of.

Hunter saw any sign of physical injury in an adult as an indicator that they were now “old.”

Kate: You said that your Dad is old, how do you know that your Dad is old?

Hunter: Cause he told me.

Kate: Does your Dad look old?

Hunter: Yeah.

Kate: When you look at your Dad how do you know that he’s old?

Hunter: Because he does old stuff.

Kate: What kind of old stuff?

Hunter: Like he hurt his back. So he has to do exercises. So that’s why he is old.

While many of my conversations with the children involved identifying the physical decline that was evident in the individuals they understood to be ‘old’, Hunter used his father’s back injury to move him into this group. Having to change your behaviour and manage an injury is something Hunter understands to be solely for older adults.

An extended understanding of the physical decline experienced by older adults was that this required environmental changes in order to meet their abilities and keep them safe.

Kate: Are there things that children can do that old people can’t?

Parker: Go swimming lessons.

Kate: Swimming lessons. Old people can’t do that?

Parker: They can swim in nice cosy water.

Kate: Can they swim in cold water?

Parker: (shakes head no).

Kate: Oh why not?

Parker: Because it’s too cold for them.

Parker's belief that old people prefer to swim in "cosy" water, as opposed to the cold water that children go to swimming lessons in, suggests a fragility and diminished resilience in older adults. Environments that children can comfortably exist in need to be adjusted in order to be more appropriate for older adults.

Noah also spoke of a need for the environments of older adults to be adjusted in order to keep them safe.

Kate: What else can you tell me about old people?

Noah: That they don't have stairs.

Kate: Why not?

Noah: Because they can't tell people that they're running or going upstairs because that makes them trip up. And they don't want to trip up.

Kate: What happens if old people trip up?

Noah: Then they kind of one or two or three of their, or five tooths will fall out.

Kate: Tooth will fall out?

Noah: Yeah so they don't like stairs. My Grandma doesn't have stairs.

The assertion that if older adults were to use a set of stairs that it would result in significant injury, speaks to an underlying assumption that the physical decline of this group has made them vulnerable. It also suggests that the physical decline is permanent, and that management involves removing things from their environment that may serve as a hazard to their physical safety. This appears to have come from an observation that his grandmother doesn't have stairs, and whether an explanation was offered by an adult or Noah came up with this answer himself, this idea has been applied to older adults as a group.

While many of the children saw the physical decline of older adults leaving them with a lack of ability across various activities, Layla had a different perspective.

Kate: What are some things that kids like to do when they're at daycare?

Layla: Chase.

Kate: Can old people do chasing?

Layla: Some. My Oma isn't very fast.

Kate: So she can do a little bit of chasing but not very quickly?

Layla: Yeah.

Kate: What about running?

Layla: They can do running but slow running.

Kate: Okay, that's interesting. What about walking? What are old people like at walking?

Layla: I can show you with my legs. (acting out walking)

Kate: Okay so you're walking.

Layla: Slow!

Kate: Slower and a little bit bent over.

As she physically demonstrates, Layla sees older adults as having experienced physical changes, such as the hunching of the back and the slowing gait, which is in line with the way her peers see older adults. The difference is that Layla sees these changes as making it difficult for older adults to move in the same way as children, but not precluding them from engaging in physical activity, which is a perspective that was expressed by many of the other children. While the children may be applying their individual beliefs about older adults to all members of this group, this does not mean their beliefs are the same. What may look similar on the surface has some nuance to it underneath.

It is interesting to note that while the majority of the children talked about the physical changes the older adults experience and how this can affect their abilities, these were typically presented as neutral facts with no judgement or feelings about the decline itself. Tasman presented a different experience of these changes.

Kate: Was this lady good at reading?

Tasman: Yeah.

Kate: Are all the old people good at reading books?

Tasman: Some of them are not as good.

Kate: The ones who aren't, what makes them not as good?

Tasman: Their voices. Because some just talk like, well old people just don't really talk beautifully. Because they just old and their throat are like.

Kate: So they don't talk beautifully?

Tasman: Yeah

Kate: What does it sound like?

Tasman: It sounds like, when they talk like (croaky voice noise). "You" (in a croaky voice).

The physical differences that he had observed in older adults seem to have impacted Tasman and his experience of iPlayed. These weren't simply observations; he had attached an element of judgement to them.

The children expressed that part of being an older adult was experiencing a change in your physical abilities, which in turn required a change in surroundings in order to keep them safe. This story of decline was commonly shared, and typically without judgement, however there were children who deviated from this narrative.

Old Age Eventually Leads to Death

The ultimate consequence of the older adult's physical decline was its connection to death, which led many children to distance themselves and their loved ones from this group.

Jett: Old people need the walking stick so they can, they can walk and balance on the streets when they're crossing the road.

Kate: What happens if they don't have it?

Jett: They'll just fall over in the road and they'll get squished like a pancake.

Jett offers a very linear understanding of ageing, in that there is a physical decline, which requires adjustments and assistance, and if these are not followed the natural consequence is death. The phrase "squished like a pancake" sounds like it might be from adult talk that Jett either overhead or was a part of. He then appears to have applied his road safety knowledge to older adults and the dangers they face due to their physical changes.

Kate: Can this old person do running?

Bonnie: (shakes head no)

Kate: Why can't they do running?

Bonnie: Because they um, otherwise um, they will die.

Kate: They'll die if they run. How come?

Bonnie: Because they're too old to run.

In a similar way to Jett, Bonnie also presented a very linear understanding of ageing, in that the old person she was drawing could no longer participate in a physical activity due to their lost ability, and if they did, they would die. It presents older adults as being very fragile and on the cusp of being alive or dead. Participation in the wrong activity could lead to their sudden death.

For other children death was less of a consequence of participating in the wrong activity, and more of an inevitability of their life stage.

Kate: So what happens when they're old?

John: They die.

Kate: Oh.

John: You die.

Kate: Is this an alive person, this one?

John: This guy's gonna die soon.

Kate: How do you know that old people die soon?

John: Because they're changing colour. Their skin's changing colour.

Kate: Oh wow.

John: Do you know this guy's skin is changing colour? Because he's getting old.

As previously explored, the children typically have observed one physical change or difference in an older adult, and this marker became their guide for whether or not an individual was part of the group older adults. John's understanding was that old age was physically manifested through dark spots on the skin. He also seems to understand these changes to be a manifestation of how close to death this group are, as their skin is literally dying. For John, the death of older adults does not appear to be a consequence of participating in the wrong activity, but rather just a part of the ageing process for everyone. Again, it is possible that this has been influenced through the talk of adults. John appears to have a clear understanding that all older adults will die, and he has used the observations of their physical changes to make sense of this.

Harriet and Jett also acknowledged the inevitability of death for older adults.

Kate: Do you think that old people like being old?

Harriet: Uh no.

Kate: Why not?

Harriet: Because they're going to die soon. Because they got most of their life.

Kate: Do you think that old people like being old?

Jett: No.

Kate: Why not?

Jett: Because, did you know when you nearly get old you die?

Kate: So are old people sad?

Jett: Yeah.

Kate: Why are they sad?

Jett: Because the old people will die.

Kate: Do you think old people ever feel happy?

Jett: No.

Both children saw this inevitability of death as being something that had great impact on the quality of life for this group. They saw it as a negative part of old age and something that prevents this group from enjoying their lives.

Due to the children's belief that being an older adult meant death was inevitable, there appeared to be an increased motivation to distance themselves and their loved ones from this group in order to protect them from this inevitability.

Kate: How do you know that your Granny is an old person?

Harriet: She's not really old, she's just a little bit.

Kate: Yeah.

Harriet: Well she's quite young, she's quite young.

Kate: How do you know that she is only a little bit old?

Harriet: Um because she's got a lot to live.

Kate: She's going to live for a long time?

Harriet: Yeah.

For much of the interview Harriet chatted away while focusing on her drawing or the pictures. When we discussed her Granny, and how she isn't that old and will live for a long time, Harriet stopped what she was doing and engaged in eye contact with me. She appeared very focused on the conversation and making her point clear (Field notes, 18/01/2017).

Despite the fact that Harriet had previously identified her Granny as being an older adult, once she had made the explicit connection that this group were much closer to death, it became important to her that Granny was different from this group. Granny might be older, but she is not as

old as those people that are going to die soon, and therefore Granny is not in any immediate danger of dying.

Kate: Do you think you're going to get old one day?

Harriet: Well not for a long time, but I will.

Harriet also had the insight to acknowledge that she herself will eventually be "old", but again it was important that this was not something that was going to happen in her immediate future. Later in her interview, Harriet also talked about how her parents would also be "alive for a long time", which could suggest that this may have been a conversation that had already happened at home. It could be that in order to comfort Harriet, her parents or other adults didn't dismiss death as a reality, but rather affirmed that this wasn't something that would be happening to anyone in their family in the near future; that they would live for a long time.

Whether it be as a consequence of participating in the wrong activity, or a natural inevitability of age, the children were clear that being an older adult was strongly connected to death. Naturally the children want those individuals whom they love and care for to be alive, so they made a clear distinction between these people and the group of older adults, even if in many other ways these individuals might have normally been put into this category.

Old Age is Not Just About Loss

While a great deal of time was spent talking about the losses that are associated with old age, there was also an acknowledgement that older adults had acquired certain abilities that the children do not have.

Kate: What can old people do that kids can't?

Parker: They can do stuff.

Kate: What kind of stuff?

Parker: Special stuff that children can't do.

Despite not being able to provide any insight into the specifics, Parker presented a brief recognition that part of being an older adult is the gaining of abilities.

Kate: Can old people do running?

Billie: Yeah.

Kate: Can old people do jumping?

Billie: Yeah.

Kate: Sounds like they can do a lot of things.

Billie: Yeah that's cause when you grow bigger you're too big for them.

Kate: Oh when you grow bigger you're too big for some things are you?

Billie: Yeah. But because old people can do like big jumping.

The physical activities that Billie spoke of older adults gaining ability in were the same ones that many of her peers felt this group experienced a decline in. Rather than seeing a longer life as a time of decline, she saw this as a time for their bodies to grow bigger and stronger, giving them abilities that the children have not yet acquired.

One of the most talked about abilities that came with being an older adult, was being a skilled reader.

Kate: They are quite good at reading books?

Hunter: Yeah.

Kate: Why are they so good at reading books do you think?

Hunter: Cause they read books when they were babies with their mums. With their mums and they just, they've read a lot of books. So um with their mums so they know all of the words.

Kate: Are they good at reading stories?

Harriet: Yeah because they read all the stories and the right words.

Kate: Oh they're good at the words too?

Harriet: Yeah.

Kate: How do you think they got so good at the words?

Harriet: Because they read when they were a little girl and practised and practised.

Both Harriet and Hunter have connected their own lives to the lives of older adults. They seem to have reflected on the time they have spent reading with their families, teachers, and the residents of the retirement village, and made an assumption that the older adults also had these experiences as children. They also both said that to become skilled requires practice and repetition, which again may reflect conversations that have been had with the adults in their lives.

Parker also spoke of older adults developing their abilities as skilled readers through practice and repetition.

Kate: How did she get so good at reading books?

Parker: Because she practised.

Kate: When did she do that?

Parker: Because she can practise.

Kate: Why can she practise?

Parker: Because she's practising at the Village all day.

Rather than being something that took place in childhood, Parker sees this repetitive practice as being a part of the day-to-day life of older adults. His construction of how this woman had become a skilled reader, again shows the role that observation plays in this process. Parker has solely observed the residents participating in iPlayed and seems to have extrapolated this information to make sense of how the rest of their days are spent.

Through practice, through their bodies growing, and through simply having had more time, part of becoming an older adult has been the development of skills that the children have not yet acquired.

Lives of Older Adults

The children had also developed an awareness of the day-to-day lives of older adults, talking about their employment, living situation, and how they fill their days. They had acquired this knowledge through their interactions with the retirement village residents, and their experiences outside of their childcare centre.

While drawing an older adult, Harry decided that it was also important to draw their home and proceeded to draw a multi-level building which was covered in windows, similar to the apartment buildings that are part of the retirement village.

Kate: There's so many windows in this house.

Harry: It's cause there's so many old ladies and man.

Kate: Oh do they each need a window to look out of?

Harry: Yeah like. There's an old man windows, that's an old man window, that's an old man window, and that's an old man window, and that's an old ladies window. That's an old man's window, that's an old ladies window. There's a man's window.

Kate: Oh do they all live in this house together?

Harry: Yeah.

Kate: Do a lot of old people live in houses like that?

Harry: Yeah.

Kate. Oh. Do all old people live in houses like that?

Harry: I think they do.

I repeatedly heard the teachers reminding the children that the retirement village is the home of the older adults that they meet, and from this Harry has an understanding that all of these

people live together in one large home. He has extrapolated this to a possible belief that all older adults live in the same way. Visiting the retirement village may be the only experience Harry has of seeing the home of older adults.

Layla offered insights into how the older adults spent their day, which have also likely been influenced by her visits to the retirement village.

Kate: What do old people do in the day when kids go to day-care?

Layla: Uh just walk around and have some food.

Kate: Anything else they do?

Layla: Talk to other people.

Next to the lounge where the children attend their iPlayed sessions at the retirement village is a cafeteria area where the older adults sit, talking and eating together. The iPlayed sessions I observed took place during what appeared to be morning tea at the village, so as the children moved from the childcare centre to the lounge in the retirement village, they saw older adults walking through the hallways, or sitting and talking and eating together. These were the exact activities that came to Layla's mind when asked how older adults spend their time.

For other children, how they made sense of the lives of older adults was informed through experiences they had had outside of the context of the retirement village and the childcare centre..

Kate: Do old people go to work?

Harriet: Nah. Because remember, my Granny doesn't go to work anymore.

Kate: Oh why not?

Harriet: Because she has a day break, because she's too old.

Kate: Oh can old people not work?

Harriet: Yeah.

Kate: Why not?

Harriet: Because they are, they're too old. The people are young and have more to be alive. They ruled it to be not old people to come.

Kate: Oh so is that a rule that old people can't go to work?

Harriet: Yeah. But that's nice for old people so that they can hang out at home.

Kate: Do they like hanging out at home?

Harriet: Yeah.

Kate: Do you think when you're an old person, do you think you'll still want to have a job?

Harriet: Well when I'm an old person I won't be able to.

Harriet's observation or knowledge that her Granny no longer works, has been extended to all older adults, including herself when she becomes part of this group. It has been put into her wider context. This context is not always completely accurate, but helps the child understand why things are the way they observe them. Her belief that older adults are no longer able to work is likely reinforced by seeing many older adults in their home, the retirement village, when she goes to visit.

Dylan also had some insights to share with me about how older adults spend their time.

Dylan: Do you know an old person?

Kate: No I don't. That's why I came here, to hear about old people from you guys. Was that everything you know?

Dylan: No I know they write letters.

Kate: Old people?

Dylan: Yeah.

Kate: Who do they write letters to?

Dylan: Me.

Dylan appears to have had at least one experience of receiving a letter from an older adult in her life, and this has been extrapolated to a belief that this is a significant part of how these people spend their days.

Whether the information is gained from their experiences at the retirement village and the childcare centre, or from their family and home lives, the same process of constructing ideas about older adults appears to be happening. When I asked them about the older adults, they called on a specific memory, and used this to develop a way of providing a set of beliefs about this group.

An important part of the children's developing understanding of what it means to be an older adult, was first identifying who was part of this group. This was predominantly done through the use of a physical marker, which was repeatedly returned to. This focus on the physical manifestation of old age highlights the important role that observation is playing in the children's conceptualisation of older adults. The children had also worked to ascertain how these physical changes had come to be, often returning to their own body as a source of understanding. Part of being an older adult was also a level of physical decline, which according to many of the children, had led to an inability to participate in a variety of physical activities. Old age was also linked to death, although it was important to the children to separate their loved ones from this group when we discussed this aspect of ageing. Importantly, old age is not just about loss, and there were children who identified the abilities that can be gained through living a longer life. Finally, the children had developed an understanding of how the older adults spent their days, including their employment and living situation.

Social Context

The children demonstrated that the information they gained, through observation, from their interactions with older adults was an important part of how they made sense of this group. However, there is also some evidence that they are socialised into seeing older adults in a certain way, particularly by their families.

Kate: What's that?

Parker: Lungs.

Kate: His lungs?

Parker: Yeah. And he got heart. Then, then, then, get some blood. Do some blood. Going down, down, down. And there's something blocking it.

Kate: Something's blocking it?

Parker: Yes, something blocking it.

Kate: What's blocking it?

Parker: That piece of water.

Kate: Is it good or bad for it to be blocked?

Parker: Bad for it blocked.

Kate: Oh. What happens when it's blocked?

Parker: You, you won't be alive. You'll be dead.

Kate: So what's blocked? The lungs, or the heart, or the blood?

Parker: The blood got stuck by that water because it's going down too fast.

Kate: Oh okay. Is that something that happens in all people?

Parker: Yeah like Uncle Steve.

Kate: It happened to Uncle Steve. Was he an old person?

Parker: Yeah and, and, and he died because something was blocking him.

When drawing an older adult, Parker made the unconventional choice of starting with the lungs and other internal organs, whereas most of the other children started with a person's external features. Parker's choice of how to begin his picture highlights his own understanding of older adults, which is that their internal changes bear the most significance. This understanding is connected to a personal experience within his family. The detailed knowledge that Parker has around what happened to his uncle suggests that this was not something he simply observed, but that he was also likely given an explanation by someone in his family.

Harriet also developed strong beliefs about older adults through the knowledge gained from her family.

Kate: Are there any parts that you don't like about going to visit them?

Harriet: Yeah.

Kate: What don't you like?

Harriet: I don't like when people choose who I have to go with.

Kate: Like to read a book. Which old person or which kid?

Harriet: Which...If it's a boy then I don't feel like I want to be with them. But if it's like a girl then I feel like I'll go with them.

Kate: A boy old person do you mean?

Harriet: No a girl.

Kate: Oh so you only like to go with the girl old people? Is that right?

Harriet: (nods yes)

Kate: Oh, why don't you like to go with the boy old people?

Harriet: Cause I just feel like I want to spend time with the girl people. Because my Dad said most boy people go in prison so, I'm not sure that I should say, and most women don't. So I decided to go with the girls because then that won't be happening too bad.

According to Harriet, her father shared a story about the unsafe nature of male adults, which she has applied to male older adults, and therefore to the men involved in iPlayed. This information has not only impacted her understanding of older adults, but also her behaviour towards some of its members.

Harriet: That man's gonna read me a story. (referring to drawing)

Kate: Do you like it when the men read you the stories?

Harriet: Girls.

Kate: Why not the men?

Harriet: Just, that. Just it's that. I just wanted to draw a man.

Kate: Yeah that's alright. How come you like the girls reading you the stories better?

Harriet: Because I like girls better.

Kate: Oh. Why are girls better?

Harriet: Because I don't feel scared.

Kate: Oh, do you feel scared with the boys?

Harriet: (nods yes)

Kate: Oh why?

Harriet: I just don't, I just, I just. I don't know, I just feel like it.

In her second interview Harriet drew a picture of her reading with a male older adult, however she was clear that this was just a drawing and that she was still not comfortable reading with males while attending iPlayed. This piece of information that she learnt from her father, has become significant in her mind and was mentioned repeatedly throughout both interviews.

The time Noah spent with his Koro and Nana had provided him with extra insights into the lives of older adults.

Noah: Old people aren't allowed to go on, they're not allowed to go on, what are they called, roller coasters.

Kate: Why not?

Noah: Because my Koro and Nana are not allowed, they told me.

Kate: What happens if they go on a roller coaster?

Noah: Um they'll get more old, and my Nana and Koro don't want to get old.

Kate: They'll get older if they go on the roller coaster?

Noah: Yes. And I don't want to them to get old so they said no.

Noah's concept of older adults has been influenced by a specific experience that he shared with his grandparents, which again held significance for him. This also represents another example

of children wanting to distance their loved ones from the collective of older adults, identifying them as ‘old’ but not as old as the collective, in order to protect them from death.

It is clear that the children’s wider social context, their families and teachers, are part of how they have come to understand older adults. The children are working to make sense of the world around them as best they can; with whatever information they have available. However, this wider context was not the focus of the current research project, and so this is less of a finding and more of an acknowledgement.

Chapter Eight: Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of the current research project was to explore the experiences of the children engaged in a shared-site IG programme carried out in New Zealand, as well as to explore the children's constructions of older adults. The following chapter provides a summary of the main findings before offering a discussion in which they are compared and contrasted to the relevant body of research. Finally, the chapter explores the strengths and limitations of the current project, directions for future research and the implications for working as a clinical psychologist. The findings from the current research project highlighted that the children had developed relationships with older adults, but that these relationships were with this group as a collective, rather than with any specific individuals. The children were observed forming individual connections with the older adults participating in iPlayed, but these connections were temporary in nature and were often forgotten by the children. Outside the context of these connections, the children engaged with and spoke of all older adults, from both the retirement village and their own family, in a consistently warm and friendly manner, which was different to how they were observed interacting with adults from other age groups. Together, these findings suggest that the children saw all older adults as being part of a cohesive group, a group that they had developed a fondness for.

Another important finding was about how the children identified who was part of this collective of older adults. This was predominantly done through appearance, with the children holding a belief that old age is something that is physically manifested which makes them different to other adults. This physical manifestation of old age was typically limited to one physical marker, such as wrinkles, but each child had their own physical marker that they used to assess who was an older adult. Given the importance that was placed on the appearance of older adults, it was evident that observation had played an important role in how the children were making sense of this group. Older adults were also seen as being in a stage of life that involved the loss of many of their physical abilities, as well as the inevitability of their death.

These findings suggest that the children were stereotyping the older adults, particularly when discussing how old age was physically manifested, which was the primary way the children assessed who was part of this group. These stereotypes were, in part, relationally produced through the children's social interactions with older adults, and these interactions appear to have been enjoyable experiences for the children. Part of the stereotyping of older adults was that these stereotypes were expressed through the relationship with the collective. The children appear to assume that all interactions with members of this collective will be warm and enjoyable, just like the ones they've had with their grandparents and various residents of the retirement village. These same expectations, or assumptions, were not applied when the children interacted with adults from other age groups. One reason for this may be that the children have daily interactions with these adults, across a wider variety of settings, compared to their interactions with older adults which are less regular and limited to a few settings. Other adults also tend to be in roles of authority in the lives of preschool children, so the children go into these interactions with a different context.

When discussing stereotypes, it is important to be clear about how we are conceptualising these. The cognitive understanding of stereotypes is that they are fixed, internal entities that can be automatically activated, whereas a discursive framework argues that stereotypes are inconsistent, showing variation across contexts, and that they develop out of social talk (Augoustinos & Walker, 1998; Augoustinos et al., 2014). It is important to note that the current study uses a discursive framework, whereas much of the research discussed in this chapter takes the cognitive one.

Much of the existing literature focused on the stereotyping of older adults by children falls into two camps. The first seeks to answer the question about whether or not children hold stereotypical or ageist beliefs about older adults, and the second explores the content of these stereotypes. The literature around the existence of stereotypical beliefs in children presents three different perspectives. The first is that children have been found to hold negative stereotypes, or ageist beliefs, about older adults (Burke, 1981; Davidson et al., 1995). The second is that children

hold positive views about older adults (Davidovic et al., 2007; Robinson et al., 2015) and the third perspective is that children can hold stereotypical beliefs about older adults, but they aren't necessarily negative in nature (Falchikov, 1990; Villar & Fabà, 2012).

The current findings appear to most align with the third perspective. Firstly, the children had constructed stereotypical beliefs about what it means to be an older adult and understood them to be a cohesive group that was different to other adults, particularly when it came to appearance. These differences were not discussed in either a positive or negative manner, as in the first two perspectives, but rather were presented as neutral pieces of information that the children had come to know about older adults. While the children were stereotyping older adults as a way of making sense of the world around them, they are not negative towards this group as other studies have suggested.

The stereotypical nature of the relationships the children developed with the collective of older adults also aligns with this perspective, that stereotyping exists, but that the children are placing no judgement on these stereotypes. There is a positive element to the relational expression of the children's stereotyping of the older adults, shown in the familiarity expressed to all members of this group, and the use of language such as "love." However, unlike the research reporting that children hold positive views about older adults (Davidovic et al., 2007; Robinson et al., 2015), this is not all there is to the relationships. Many of the children also expressed an understanding that these relationships existed predominantly for the benefit of the older adults, and a difference in boundaries was observed between the children's interactions with older adults and their interactions with adults from other age groups. The stereotypes the children held around the older adults were neither strictly negative nor positive in nature, they were just present. In the conversations I had with the children, and the interactions I observed, the stereotypes were present.

The differences in reported findings across the three perspectives on the stereotyping of older adults, and therefore the current findings can, in part, be explained by looking at the

methodological choices. The studies associated with the first two perspectives, in which children either viewed older adults in a negative or positive way, were deductive; the researchers were seeking to confirm whether or not their own beliefs about children's understandings of older adults were correct. In turn their method and analysis choices involved the presentation of the stereotypical ideas, and the children being asked to confirm or deny their presence through rating scales or closed questions (Burke, 1981; Davidovic et al., 2007; Davidson et al., 1995; Robinson et al., 2015). In contrast, Falchikov (1990) and Villar and Fabà (2012) approached the same research topic from an inductive perspective, which resulted in their method and analysis choices being open in nature, and therefore their reported findings allowed the children to offer a variety of answers, rather than answering a pre-existing list developed by the researchers. The current research project took a similar approach. Rather than attempting to access a finite truth within the children through closed questions or rating scales, I sought to understand how the children made sense of older adults within the context of our social interaction.

This is to not suggest that the studies reporting that children stereotype older adults in a negative or positive manner are incorrect, as the current findings do acknowledge that there can be positive and negative components to the children's stereotyping. However, if children are exclusively asked about their concept of older adults within a discrete set of parameters, this will only produce findings that exist within these parameters, and does not mean that children only think about older adults in this way. When children are given space to express their views and beliefs in an open manner, as in the current project, and when the interpretation of these views and beliefs allows all components of the information to be included, there is much more richness and nuance in the children's conceptualisation of older adults. The studies reporting that children see older adults in either a negative or positive manner, also do not acknowledge the impact that the context of these questions played on the children's answers, and instead their findings are presented as fixed truths that the children will hold in all situations. By contrast, the current findings were actively

constructed between me and the children and represent their understandings of older adults in that context, in that moment in time.

By taking a broader inductive approach, I was able to highlight one of the ways in which the stereotypes were constructed; the pattern of observing a physical difference, a marker of the older adults age, and using that marker to identify other members of this group. The pattern was consistently seen across the children's talk, however the specific details or the content of the stereotype changed from child to child. This pattern may not have been identified if the children were simply asked to rate certain traits, or answer "yes" or "no" to their presence. The other important pattern that would not have been identifiable through these methods, was the children using their own bodies as a way of making sense of how the physical changes they had observed in older adults had come to be. The use of multiple methods in the current study, alongside my curious and inductive stance, provided the children a variety of opportunities to share with me how they understood older adults, in their own words, and within the context of their own life. This likely played an important role in the various layers that were seen in the findings.

The other component of the literature on the stereotyping of older adults by children is a focus on the content of these stereotypes. Physical decline was a theme that was seen in both the literature and the current findings, however the specifics of these findings did not always align. While there was agreement that children can see older adults as tired and frail, the current findings did not show that the children thought of the older adults as unattractive and sick (Hoe & Davidson, 2002; Levy & Macdonald, 2016; Teater & Chonody, 2017). Likewise, while the children in the current study showed a strong acknowledgement that there were changes in appearance, this was not referred to as a negative as it is in the literature (Hoe & Davidson, 2002; Levy & Macdonald, 2016; Teater & Chonody, 2017). When looking at the ability to participate, the belief that older adults weren't as capable as participating in the same activities as children, was seen in both the literature and the current findings (Robinson et al., 2007). However, the literature speaks of older adults being

poor, isolated, incompetent and doing nothing but sitting around, which were not ideas shared by the children in the current study (Babcock et al., 2016; Cuddy et al., 2005; Falchikov, 1990; Hoe & Davidson, 2002; Seefeldt et al., 1977). Instead, the children acknowledged that they did not know how older adults spent their time, as they had never observed them outside of the context of their iPlayed sessions, or they would speak of the activities they had seen them engaging in, such as reading.

Older adults are also reported to be seen as separate from the rest of society, being disposable and almost dead (Babcock et al., 2016; Falchikov, 1990; Officer et al., 2016; Rich et al., 1983). The current findings showed that the children made a direct link between old age and death, but this was conceptualised as being part of their ageing process, as opposed to something they were ready for, or that made them disposable. The children also repeatedly made it clear that older adults were different, but this did not extend to a separation from the rest of society. Cognitive decline was another of the themes in the literature, with references to older adults being forgetful and presenting as cognitively slower (Hoe & Davidson, 2002; Teater & Chonody, 2017) however, this was not part of the story that the children presented. By contrast, several of the children reflected that the adults had, in fact, gained abilities. Living a longer life had allowed them time to develop abilities that the children had not. The ability to be a skilled reader was particularly identified by the children and was based on their direct experience. The literature also reports that older adults can be seen as having to rely on others, and being “burdensome” (Levy & Macdonald, 2016; Officer et al., 2016; Seefeldt et al., 1977) which was not something that the children in the current study discussed. They did talk about older adults needing to adjust their environment in order to keep themselves safe, but there was no mention of other people participating or being responsible for this.

Overall, when comparing the contents of the stereotypes that children hold about older adults, the findings in the literature present a general tone of negativity and distaste towards this

group among children. The children in the current study have identified certain differences in older adults, the contents of the stereotypes they hold, but placed no value on these differences. This again fits in with the perspective that the children are stereotyping older adults, but that this is neither negative nor positive.

The variances noted between the literature and the current findings could be occurring for a number of reasons. The methodological approach is crucial and much of the research on this topic has taken a cognitive framework of stereotypes and was deductive in nature, whereas this was not the approach of the current project. The literature also covers a wide variety of age groups, both children and young people, so there will be variance in the language and ideas the participants had access to. It is also important to consider that the children in the current study have been part of an IG programme, meaning that they have had repeated opportunities to engage with older adults who are actively participating in their lives, who have knowledge and experiences to share, and who may have been spoken about with a level of importance by their teachers and parents. In general, the children in the studies looking at the stereotyping of older adults by children, were not participating in IG programmes, so may not have had as much access to older adults as the children in the current study.

The role that method choices, age group, and participation in an IG programme may have had on the findings is highlighted by looking to the study by Holmes (2009) who interviewed both the older adults and the children (aged three to five years old) participating in a shared-site IG programme. Interestingly, the current findings are very similar to those of (Holmes, 2009), as are the method choices, the population, and the context of the study.

The findings from the current study align with the critique offered in the introduction, supporting a discursive framework of stereotypes, rather than a cognitive one. One way this was demonstrated was through the children's inclusion of their grandparents in the stereotypes they had of older adults. Throughout the interviews, there were multiple occasions in which the children

included their grandparents in the collective of older adults, and much of their understanding about how this collective could be identified was directly informed by the appearance and lives of their grandparents. However, when it came to discussions around the inevitable relationship between old age and death, the children were quick to distance their grandparents from this group. While they continued to acknowledge that their grandparents were "old" because they still fit much of criteria the children had for this group, they were a different type of old; the type that wasn't going to die anytime soon. This shift in response to a change in context is similar to the changing stereotypes of Americans that Haslam et al. (1992) reported in psychology students during the Gulf War. If the stereotypical beliefs that children held regarding older adults were a fixed internal reality, as the cognitive framework conceptualises them, we wouldn't expect to see this flexibility from the children. Instead of being fixed, the children's conceptualisation of the collective of older adults changed as the context of the social interaction changed.

The role that observation played in the development of the children's beliefs about older adults also supports a discursive framework of stereotypes. While not the only factor to influence the children's understandings of older adults, the observational nature of their learning suggests that the stereotypes the children held regarding older adults were relationally produced through their social interactions with individual members of this group, rather than fixed unchangeable beliefs that they bring to these interactions. The variable and context-driven nature of the children's stereotypes, combined with their relational production, suggests that the stereotypes that the children hold regarding older adults will likely change depending on the context and content of their social interactions, and the wider context of their lives.

Research Strengths and Specific Contributions to the Current State of Knowledge

The current study has a variety of strengths which allowed it to make several contributions to the literature about children's conceptualisations of older adults. It also contributes to the existing argument that children are capable of being included in research.

In the IG context, this study gives voice to the experiences of preschool children by prioritising their perspectives, and not turning to the adults in their lives to provide confirmation. In part, this voice was also facilitated by my conscious attempts to acknowledge, and make small adjustments to, the power imbalance that existed between me and the children. Accessing and sharing the voices of these preschool children is important for a number of reasons; the first being that the majority of IG literature is focused on programmes with school aged children, particularly those aged nine and ten years old (Dunham & Casadonte, 2009). Secondly, even when a study is focused on programmes involving preschool children, it often seeks the voices of the adults and does not include the children's at all (Gigliotti et al., 2005). Finally, IG programmes are promoted as a vehicle to enable the development of new relationships and meaningful interactions (Cummings et al., 2003; Epstein & Boisvert, 2006). By focussing on the children's voices, we can allow them to express the meaning and importance of these relationships to them, besides any expectations that the adults involved in these programmes may have. Given that IG programmes are intended to mutually benefit both the children and the older adults participating, it is important that both of these groups be included in research.

The geographical location of the current study is another important part of its contribution to the literature. At present there are no published research studies with a focus on children participating in IG programmes in New Zealand, and only one with a focus on older adults. When we look to Australia, which shares more similarities in terms of context than New Zealand does with the USA (where much of the IG research is coming from) there are only two published studies focusing on preschool children in IG programmes, and neither of these include the voices or experiences of the children (Low et al., 2015; Skropeta et al., 2014).

The current study also makes a significant contribution to the methodological literature about the inclusion of children in qualitative projects, by employing multiple methods. Previous studies with preschool children engaged in IG programmes have included the use of interviews and

drawings (Heyman et al., 2011; Holmes, 2009) but it is rare for one study to include four different methods, with observation being one of these, as did the current study. By utilising semi-structured interviews, drawings, and photo-elicitation, the children had various opportunities to participate in the research in whatever way was the most accessible or interesting for them. The use of drawings also provided them with an activity that was familiar and comfortable. The inclusion of observation played a particularly important role in the current study, as much of the richness of the findings came from comparing and contrasting the children's interviews to their behaviour during the iPlayed sessions.

The findings that focus on the children's relationship with older adults as a collective, rather than with specific individuals, is an area that has not been commonly discussed or explored in previous studies, making it another significant contribution. The existing research typically focuses on: whether or not children are stereotyping older adults; what the content of these stereotypes is; and when the research is in the context of an IG programme, whether or not participation in the programme had an impact on these stereotypes. This idea of the collective takes this focus a step further and considers how the stereotyping of older adults is relationally expressed.

Another component of this contribution to the research is that the stereotyping of older adults in the current study were expressed in a positive manner, with the children talking about the love they feel towards this group. They were also observed being warm and friendly towards all members of the collective of older adults. Often the story that is told in research focusing on the stereotyping of older adults by children, is that the existence of these stereotypes will lead to the children treating this group in a negative or exclusionary manner. It is important to consider that there is not a clear trajectory of consequences if stereotyping exists, and that it may simply be that the children are trying to make sense of their world, in that moment and time in the best way they can.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The current study has demonstrated that preschool children are capable of participating in qualitative research and that they have interesting and important insights to offer. There is a strong argument to be made that all future research that focuses on young children and the programmes they are engaged in, particularly IG programmes, should involve their active participation. Given that IG programmes are intended to mutually benefit both older adults and children/young people, future research may consider how both of these groups can be heard within the scope of their project. While the scope of the current study was on the children participating in iPlayed, a concurrent research project was carried out by another researcher, focusing on the older adults in the programme. Researchers should also consider the use of multiple methods when undertaking research with children, particularly the inclusion of interviews and observations, to have access to both their social talk and behaviour. The inclusion of drawings as a method is also likely to make a positive contribution.

The current study also has several limitations which lend themselves to important considerations for future projects. When considering the context of the current research, all of the children were exposed to one set of teachers, they lived in an urban setting, and attended a preschool where regular interaction with older adults was common and normalised. This did however provide the current study a strong focus, with a homogenous group, of sufficient size and scope for the analysis, which was important particularly given the overall research study requirements. The current study also did not include any specific focus or analysis of the religious or cultural beliefs that may have played into the children's understandings of older adults, because it needed to be focused on the research questions. Future research projects might expand their focus to include the wider context of the children's lives and the role that may be playing in their developing understanding of older adults.

Another important part of the children's context is their teachers, parents and families. As the primary focus of the current research was on the children and their experiences of the older adults, I did not fully anticipate the way in which this context might influence the children prior to conducting the study. As acknowledged in the findings, it is likely that the conversations the children are having with their teachers and parents, the conversations that they are overhearing, and the way they observe these people interacting with older adults, is having some impact on the way the children conceptualise this group. In order to develop a sense of this impact, future research exploring the ways that teachers, parents and families influence their children's understandings of older adults would be beneficial. I also chose not to collect any information from families about the presence of grandparents and older family members in their lives, as I wanted to continue to prioritise the children's voices and not turn to their parents for confirmation. While many of the children reported that their grandparents lived a plane ride away, future research may wish to explore the wider landscape of older adult relationships in children's lives, and how their presence or absence plays into their understandings of older adults. It may also be interesting to consider the impact on children who do not have older adults regularly a part of their lives, and therefore do not get to observe their parents or teachers interacting with older adults. What is the impact for children who do not get to observe role-modelling or how this group fits in with their wider community?

Finally, the current study did not collect demographic information about the children and their families. Given that the IG research in New Zealand is in its infancy, and that New Zealand is a multi-cultural country with a bi-cultural commitment, future research may wish to collect this information to prioritise this commitment.

Implications for Working as a Clinical Psychologist

While the current study is not clinical in nature, it was completed as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Clinical Psychology; therefore it is necessary to consider the implications of the current findings to the work of a clinical psychologist.

The current findings offer an important reminder of how much young children are learning through their observations, and how they are working to make sense of these observations using their wider context. When considering a clinical setting, it reinforces how important it is for psychologists to take the time to understand the child's context, and the various sources of information they may be observing and learning from. While parents and caregivers are an important part of this context, and their input and support are important, clinicians cannot assume that their insights into the child's experience are sufficient. It is important that time is spent with the child, prioritising their voice and experience, and seeing them as the expert of their own life.

Some of the strengths of the current study could be applied in a clinical setting, and are already used by many clinical psychologists, to make this setting more accessible for a young child, and to assist with the development of rapport. The research employed multiple methods, including interviews, observations and drawings, which have clinical applicability in that they provide the clinician with a variety of sources of information from children. Clinicians could consider the use of activities that are familiar to children to make them feel more comfortable in an unfamiliar setting. Intentional attempts to acknowledge and make small adjustments to the power imbalance that exists between adults and children may also benefit the development of rapport, and the openness of the children.

When it comes to the use of drawings with children, the current study emphasises the importance of considering how these drawings are interpreted and made sense of. A difference in findings was noted when studies made the choice for adults to interpret children's drawings, opposed to when adults spent the time asking the children to share what their drawing meant to them. This is a reminder for clinical psychologists to not attempt to evaluate a child's drawing or words without the child's participation, but to centre the child as the expert in their life and experience, and to ask them what their drawing means, rather than to make assumptions, or allow their parents and caregivers to make assumptions.

Clinical psychology endeavours to categorise and quantify the human experience of emotion and mental distress, which is typically done through the use of diagnostic categories and structured assessment tools. Much like the majority of research focused on children's stereotyping of older adults, this relies heavily on the use of questionnaires containing rating scales and yes/no questions. The questionnaires set the context and the language within which children and families may consider their emotional experiences. Much like the research, this is not to say that this wrong, or that the information gathered is incorrect, but it is important for clinicians to consider the context that these questionnaires bring. It is a useful reminder that these questionnaires can be a valuable starting point, but that the subsequent conversations psychologists have with children, in which they explore what these questions meant to the children and how they made sense of them, allow the children to further develop their personal understandings of their emotional experiences. It is also important to remember that the use of such discrete questionnaires may have set the framework or context for the interactions with the child and their family.

Finally, the diagnostic categories and assessment tools that clinical psychology relies on, are typically developed based on groups of people who share similar contexts, and these contexts are often shared by the clinicians working in this field. It is important for clinical psychologists to be aware that many of their clients will not share this same context and worldview, and to consider what that means as we work alongside these people to help them with their current difficulties.

Conclusion

The use of IG programmes is growing in popularity around the Western world, in part due to a belief that participation in these programmes may combat the ageist beliefs and negative stereotypes of older adults, that children have reportedly developed. The current research sought to explore the experiences of the preschool children engaged in an IG programme based in New Zealand, as well as to explore the children's constructions and understandings of older adults. By

approaching this exploration from a discursive, rather than cognitive, framework, the importance and value of each child and their context was able to be included.

It was shown that the children had developed relationships with the older adults, but that these relationships were not with individuals, but rather with the collective of older adults. Regardless of whether there had been any previous interaction, the children greeted all older adults with the same level of warmth and openness, and they spoke of a love and friendship between themselves and this group. This was in direct contrast to their relationships with other adults that were developed on an individual basis.

An important part of the children's relationships with the older adults was how they identified who was part of this collective. This was typically done through the use of a singular physical feature, and while each child had a different marker of old age, they all repeatedly returned to this marker in their conceptualisation of whether someone was part of the collective of older adults. The level of importance that the children placed on the physical manifestation of old age signals that observation likely plays a central role in this developing understanding.

One way of interpreting these findings is that the children were stereotyping older adults as a way of making sense of their experiences, but that contrary to the heavily repeated narrative in the existing research, these stereotypes are negative or ageist; the children placed no judgements on their ideas about older adults. For these children, while all older adults may carry the same physical manifestations of their old age, this was neither a good nor bad thing, it was simply the way things were. These differences in findings can, in part, be accounted for by methodological choices. Much of the existing research focused on the stereotyping of older adults by children is deductive, and therefore offers children rating scales and yes/no questions, whereas the current study was inductive, and selected methods that allowed the children to go further than structured assessments.

This research builds on a small body of existing literature focused on preschool children engaged in IG programmes, and is one of even fewer that chose to include and prioritise the voices of the children. It supports the argument that children have capacity to be included in qualitative research, and that they have important and interesting contributions to make. It also supports the use of multiple methods when working with children and suggests that the inclusion of both observation and interviews, can bring interesting contrasts and depth to the findings. This research is also the first with a focus on children to explore an IG programme in New Zealand. It is hoped that future research will continue to add to these areas, and that the voices and experiences of children will be prioritised and treated as an important part of the story, not one that needs to be filled in by the adults in their lives.

Chapter Nine: Final Reflections

At the beginning of this research project I had just finished working as a nanny for four years, and before that had a long history of caring for and working with young children. I believed then, as I do now, that young children were more than capable of sharing their insights and experiences, and that their parents and caregivers didn't always know how their children were making sense of the world. I had experience considering the strengths of individual children and utilising these to best support them in their development, and in encouraging them to share their thoughts and feelings. I had witnessed young children actively engage in acts of meaning-making in everyday life.

I was also beginning my training to become a clinical psychologist, an evidence-based profession built on the assessment of the human experience of emotional distress. At this time my understanding of evidence-based was that you looked to the published research for the answers or the 'truth.' There was a correct way of completing an assessment with a client, and a correct way of doing treatment, and I would be able to assess which box a client fit into, and therefore which treatment they should receive, based on the research or the evidence. I had not yet developed the ability to be critical of published research, and to understand that there were various research perspectives.

During the first year of this research project I began to engage with the literature about IG programmes and ageism, and at that time I accepted this literature as the truth. While my research project was to be an exploration, I expected the children would offer me the same answers that I had read in the literature. Alongside this I was being trained to complete a clinical assessment, to use frameworks and screening tools to understand a person's experience and put it these experiences into the appropriate category of distress. It was at the end of this year that I went down to Wellington and completed my first two interviews, the pilot interviews for the study. I went with a

clear plan and a clear set of expectations of what I would be walking away with at the end of this research visit.

As I came away from that visit, I remember feeling anxious: anxious that the children didn't say the things I expected them to say, anxious that they had different abilities, and anxious that some children wanted to engage in the interview more than others. Thankfully it was several months before I returned for my next visit, and I had time to listen to those interviews and to reflect on what had happened. I could hear that I was pursuing certain topics, repeatedly bringing the children back to the same idea, and there was an impatience if the children preferred to talk about or focus on something else. I had let my clinical training and the research I had been reading get in the way of my ability to just be with young children, to be curious about their experiences, and to create alongside them. My epistemological assumptions were clashing with my own experiences and beliefs about children.

This epistemological conflict led to me looking for other ways of understanding, and so I came to social constructionism which gave me an understanding that there was not an objective truth to be sought. It helped me to see that the goal of my research was to explore how these children, in this particular context were constructing their understandings of older adults, through their interactions with me. There was not a right or wrong answer to be found. I returned to the literature I had engaged with, and had to read everything new, and practice bringing a critical lens, and not just accepting what the authors told me. I could learn from the choices made in the various projects and consider what components could be useful for my project. I went on my next research visit the following year with the goal of being more curious, less driven to answer the question, and attempting to be creating with the children, and not for them.

Given that the children would typically only sit with me for an average of 18 minutes, I still felt a pressure to introduce the context of "old people" and to be refocusing the children to this if they drifted to a different conversation. However, I noticed that the children were more engaged in

our interviews, likely because they weren't being made to feel they were giving me the wrong answer. I re-interviewed one of my initial participants, and she was much chattier and appeared more comfortable. It is important to acknowledge that I was still engaged in my clinical training, which will have impacted my interviewing style, and I am sure there was an element of looking for the problem or the pathology that remained.

The role of the observations in the research also highlights the necessary growth I have experienced. While collecting the data, I thought the observations were interesting and useful, but I think I was still so focused on what the children were telling me and believed that was where my findings would be. It wasn't until the process of analysis began that I could see their richness and their worth. The observations were a reminder that I wasn't looking for the children's generalisable truth, which I was probably listening for in their interviews, but that we were constructing their understandings and experiences in that moment, and in that context.

The process of completing this research project over the past five years has not only been educational from a research perspective, but also from a clinical one. I still believe that there is value in the evidence-base of our profession, but I am more able to bring a critical lens to this research, for example by questioning the wider context of the participants in the study, and comparing this to the context of my own clients. Another example is to be looking at the research for clinical outcomes, but also for research that considers the experiences of the client in that treatment model. Particularly now that I work in eating disorders, it is important to consider terms like "recovery" and what these mean to researchers, to clinicians, to governments and funding agencies, and most importantly, what this looks like to clients and their families.

This process has also encouraged me to consider the type of clinician I want to be. I have come to realise I do not want to be the type of clinician who believes that there is one successful treatment modality, that should be adhered to regardless of the client. Instead I want to be the kind of clinician who is reflexive and integrative, who will do the work to continue to develop my

knowledge but will also position the client as the expert in their own life. I am sure that much of this is part of the normal process for a young clinician, as they shift from their training programme into their professional role, but I feel much of this growth was facilitated by my work on this project alongside this transition, and I am grateful for that.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Information Sheet

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

Experiences of Children Interacting with Older Adults

INFORMATION SHEET

Kia Ora Mums, Dads, and Caregivers,

My name is Kate Hebenton and I am a student at Massey University doing my Doctorate in Psychology. I have a background working with young children, and have always enjoyed hearing their perspective on the world around them. The relationship Little Wonders has with Village at the Park is a very special and unique connection, and I am interested in hearing from your children what they think of this relationship.

My research project aims to understand your child's experience of interacting with the older adults at Village at the Park, and to find out how they think about these older adults and aging. I would love for your child to be involved in my study, and I invite them to be a part of this research project, and share what the I-Played programme and aging means to them. If you are happy for your child to be a part of my research, please sign the attached consent form and return it to Sarah at Little Wonders. If you have any questions about the research, please don't hesitate to contact me at **hebenton.kate@gmail.com**.

You have been given this information sheet because your child has been involved in the I-Played programme, and is in the preschool room at Little Wonders. Altogether, I would like to interview 12 children, however, if we have more than that interested, I would love to hear as many stories as possible.

There will be two parts to my study. The first will involve me sitting in on several of the I-Played sessions. I will then interview children, one on one, and will ask them about their experience of the programme and what they think about older adults and aging. I will also use some of the photos the staff have taken during the I-Played sessions, to help children remember the sessions and the people involved. Interviews will be recorded, and will likely take around 30 minutes, and will take place at Little Wonders, on a day when your child is attending. If you agree to your child being a part of my research, I will also ask your child for their permission before the interview begins.

Once I have interviewed your child, I will type up the interview, and with my observations, use this information to create an understanding of how your children are experiencing their interactions with

the older adults at Village at the Park. All of the data I collect will be kept in a password protected file or in a locked drawer, and when I write up the research, your child will be assigned a code name so that their personal information will not be seen by anyone other than myself and my supervisors. All data will be destroyed after 5 years. Once the project has been completed, a summary of our findings will be sent to all parents and to Little Wonders.

You are under no obligation to agree to let your child be a part of my research, this information sheet is just an invitation. If you do decide that you'd like to child to participate, you have the right, and are welcome to ask me any questions about the research at any time. It is also important to understand that at no time will I use your child's name, or any information which may make then identifiable, during my research. If for any reason your child becomes upset or agitated during the interview, we can turn the recorder off and the stop the interview. Also, if your child doesn't want to answer one or any of the questions, they do not have to. If you or your child are unhappy with the interview in anyway, you are welcome to withdraw your child from the study anytime up until two weeks after their interview. And finally, once the research is complete, yourself and the childcare centre will be provided with a summary of the results, which I am more than happy for you to share with your child.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself or my supervisors at any stage throughout the research process.

Kind Regards,
Kate Hebenton

Hebenton.kate@gmail.com

Supervisors:

Prof. Chris Stephens – C.V.Stephens@massey.ac.nz

Prof. Kerry Chamberlain – K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz

Committee Approval Statement:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application 16/28. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Andrew Chrystall, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Norther, telephone 09-414-0800 ext. 43317, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz

Appendix B: Consent Form

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

Experiences of Preschool Children Interacting with Older Adults

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to my child's participation in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Parent/Caregiver Signature: ..... **Date:** .....

Child's Full Name - printed .....

Relationship to child: .....

Appendix C: Photo Release Form – Parents/Caregivers

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

Experiences of Children Interacting with Older Adults

PHOTO RELEASE FORM – PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

Recently your child has been spending time with the residents of Village at the Park as part of the I-Played programme. A student from Massey University, Kate Hebenton, is currently researching this programme. As a part of the I-Played programme, the childcare staff have been taking photographs of your child engaging in the programme. These photographs are an ideal illustration of the programme activities, and Kate would like to include them in her doctoral thesis and other publications related to this project. Because people could recognize your child in these photos, she is requesting your permission to use the photographs in her thesis and any other publications.

This form is to ensure you feel comfortable having your child's photograph included in the research findings. All photographs will be securely stored and only used if you give your permission by signing this form.

As you can see by looking at the accompanying material, each photograph is numbered, and each person in the photo is identified with a letter. Your child may be in more than one of the photographs. You can choose which photos you give permission to be used in Kate's research. If you agree to the use of a photograph of your child, please write the number of the photo and the letter which identifies your child in this photo.

Number of the photograph and letter of the person: _____

_____

I give my consent for this photograph to be reproduced for educational and/or non-commercial purposes, in reports, presentations, and publications connected to the research project. I understand that my child's name will NOT be used with the photograph.

Parent/Caregiver Signature: ..... **Date:** .....

Child's Full Name - printed .....

Relationship to the Child: .....

Appendix D: Consent Form for the use of Photographs – Older Adults

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

Experiences of Children Interacting with Older Adults

PHOTO RELEASE FORM – VILLAGE RESIDENTS

Hello to the participants of the I-Played Programme,

For the past several months you have been spending time with the children at Little Wonders, as part of the I-Played programme. This programme is being researched by a student from Massey University, Kate Hebenton. As part of the programme, the staff from the childcare centre have been taking photos of the children and the village residents interacting. These photos are an ideal illustration of the programme activities, and Kate would like to include them in her doctoral thesis and other publication related to this project. You have been given this form because you are in at least one of the photos that Kate would like to use. Because people could recognize you in these photos, she is requesting your permission to use the photographs in her thesis and any other publications.

This form is to ensure you feel comfortable having your photograph included in the research findings. All photographs will be securely stored and only used if you give your permission by signing this form.

As you can see by looking at the accompanying material, each photograph is numbered, and each person in the photo is identified with a letter. You may be in more than one of the photographs. You can choose which photos you give permission to be used in Kate's research. If you agree to the use of a photograph, please write the number of the photo and the letter which identifies you in the photo.

Number of the photograph and number of the person: _____

_____

I give my consent for this photograph to be reproduced for educational and/or non-commercial purposes, in reports, presentations, and publications connected to the research project. I understand that my name will NOT be used with the photograph.

Signature: ..... **Date:** .....

Full Name - printed .....

Appendix E: Interview Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews

- Children's explanations of their visits with the older adults – what they do and why
- Children's favourite parts of visiting the older adults, and the things they don't like
- What children think about the older adults they visit
- What children think about older adults in general
- What children think about getting older

Appendix F: Research Case Study

Massey University

Clinical Psychology

CASE STUDY 6

A Research Case Study Exploring the Ways in which Preschool Aged Children Discuss Older Adults

Candidate: Kate Hebenton

Clinical Psychology Programme Massey University

Student ID: [redacted]

Setting: Centre for Psychology

Supervisors: Christine Stephens & Kerry Chamberlain

This case was completed during internship at the Centre for Psychology in 2018 and represents the work of the candidate

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Supervisor	**Supervisor**	**Student**
Professor Christine Stephens	Professor Kerry Chamberlain	Kate Hebenton
Professor - Psychology	Professor - Psychology	Intern Psychologist

Abstract

The following case study presents the preliminary findings from a research project with the aim of exploring the ways in which preschool aged children, engaged in an intergenerational programme, discuss older adults and ageing. Preschool children participating in I-Played, an intergenerational programme based in Wellington, were individually interviewed, and the transcripts were then analysed. The preliminary findings from this analysis are presented, covering the following three themes: Identifying an older adult; Age equals experience and skilfulness; and Connection and relationships. Following this the key conclusion are discussed, followed by a reflection on how this current research has impacted on the researcher's clinical practice.

Introduction

Ageing Population

Around the world, Western countries are experiencing significant population ageing, with the percentage of those aged 75 years and older expected to soar dramatically between now and 2030 (Gaymu et al., 2010). The demographic changes in both New Zealand and around the world have had a flow on effect, changing the ways families look in Western cultures. Increases in life expectancy have resulted in three, four, or five generation families becoming more common, as well as children being more likely to have surviving grandparents into young adulthood, and to grow up with both biological parents living (Blasinsky, 1997; Seltzer & Bianchi, 2013). While families are becoming increasingly intergenerational, individual members of these families are becoming more geographically separated. Older adults are becoming more mobile, nuclear families are more likely to move away from in-laws and siblings, and children are moving away from the area where their parents live (Linda, 2009; Myers & Agree, 1994). There is also less age diversity within the family home, due to both a decrease in family size, as well as a decrease in the number of three-generation families living together (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005). Despite the increasing diversity within our societies, many children are growing up in very homogenous communities, having very little interaction with those from different cultures, ethnicities, and ages (Crawford & Bhattacharya, 2014).

Not only are children and grandparents/older adults often separated by geographical distance, or by the circumstances of the many combinations of family structure that currently exist, but there are decreased opportunities for connection and engagement between these two groups when the facilities that are developed to support them, such as day-care centres and retirement villages, are such separate entities. It is well known that in order for bonds to be built, face-to-face interaction is important, and the more two groups are in physical proximity of one another, the more likely this face-to-face interaction is (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005). The current provision of institutional care for children and older adults means that these populations are segregated from one another, and decreases the likelihood of these groups being able to form relationships with one another (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005). This separation is argued to be a contributing factor in the development of ageist beliefs in children.

Ageism

Ageism, a term first used by Robert Butler in 1969, describes the stereotyping and discrimination of older adults, based purely on their chronological age (Babcock, MaloneBeach, & Woodworth-Hou, 2016; Davidovic, Djordjevic, Erceg, Despotovic, & Milosevic, 2007). Ageism grows from socially shared ideas about ageing and can influence an individual or group's attitudes and behaviours toward older adults (Cherry et al., 2016). Ageism provides a way of creating a distinction between "us" and "them."(Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005). Even the term "elderly" has a value placed upon it, and is negatively categorised in today's discourse, in stark contrast to the glamour of "youth" (Ng, 1998).

Stereotypes are fixed cognitive beliefs used to categorise groups of people, based on information which has often been overgeneralised (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005). They develop over time and are evoked by certain situations or social cues (Teater & Chonody, 2017). According to Robinson and Howatson-Jones (2014), stereotypes "are neither positive nor negative in themselves. Their strength is that they help people to navigate their social world, but their weaknesses is that they do not reveal the whole truth and, once embraced, they are difficult to dislodge" (p. 305). An increase in research focusing on ageism has led to an increased understanding of exactly what makes up the stereotypes Western societies hold of older adults. Several themes can be identified throughout the negative stereotypes, including: physical decline; cognitive decline; being dependant on others yet unwanted by others; a decrease in activity participation; and older adults as being separate from the rest of society (Hoe & Davidson, 2002; Levy & Macdonald, 2016; Teater & Chonody, 2017).

We all learn and develop attitudes regarding ageing, and this education begins in childhood, whether formal or informal. It is not a question of whether children are learning about older adults and ageing from their world, but rather what information they are being presented with, and from what sources (Klein, Council, & McGuire, 2005). Primarily, children are provided ideas and beliefs about ageing from their families, their culture, society, the media, and literature (Gilbert & Ricketts, 2008). And the research suggests that much of the information provided by these sources, will be negative (Klein et al., 2005).

Negative beliefs about older adults can be found in the talk of pre-school children, with signs of ageist language identified in children as young as three years old, and measurable ageist

attitudes by the age of 5 years old (Cummings, Williams, & Ellis, 2003; Gilbert & Ricketts, 2008; Klein et al., 2005). Unfortunately, these ageist beliefs are nurtured and established before children develop the cognitive ability to critically evaluate these beliefs for themselves (Hoe & Davidson, 2002). By the age of six and seven years old, children have developed well-defined beliefs about older adults, by the age of 12 to 13 years old these beliefs become difficult to shift, and by the time a young person is in high school it is extremely difficult to challenge their firmly established attitudes (Hoe & Davidson, 2002; Klein et al., 2005). This suggests that to prevent young people from developing stereotypically negative attitudes towards older adults, intervention needs to occur early in a child's life. Intergenerational programs that foster contact and connections between older adults and children have been identified as one possible method of counteracting ageist beliefs by positively changing a child's attitudes and providing a protective barrier against the further development of ageism in these children (Cummings et al., 2003; Fair & Delaplane, 2015; Gilbert & Ricketts, 2008).

Intergenerational Programmes

Intergenerational (IG) programs involve the bringing together of children and young people, with older adults, to exchange skills and experiences, and form connections, with the goal of fostering mutually beneficial interactions for both generations (Biggs & Knox, 2014; Epstein & Boisvert, 2006; Heyman & Gutheil, 2008). Shared-site IG programs are those in which interactions between older adults and children and young people occur at a facility or campus which is used by both parties, and that does not infringe on the privacy of any of those involved in the programme. Interactions are regularly scheduled and involve planned as well as informal encounters (Biggs & Knox, 2014; Carson, Kobayashi, & Kuehne, 2011; Heyman & Gutheil, 2008). As both older adults and children and young people can be marginalised in our society, a large component of IG programs involves the empowerment of its members, as well as the opportunity for both generations to gain information that counteracts the stereotype of the other group (Fair, Davis, & Fischer, 2011; Gamliel & Gabay, 2014). As well as being a cost-effective way of addressing the needs of a range of community members, IG programs have been found to reconstruct social networks, improve mutual understanding, and cultivate feelings of value and contribution (Gamliel & Gabay, 2014).

Participation in IG programs has proven benefits for children and young people. Research suggests that engagement in IG programs has resulted in an improved and deeper

understanding of ageing in general (Carson et al., 2011; Galbraith, Larkin, Moorhouse, & Oomen, 2015), and also has an effect on children and young people's attitudes towards older adults, with participants showing increased positive attitude scores and reports of long-term attitudinal shifts (Carson et al., 2011; Cummings et al., 2003; Epstein & Boisvert, 2006; Fair & Delaplane, 2015). IG program participation has also been found to give children and young people a greater and more complex appreciation for the abilities and limitations of older adults, and an understanding that not all older adults are alike (Carson et al., 2011; Fair et al., 2011; Fair & Delaplane, 2015; Galbraith et al., 2015). Identified specific benefits for preschool children involved in IG programmes have included improvements in prosocial behaviours, such as sharing, cooperation, and a willingness to help (Dellmann-Jenkins, Lambert, & Fruit, 1991), as well as the ability to manage their own behaviours and feelings, and the development of empathy through exposure to individuals who are different to themselves and who have different needs (Femia, Zarit, Blair, Jarrott, & Bruno, 2008). One important critique of the current body of research exploring IG programs is that a larger proportion focuses on older adults (Galbraith et al., 2015), resulting in children and young people's experiences of these programmes often being ignored. This contradicts the very purpose of IG programs, which is being mutually beneficial to both parties.

Early intervention appears to be the ideal time to counteract any future development of a child's ageist beliefs, and participation in an IG programme can result in a child developing a deeper and more complex understanding of older adults and ageing. Given this, and that historically, a large proportion of IG research has not included the voices of children, it is argued that there is a need for research to focus on IG programmes that include the participation of younger children, and that their voices and experience be acknowledged, as well as those of the older adults.

The current paper aims to explore the ways in which preschool children, who are regularly participating in an intergenerational programme, talk about older adults and ageing.

Method

The current research project was based in Wellington, where a retirement village and childcare centre share a site. This has allowed the staff from both facilities the opportunity to work together to develop a formalised shared site IG program, the first of its kind in New Zealand, called I-Played. I-Played involves the weekly coming together of older adults who reside at the retirement village, and children aged 1 year to 5 years old from the childcare centre. At the time of data collection the I-played sessions involve book buddy sessions, at which residents read books to small groups of children; these sessions took place in a lounge of the retirement village. The I-Played programme has also involved music sessions, and there were plans for art sessions to be included in the future. The data for this study was gathered as part of a wider study focusing on the experiences of the preschool children involved in the I-Played programme.

Participants and Recruitment

Participants were children enrolled in the childcare centre, who were in the preschool room, meaning they were between the ages of 3 and a half and 5 years old. Once a child had participated in a minimum of three I-Played sessions, their parent or caregiver was given the information and consent sheets by the preschool teachers, and asked to return them to the centre if they consented to their child's participation in the study. 17 parents or caregivers were informed about the study, and all 17 consented to their child's participation. Prior to the child's individual interview, they were asked for their assent to participate. The researcher explained to the child that she wanted to learn about older adults and about I-Played, and asked if the child would be willing to come draw some pictures and talk to the researcher one-on-one. The children were also informed that their interviews were going to be recorded and listened to at a later time. Assent was given verbally by the children.

Data Collection

Data collection took place over several visits to the childcare centre, and through multiple steps. The day before the I-Played session the researcher would spend an afternoon with the preschool aged children, in their classroom, so that they would be familiar with her. The following day the researcher attended the I-Played session as an observer, as well as taking photos of the children and older adults interacting. That afternoon, the children were

individually interviewed, and the interviews recorded. The interview began with the child being asked to draw a picture of an older adult, with the purpose of easing them into the interview with a focus other than the researcher, and also to help focus them on the topic of the interview. The children were then shown photos that were taken during the I-Played session they'd attended that morning, with the purpose of grounding them in the specific moment that the researcher was asking them about.

Data Analysis

The current study involved a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. Thematic analysis was chosen as it has the ability to address a wide range of qualitative questions, and it has been found useful when looks at both experiences, as well as understanding and perceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is also known to be accessible and flexible, both in its use, and in the results it generates, meaning they can be easily understood by the educated general public (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which is important when feedback to key stakeholders will be an important part of the wider research project. The analysis itself was involved the researcher transcribing each interview, and then reading each transcript multiple times. From these readings, themes began to emerge, and the transcripts were coded according to the themes that had been identified.

Ethics

Ethical approval for the current study was received from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. The key ethical issues were; obtaining assent from the children, taking photographs of identifiable people; and the researcher interviewing children one-on-one.

Findings

The following presents the preliminary findings of the current research project. Analysis of the interview transcripts identified three key themes relating to how the children discussed older adults: Identifying an older adult; Age equals experience and skilfulness; and Connection and relationships. These three themes are outlined below, and drawings and photographs are included to assist in illustrating the themes.

To protect the identities of the individuals involved in the current research project, as well as in the wider I-Played programme, any names used in the following section are pseudonyms.

Identifying an Older Adult

The ways in which one identifies whether or not an individual is an older adult, or not, was a significant talking point throughout the interviews. Some of the children were unable to articulate how you would differentiate between an adult who was old and one who was not old. These children also tended to be less descriptive overall in their interviews. It is possible that they had never considered what made someone "old," that they saw all adults as being the same, or that they didn't have the language to discuss and describe their thoughts. Importantly, all the children that struggled to identify what made someone an older adult, were able to differentiate between themselves and this population group, illustrating that these children still had a clear understanding that they were somehow different to older adults.

> *Interviewer: Do old people's faces look like children's faces?*
> *Participant 7: I don't, I've never seen an old people*
>
> *Interviewer: Are these old people?*
> *Participant 7: I don't know if they are.*
>
> *Interviewer: Are you an old person?*
> *Participant 7: No.*

For a substantial group of the children, one singular physical trait was used to identify whether or not someone was an older adult, although the trait in particular would vary from child-to-child. The trait the child used as an identifier would appear multiple times throughout their interview, and was used as a rule beyond the older adults they interacted with at during I-

Played sessions, being applied to their family members and teachers as well. Consistently it was observed that there was never a tone or language that would suggest any disgust or judgement towards these traits, the children simply presented these observations a neutral facts.

Wrinkles were a common identifier of an older adult, although there were many different ways in which these were explained, and many explanations for how someone might get wrinkles. Some of the children did not have the word “wrinkles” in their vocabulary, but they always managed to express what they used to identify an older adult. When they were unable to use language, children would use their drawings, the photographs, and even their own bodies to identify the physical trait.

> *Participant 14: And she’s, she um always wears these like little stripes on her, like these ones here (pointing to the lines on the palm).*
> *Interviewer: Oh she has those on her skin.*
> *Participant: There.*
> *Interviewer: On her hands, like yours?*
> *Participant 14: Like, and on shes neck and on shes face and stuff.*
> *Interviewer: So like these creases in the skin that we have.*
> *Participant 14: Yep.*
> *Interviewer: But they’re all over her body?*
> *Participant 14: Yep.*

> *Interviewer: And what about, what else was on her face? What are those?*
> *Participant 13: More crinkles.*
> *Interviewer: Oh she had a lot of crinkles did she?*
> *Participant 13: Yeah a lot.*

Changes in the colour or quality or skin were also observed by several of the children, with the implication, and on occasion even the overt statement that this was due to decay of the physical body, due to ageing. Again, although the children were discussing the changing and decaying of an older adult’s body, there was no negativity or disgust in their language or tone, these were presented simply as facts.

Interviewer: Oh. How do you know old people die soon?

Participant 8: Uh, because they're changing colour. Their skin's changing colour.

Interviewer: So when you look at a person, how do you know if they're old by looking at them?

Participant 8: Uh, on the, very, very, kind of blacky colour. Their skin is kind of blacky colour or brown.

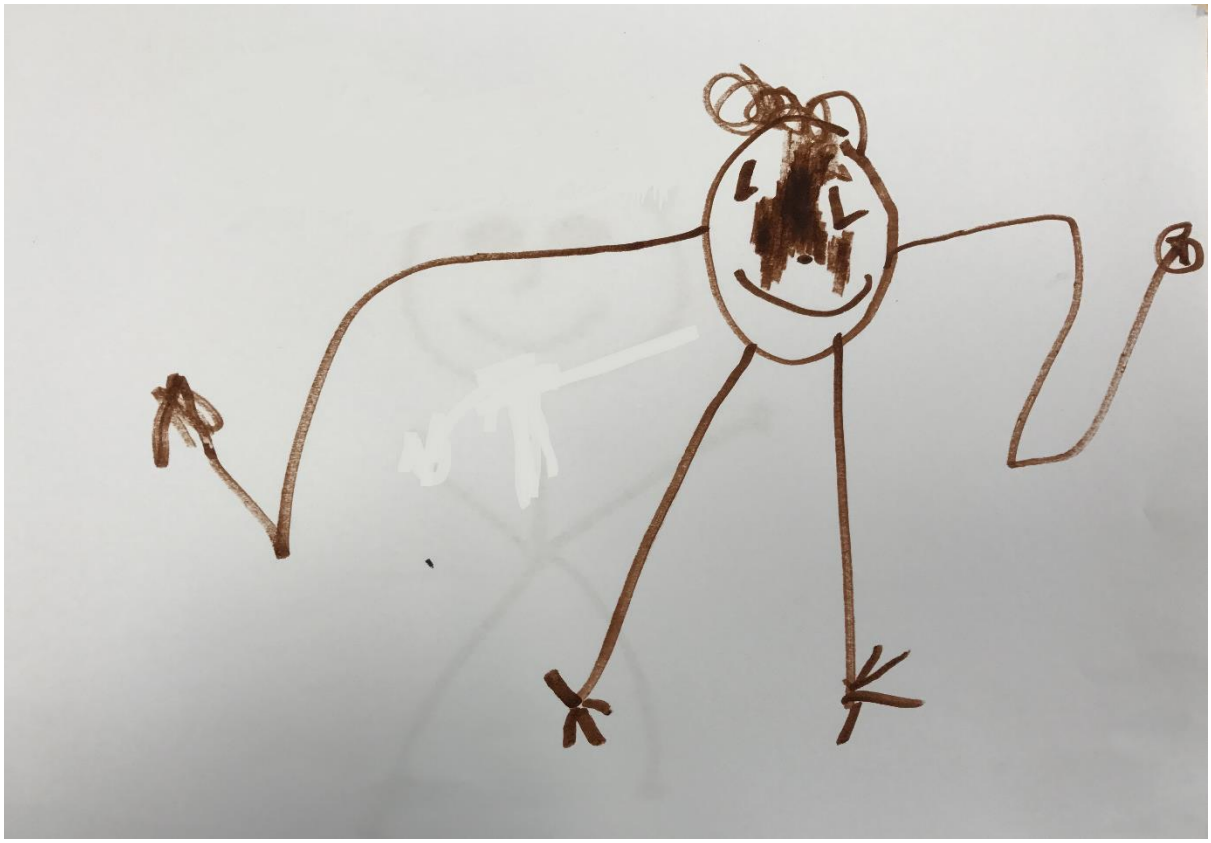

Figure 1. Participant 8's drawing of an older adult, depicting the skin changing colour.

Interviewer: Yeah. What else? You said that they have different parts, so they have wrinkles on their faces. What else do old people have that's different?

Participant 1: (points to neck)

Interviewer: This, is this like they get more skin maybe? Is that what you mean?

Participant 1: Yeah they get more skin on your neck so that a little triangle comes there and then it goes like that. When they talk it firstly pops up and when they breathe down it goes down.

Interviewer: Do I have one of those?

Participant 1: Uh uh (shakes head no).

Interviewer: Oh is it just old people?

Participant 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh. Is it girl old people or boy old people or both?

Participant 1: Both. Because they both are the same like.

Age Equals Experience and Skilfulness

Many of the children talked about the skills the older adults had when it came to reading books, and highlighted this as being one of the positive aspects of attending the book buddy sessions. The children were often able to extend this and link a person's skilfulness in reading books directly to their being an older adult, with the implication being that by living a long time, the person had plenty of time to practice reading, therefore making it a skill that they are now proficient in. It appeared that the children held admiration for the skills of the older adults, while at the same time developing an understanding that practice and time were important components of developing a skill. For example, this child describes the lady they had been reading with that morning being both good at the stories as a whole, as well as being able to say the words correctly. She attributes this success at reading as being due considerable practice over time, beginning when the older adult was a young girl, like this child currently is.

Interviewer: Are they good at reading you stories?

Participant 1: Yeah because they read all the stories and the right words.

Interviewer: Oh they're good at the words too?

Participant 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: How do you think that they got so good at the words?

Participant 1: Because they read when they were little girl and practiced and practiced.

Interviewer: Oh they've had a lot of practice have they?

Participant 1: Yeah.

Figure 2. Older adult reading to children, and getting them to point out words and letters.

Connection & Relationships

The connections and relationships that the children formed with the older adults in the I-Played programme, were another important component of their discussion, however there were variations to the depth of these relationships.

For some children individual friendships were established with the older adults, as is illustrated by the following child who talked about a friendship with the woman she had spent time reading with that morning.

> *Interviewer: Are the old people your friends?*
>
> *Participant 4: Yes.*
>
> *Interviewer: Yeah?*
>
> *Participant 4: Margaret is.*

Figure 3. Older adult reading to a group of children.

For other children there was a sense of liking and appreciating the older adults, but not in terms of a friendship. It is important to highlight that it was uncommon for children to remember the names of any of the older adults they'd interacted with. In observing the sessions, I noted that, there was never a moment in which the older adults and children were introduced to each other; they just moved from arriving, to book selection, and straight into book reading, making it almost impossible for the children to learn the adult's names. They children also attended I-Played on a rotation, so it was unlikely that they'd see these older adults more than once every 6 weeks. Despite this infrequent contact, connections were formed, suggesting that there the older adults held a certain level of importance or significance in the lives of the children. For example, this child was fond of the older adults she spent time with at the retirement village, particularly that they could help her learn a new skill, seemingly an activity that would allow them to form a connection. However, for this child the connection did not extend to a friendship, and while she liked the older adults, she did not recall their names.

Interviewer: Do you like the old people?

Participant 10: (nods head yes).

Interviewer: What do you like about them?

Participant 10: I like about them because they have, because they help me learn how to read.

Interviewer: Oh that's nice. Are you friends with the old people?

Participant 10: Mmm, not really.

Interviewer: Not really.

Participant 10: But, I know that they're old, but I don't really know their names.

Other children talked about how their presence and attendance at the I-Played sessions was important in bringing joy and happiness into the lives of the older adults, although there was no suggestion from the children that these people were otherwise unhappy. For some children, the interaction between themselves and the older adults clearly brought happiness to the older adults, and the children had a sense that they were important to these people, but it was not common for them to speak of any reciprocal feelings. There was less discussion of the children feeling happy in response to the connections they'd made with the older adults, but importantly, there was also no talk of hate or dislike towards the older adults. For example, this child knew that the older adult in the photo liked spending time with her by looking at a photo and seeing the woman smiling at her, but there was no acknowledgement of how she felt in response.

For some children, this happiness was one sided, with them being more ambivalent about the impact of the older adults on their own life, but adamant that they positively impacted their lives. For many, there was a sense that they were important to the older adults.

Participant 3: Because look, she's smiling. (referring to photograph)

Interviewer: Oh, is that how you know she likes it?

Participant 3: Yeah.

The photographs also played an important role of allowing children to engage with the connections they had with the older adults. When they were not able to access the language to discuss a connection or relationship, we could look at the photographs of them interacting with the older adults, to see the ways in which those connections and relationships were expressed.

Interviewer: Yeah and look at you, what are you doing? (Referring to photograph)

Participant 1: I'm snuggling into her.

Figure 4. Child cuddling with older adult as she is read to.

Conclusion

The current paper aimed to explore the ways in which preschool children, who are regularly participating in an intergenerational programme, talk about older adults and ageing. One key conclusion from the preliminary findings is that many of the children are using physical features to help them decide if someone is an older adult. Interestingly while the feature varies from child to child, each child uses only one feature, and this feature was mentioned several times throughout their individual interview. Research has found that negative beliefs about older adults can be found in the talk of preschool-children, with signs of ageist language identified in children as young as three years old (Cummings et al., 2003; Gilbert & Ricketts, 2008; Klein et al., 2005), however, while the children interviewed were highlighting the physical features that make an older adult different from someone younger, there was never any negative language or tone used. The children presented this information as facts free from judgement. It is possible that the children's repeated attendance of I-Played sessions, which provide repeated exposure to older adults, has allowed the children to see the differences between themselves and the older adults as mere facts, without attributing any negative meaning onto the differences they observe in these adults. It is interesting to see the development of stereotypes occurring so early in a child's life, as it could certainly be argued that these children are using fixed, cognitive beliefs, and overgeneralising them to organise a group of people, which is how Hagestad and Uhlenberg (2005) define a stereotype.

Another key conclusion from the preliminary findings is that children have the ability to develop connections, and in some cases friendships, with older adults, as well as seeing older adults as being skilful and able to share these skills. This conclusion is contradictory to much of the research, which suggests that due to ageism, many children see older adults as being separate from the rest of society, experiencing cognitive decline, and as being unwanted by others (Hoe & Davidson, 2002; Levy & Macdonald, 2016; Teater & Chonody, 2017). Being skilled at reading and sharing this with the children seems to contradict the idea of a person in cognitive decline. Intergenerational programmes are defined as the bringing together of children and older adults, to exchange skills and experiences, as well as form connections (Biggs & Knox, 2014; Epstein & Boisvert, 2006), and it could be argued that when this definition is met and both children and older adults are allowed to share these experiences and connections, it can be impactful on the way children view older adults and their role in

society, and in the child's own world. It also highlights the importance of children being involved in research concerning the intergenerational programmes that they are engaged in, as by definition, these programmes are designed to equally benefit older adults and children, so should to the research the works to understand their beliefs and understandings of their world and experiences.

Reflection

Upon returning to my qualitative research project after a year of clinical practice, it has struck me that there is quite a difference in the mind-set required to carry out these two pieces of work. In qualitative research, we are often allowing the participant to construct their own truth and their own understanding of their world, and as is the case with my research, an inductive analysis was used where we allow the themes to come out of the conversations. In my clinical practice I definitely strive to allow my clients to talk about their experiences and what feels truthful to them, however, as psychologists, we go into an assessment with an agenda, and at times holding certain criteria which guides the questions that we ask. Moving into treatment we use evidence-based protocols and models that seem to be based on the idea that people's experiences of a certain mental health difficulty will all fit into the same boxes, which at times feels like it lies in opposition to a constructionist, qualitative viewpoint. At this stage in both my research and clinical careers, this is mostly an observation, a musing, as I am currently how these two different perspectives are informing each other when I work, or what this may or may not mean for my future practice and practice.

All of my research interviews were carried out prior to my internship year and provided several helpful insights which informed my practice both in assessment and treatment throughout this year. Going into my research interviews, I found myself planning a set of broad questions, and in my case practical activities, that ideally will help the participants feel comfortable and open. You hope that this comfort and openness will lead to deep and inspired conversation that will result in ground-breaking research. The reality, particularly when working with preschool children, is that sometimes there isn't a deep inspired answer, or sometimes no matter the questions or the activities, the participant doesn't have much enthusiasm to engage in your project. It was also important for me to acknowledge that due to me travelling for these interviews, that there were times when I was worn down, and wasn't as engaged or motivated during an interview, or I was less tolerant of a child going off task or of answering with what I deemed to be "silly" answers. This is definitely a pattern I have seen play out in my clinical practice, that even when it comes to adults, the client or the therapist may be having an off day, that the client may not be willing to engage in the assessment or therapy session, or that they may be tangential or circumstantial in their talk, and not everything they talk about seems relevant and inspiring. I believe that my research

interviews taught me to be more flexible in my practice, but also to reflect on the process of engagement with another human being, regardless of age, and look at why an interview or session went well or not so well.

My work with the preschool children also encouraged me to be more creative in my work with clients. My initial interview purely involved talking, and not surprisingly it wasn't very successful. I had to be resourceful and creative and develop ways to engage my participants that was motivating and interesting to them. I found that by focusing on the drawing task or the photographs, the participants appeared more at ease, and more able of engaging in a conversation, rather than being on the other end of an interrogation. I find myself needing to draw on my flexibility and creativity in therapy as well, and similarly find that by focusing on something outside of myself or the client, such as the whiteboard or a worksheet, the clients relaxes and opens up, and information flows more naturally.

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