Understanding the Impact of GrandPals on Older Adult Participants

by

Nicole Leibowitz

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ABSTRACT

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF GRANDPALS ON OLDER ADULT PARTICIPANTS

Nicole Leibowitz
University of Guelph, 2019

Advisory Committee:
Dr. Kimberley Wilson
Dr. Scott Maitland

This community-engaged research project explored the experiences of 11 older adults, between the ages of 61 and 99, involved in GrandPals, a school-based, service-learning, intergenerational program. Participants shared their experiences through face-to-face interviews. An inductive thematic analysis approach was used to analyze the data. Through the thematic analysis, four themes were identified: Connections, Reciprocity and the Role of Age, Reminiscence and Reflection, and It Takes Work: Investments into an Intergenerational Program. Participants described the meaningful connections they formed with the students. Moreover, participants highlighted how GrandPals provides an opportunity for a reciprocal exchange of knowledge and experiences between younger and older people. Participants also spoke about the reflection and reminiscence which occurred through GrandPals. Finally, while participants had a positive experience, they acknowledged the amount of work and varying investments required to be involved in an intergenerational program. Through revisiting the questions guiding this research, several additional patterns were identified. Overall, participants had a positive experience in GrandPals. Participants shared differing motivations for their involvement in the intergenerational program. Involvement in GrandPals appeared to be beneficial for participants’ mental health and well-being. Lastly, while participants developed connections with the students, involvement in GrandPals did not seem to have a significant impact on participants’ social participation/social network.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Nationally, the aging population has dramatically increased in recent years. The number of Canadians aged 85 and older grew by 19.4% between 2011 and 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017). Multiple factors have contributed to the rapid growth of the aging population, including increased life expectancy, decreased fertility rates, and the large baby boomer cohort. Consequently, researchers predict that the aging population in Canada will continue to grow exponentially (Statistics Canada, 2017). Although older\(^1\) adults comprise a significant portion of the population, there are few opportunities for members of different generations\(^2\) to make meaningful and lasting connections. Various societal factors have contributed to the separation of the generations, including the emergence of nuclear families, heightened divorce rates (Morita & Kobayashi, 2013), increased family mobility, the growth of single-parent families, and technological advancements (Meshel & McGlynn, 2004). As the family structure continues to transform, it is less common for older adults to live in the same household or even in the same community as their adult children and grandchildren (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005). Thus, with the increasing geographic distance between the youngest and oldest generations, individuals have fewer opportunities for intergenerational\(^3\) interactions (Andrew, 2002). Although newer forms of information and communication technology may facilitate intergenerational contact, accessibility and usability of technology remains an issue and contributes to the historically low adoption rates among older adults (Mitzner, 2019). Evidently, various barriers impede the development of positive relationships between the generations (Government of Canada, 2017).

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1 The term *older* refers to any individual over the age of 60.
2 The term *generations* is defined as, “age groups born in the same time period and sharing similar historical experiences…” (Pinquart, Wenzel, & Sorensen, 2000, p. 524).
3 The term *intergenerational* refers to “combining individuals of different age categories or generations” (Whiteland, 2013, p. 397).
Significant negative consequences may result from a lack of contact between the generations, including ageism⁴ and social isolation⁵. Insufficient contact between members of different generations contributes to stereotypes, misconceptions, and negative attitudes amongst younger and older persons (Belgrave, 2011). Stereotypes can be defined as, “beliefs about characteristics, attributes, and behaviours of members of certain groups” (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2015, p. 244). Prejudice and discrimination result when such traits are generalized to a group of people without acknowledging the diversity that exists within the group (Babcock et al., 2016). Stereotyping people on the basis of old age contributes to ageism, which can be manifested in the following ways: “negative attitudes towards older people, old age and the ageing process; discrimination or treating older people unfairly; and implementing policies or practices that reinforce negative stereotypes of older people” (Lyons et al., 2017, p. 1). In the presence of ageism and existing stereotypes, older adults are commonly depicted as incompetent, socially isolated, and emotionally unstable (Penick, et al., 2014). Prior research has shown that younger people often hold negative attitudes toward older adults (Pinquart & Sorensen, 2000). For older adults, the potential adverse effects of ageism include limited employment opportunities, age-biased decision making in healthcare settings, and poorer mental health (Lyons et al., 2017). Additionally, the scarcity of interactions with younger people may heighten their risk of social isolation, which is a concern during later life (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2006).

With Canada’s changing demographics and the gap between younger and older persons, promoting positive interactions and relationships between the generations is of increasing importance. Positive intergenerational relationships contribute to broadened and diversified

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⁴ The term ageism is defined as, “the untrue assumption that chronological age is the main determinant of human characteristics and that one age is better than another” (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2015, p. 30).

⁵ Social isolation refers to a “low quantity and quality of contact with others”. (Government of Canada, 2017, p. 5).
social networks, enhanced community capacity, and strengthened social cohesion (Government of Canada, 2017). Intergenerational relationships exist in many forms, including within the family, workplace, and society (Government of Canada, 2017). The focus of this paper is on non-familial intergenerational programs, which are “a form of human service that involves ongoing and organized interactions between members of younger and older age groups for the benefit of all participants” (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019, p. 1). Intergenerational programs aim to increase contact and understanding between generations, establish meaningful relationships, promote emotional and social development, and accomplish various educational or community goals (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019).
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The following literature review provides an overview of intergenerational programs, explores the current state of the literature, and theoretical orientations within the literature. Key outcomes of intergenerational programs are reviewed, including attitudinal change, mental health and well-being, social interaction/participation, and engagement. Finally, service-learning programs and intergenerational shared-site programs are discussed.

Overview of Intergenerational Programs

Five major categories of intergenerational programs are commonly described in the literature: older adults supporting students, students supporting older adults, older adults and students collaborating to support their community, older adults and students engaging together in learning/social activities, and older adults and students sharing sites (Ayala, Hewson, Bray, Jones, & Hartley, 2007; Cohen-Mansfield & Jensen, 2007). Although the overarching aims of intergenerational programs remain quite consistent, each program can differ in terms of the target population, context, focus, specific goals (Ayala et al., 2007), settings, and activities (Gualano et al., 2018). Common intergenerational activities aligned with specific goals include educational programs to foster knowledge and skills or positive attitudinal change, health programs to increase physical activity, open-ended activities to encourage informal dialogue and interactions, collaboration on a citizens project, and mixed approaches with various activities and goals (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019). Some scholars argue that an important distinction must be made between intergenerational programming as opposed to simply intergenerational activities (Beynon, Heydon, O’Neill, Zhang, & Crocker, 2013). It has been suggested that just the act of bringing different generations together without structured programming may not necessarily produce the intended effects. Therefore, intergenerational programs should strive to meet the
following criteria: “be beneficial to all participants, be on-going, lasting for a significant length of time to establish relationships, serve the community, and include a curricular component” (Beynon et al., 2013, p. 178).

**Current State of the Literature**

To date, intergenerational programs have been a frequent topic of research. Through content analyses and systematic reviews, several trends have been identified in the existing literature (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019; Gualano et al., 2018; Jarrott, 2011; Martins et al., 2019). Intergenerational programs are extremely diverse, which allows for a widespread application and feasibility (Gualano et al., 2018). However, the varied nature of intergenerational programs has resulted in heterogenous literature and study methodologies with regard to sample characteristics, study design, and theoretical orientation (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019). The main characteristics of research on intergenerational programs based on several recent review articles are summarized in Table 1 (see Appendix A for Summary of Review Articles). The majority of studies were conducted in the United States, followed by Japan, then a few in Australia and Israel, and even fewer in Canada and the United Kingdom. Substantial diversity exists in sample size, which ranged from 7 to 940; however, the majority of studies had samples less than 50. It should be noted that based on Martins and colleagues (2019) review, sample size does not appear to influence the results related to effectiveness of programs. Whereas some studies focused solely on members of one generation, most studies examined the experiences of both the students and older adults involved in an intergenerational program.

Several limitations of existing research were noted, including the variability of study methodologies, absence of standardized measures, and lack of randomized control trials (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019; Gualano et al., 2018; Jarrott, 2011; Martins et al., 2019).
Additionally, various means of assessing the impact of intergenerational programs are evident throughout the literature, such as interviews, surveys, observational scales, drawings, and cognitive assessments (Jarrott, Smith, & Weintraub, 2008). In response to common limitations of existing literature, Jarrott (2011) proposed the following recommendations for strengthening future research in this area: “(a) theoretically informed studies, (b) larger sample sizes, (c) multigenerational evaluations, (d) development or employment of standardized measures, (e) longitudinal assessments, (f) outcome measures that move beyond general perceptions and attitudinal change, and (g) use of rigorous qualitative and quantitative analyses” (p. 48).

**Theoretical Orientation**

Several theories underlie existing research on intergenerational programs, with the most common theories being Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development and Allport’s Contact Hypothesis (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019; Jarrott, 2011).

**Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development.** According to Erikson (1963), as individuals age, they progress through eight stages of development: Trust vs. Mistrust, Autonomy vs. Shame, Initiative vs. Guilt, Industry vs. Inferiority, Identity vs. Role Confusion, Intimacy vs. Isolation, Generativity vs. Stagnation, and Ego Integrity vs. Despair. At each stage, individuals are confronted with a conflict which they must overcome to move forward in their development. During adolescence, youth are thought to be “concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are…” (Erikson, 1963, p. 261) and focused on establishing their own identity and a sense of meaning and direction. In addition, achieving generativity, which is “the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation” (Erikson, 1963, p. 267), is suggested to be a primary focus from middle age onward. Aligned with Erikson’s (1963) theory, intergenerational programs are suggested to be a mutually
beneficial means of promoting both identity formation for youth and generativity for older adults. For instance, Ehlman et al. (2014) investigated the impact of an intergenerational oral history project on levels of perceived generativity among older adults. Results of the study by Elman and colleagues (2014) indicated increased levels of perceived generativity following participation in the intergenerational oral history project as measured by the Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS) (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992).

Prior research has suggested that various aspects of an intergenerational program can either enhance or hinder the development of generativity and identity formation. For instance, the age of and response elicited from the younger generation may influence the promotion of generativity for older adults involved in an intergenerational program. Tabuchi and Miura (2015) investigated whether the process of generativity for older adults who shared their life narratives would be influenced by the age and type of reaction of the younger listeners. After controlling for the listener’s age and reactions to the narratives, the researchers found that the generativity of the older participants was encouraged only when a young person displayed an empathic reaction to the narrative (Tabuchi & Miura, 2015). Additionally, the context of an intergenerational program may influence the development of generativity and identity formation. Kessler and Staudinger (2007) suggested that generativity and identity formation can be best achieved if the context of the intergenerational relationship assigns an expert status to the older individual to allow for transfer of knowledge and experience to the younger generation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the following conditions which differed based on age composition and contextual demand: “old-young, life problem”, “old-young, media problem”, “peer control conditions: old-old, life problem; young-young, life problem” (p. 692). The “life problem” task entailed that they dyads provide recommendations to a fictitious person who “has not
accomplished in life what he or she once set out for” (p. 5). In contrast, the “media problem task” required the partners to provide suggestions to a TV producer regarding a new show for teenagers. In sum, the researchers found that both the older adults and the young people in the experimental condition, which appointed expert status to the older adults (“old-young, life problem”), exhibited higher scores on generativity and identity formation (Kessler & Staudinger, 2007). In addition, Knight et al. (2014) reviewed studies involving reciprocal giving in intergenerational programs and found that creating a context that facilitates a sense of meaningfulness associated with intergenerational interactions is necessary to cultivate participants generativity or identity formation.

**Allport’s contact hypothesis.** Allport (1985) proposed that interpersonal contact can actually decrease prejudice between members of opposing groups if certain conditions are present. Environments that facilitate reduced prejudice between groups ensure that members of both groups are equal, work towards a common goal, interact cooperatively, and are supported by an institution or authority (Allport, 1985). This theory has informed research on intergenerational programs as its application is thought to foster more successful intergenerational relationships between students and older adults (Biggs & Knox, 2014; Gigliotti et al., 2014; Lynott & Merola, 2007; Whiteland, 2007; Teater, 2018). Lynott and Merola (2007) explicitly implemented elements of the contact hypothesis into their study of children’s attitudes toward older adults. Similarly, based on the conditions outlined in the contact hypothesis, Teater (2018) investigated the extent to which young people’s stereotypes and attitudes towards older adults changed following intergenerational contact and how this process of change occurs. The data were collected through researcher observations and field notes taken during the intergenerational contact, journal entries written by the youth, and individual interviews with the
young people. The findings of this study further supported the use of the contact hypothesis, in particular equal status and a common goal, when designing an intergenerational program (Teater, 2018). In addition, Jarrott and Smith (2011) examined whether outcomes of an intergenerational program informed by contact theory would differ from a more traditional intergenerational program. Through observing the behaviour of older participants from both programs, the researchers found that involvement in the theory-based program resulted in more desirable outcomes including increased levels of active engagement and decreased levels of passive observation (Jarrott & Smith, 2011).

**Impacts of Intergenerational Programs on Youth**

**Attitudinal change.** Research on intergenerational programs commonly focuses on the impact of intergenerational contact on participants’ attitudes toward and stereotypes of the other generation. Engaging in intergenerational interactions is thought to help reduce ageism by altering participants’ attitudes.

**Preschool-age students.** Researchers have found that ageist attitudes are formed at a very early age, with evidence of negative evaluations and differential treatment of older adults in children as young as three and four (Cummings et al., 2002). However, few studies have examined the impact of intergenerational contact on very young children's attitudes toward older adults. Middlecamp and Gross (2002) explored whether preschool-age children attending intergenerational daycare would have more positive and fewer negative attitudes toward older adults, compared to children in daycare without an intergenerational component. The intergenerational daycare provided daily opportunities for intergenerational contact, including structured activities multiple times throughout the week. Overall, children in both groups viewed older adults more negatively than younger adults, as measured by the Children’s Attitudes...
Toward the Elderly (CATE) (Jantz, Seefeldt, Galper, & Serock, 1976). Furthermore, preschool children in the intergenerational daycare did not significantly differ in their attitudes toward older adults compared to children lacking intergenerational contact. The results of this study suggest that intergenerational contact does not affect preschool children’s attitudes toward aging in general or toward older adults. Such findings may be limited due to the small sample size as well as the likelihood that the very young participants may not have fully comprehended the instructions that were asked of them (Middlecamp & Gross, 2002).

**Elementary school-age students.** The influence of involvement in an intergenerational program on the attitudes of elementary school age students has been studied extensively, with intergenerational contact yielding mixed results. In their systematic review of research investigating the impacts of intergenerational programs on school-age children and older adults, Giraudeau and Bailly (2019) identified several studies which reported that intergenerational programs had a positive effect on children’s attitudes (Dunham & Casadonte, 2009; Gamliel & Gabay, 2014), a study which reported a mixed effect (Lynott & Merola, 2007), and a few studies which reported no effect (Belgrave, 2011; Kamei et al., 2011; Perry & Weatherby, 2011).

**Positive effect.** Despite the mixed results reported by Giraudeau and Bailly (2019), there is substantial evidence to support the effectiveness of intergenerational programs in improving elementary school-age children’s attitudes toward older adults. Dunham and Casadonte (2009) examined whether the presence of senior volunteers as support to teachers in a classroom would influence elementary and junior high school students’ attitudes. Student’s scores on the Children’s View of Aging survey (Newman, 1997) indicated a significant increase in students’ positive attitudes towards aging, despite the fact that the intergenerational program was not specifically designed to target attitudinal change (Dunham & Casadonte, 2009). Cummings et al.
(2002) investigated the impact of an intergenerational outdoor classroom program on at-risk fourth-grade children’s attitudes towards older adults. Compared to a control group, children who participated in the intergenerational program demonstrated significantly more positive attitudes toward older adults, as measured by the Semantic Differential sub-scale of the CATE (Cummings et al., 2002). Additionally, Pinquart et al. (2000) explored the impact of an intergenerational program on both younger and older participants attitudes toward the other generation, depending on the amount of joint activity within the group. The experimental group involved older adults and children working cohesively to create a story to perform at a puppet show. In the control group, the older adults and children created separate stories but together decided which story to perform. Results indicated that the children in both groups demonstrated improvements in their ratings of older adults (Pinquart et al., 2000).

**Mixed effect.** While many studies report positive effects of intergenerational contact on attitude change of elementary school-age children, the findings of some studies are inconclusive. Bales et al. (2000) examined whether involvement in a school-based intergenerational program would impact children's perceptions of seniors. The intergenerational program involved older adults recruited from the community and second-grade, fourth-grade, and fifth-grade students recruited from a private elementary school. To measure a change in attitudes, all of the students provided descriptors of older adults prior to and following the intergenerational program. Both the second and fourth-grade students demonstrated an increase in the number of positive descriptors of older adults after the intergenerational intervention, suggesting a change in attitude. Among the fifth-grade students, there was no difference in the descriptor words following intergenerational contact. Compared to the second and fourth-grade students, this evident lack of change in descriptor words among the fifth-grade students is likely due to having
less frequent contact with the older adults; the fifth-grade students engaged in one letter exchange and an in-person meeting with their senior pen-pal compared to four letter exchanges and several in-person interactions between the second and fourth-grade students and their pen-pals (Bales et al., 2000). Additionally, Lynott and Merola (2007) investigated the impacts of a school-based, intergenerational program the fourth graders' attitudes toward older adults. After repeating the intergenerational program with four different classrooms once each year throughout 2002 and 2005, the researchers found that children's attitudes became significantly more positive on only 9 out of 17 items used to describe older adults (Lynott & Merola, 2007). Moreover, Meshel and McGlynn (2004) found that both adolescents and older adults involved in an interactive intergenerational program exhibited more positive attitudes towards the other generation following contact. However, the adolescents demonstrated more negative stereotypes of older adults after engaging in the intergenerational program (Meshel & McGlynn, 2004). It appears that, in some cases, although increased intergenerational contact may positively affect adolescent's attitudes, existing negative stereotypes of older adults may actually be exacerbated as a result.

No effect. Further exploring the attitudes of elementary school-age children, a few studies found that intergenerational contact did not show attitudinal change. Belgrave (2011) reported no significant difference in children’s attitudes toward older adults after participation in a music-based intergenerational program, as measured by the CATE. However, the children’s descriptions of older adults became more positive over time, which was evident through their biweekly responses to open-ended questions (Belgrave, 2011). Similarly, Kamei et al. (2011) also reported no significant change in children’s perceptions of older adults, although their initial ratings of older adults were generally quite positive (Kamei et al., 2011). Additionally, Babcock
et al. (2016) used a control-group design to measure elementary school children’s implicit and explicit attitudes toward older adults after participation in a four-week in-class intergenerational program. In general, all of the children demonstrated a negative bias towards older adults, as indicated by their scores on a child-friendly adaptation of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). Although participants’ negative biases towards older adults were minimized during the explicit tasks, the results indicated that involvement in the program did not significantly impact participants implicit or explicit attitudes towards older adults (Babcock et al., 2016). As suggested by Babcock et al. (2016) a possible reason as to why the children’s attitudes did not change is that children’s biases may be so deep-rooted by elementary school that it is difficult to achieve attitudinal change following such a brief intergenerational program.

**High school-age students.** Thompson and Weaver (2016) studied high school students who were involved in an intergenerational program in fourth grade and compared them with high school students from a neighbouring town without prior involvement in an intergenerational program. The students’ perceptions of older adults were measured using the Images of Aging Scale (IAS) (Levy, Kasl, & Gill, 2004) and the quality of their intergenerational contact was also assessed. In general, the high school students maintained modestly positive images of older adults and were reluctant to endorse negative images of aging. The high school students with prior experience in an intergenerational program displayed more positive images of older adults. However, the groups of students did not differ with regard to negative images of aging in general (Thompson & Weaver, 2016). Thus, the findings of this study suggest that although early involvement in an intergenerational program may contribute to more positive views of older adults, young people’s negativity and fears about aging may persist. More longitudinal research
is needed to determine if attitudinal changes resulting from intergenerational contact continue over time.

*University-age students.* Studies on attitude change and intergenerational contact involving university age students have yielded more consistent results than studies involving children and adolescents. Research has shown that the university students’ attitudes towards older adults become more positive following participation in an intergenerational program, as measured by pre-test and post-test scores on the Aging Semantic Differential Scale (ASD) and the refined-ASD (Penick et al., 2014; Powers et al., 2013; Rubin et al., 2015). In a study conducted by Hernandez and Gonzalez (2008) university students experienced reduced stereotypes of older adults following participation in an intergenerational exercise program.

**Impacts of Intergenerational Programs on Older Adults**

**Mental health and well-being.** Involvement in intergenerational programs may improve the mental health and well-being of older adults. Mental health can be defined as, “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community” (World Health Organization, 2014, para. 1). Promoting mental health and well-being for older adults is imperative, as individuals often experience complex and unique age-related physical, social, and psychological changes that may negatively impact their mental health (MacCourt, 2008).

Murayama et al. (2015) investigated the impact of an intergenerational picture book reading program, Research of Productivity by Intergenerational Sympathy (REPRINTS), on elderly participants sense of coherence (SOC) and depressive mood. SOC, described as the ability to “control psychological stress” (Murayama et al., 2015, p. 307) is associated with
improved mental health. The findings indicated that levels of SOC increased for participants involved in both the REPRINTS intervention group as well as the control group; however, neither group exhibited any change in depressive mood overtime (Murayama et al., 2015). Further research has focused specifically on reducing depressive symptoms through intergenerational contact. Two studies have linked involvement in an intergenerational program with decreased depressive symptoms among older adults (Hernandez & Gonzalez, 2008; Kamei et al., 2011). In Hernandez and Gonzalez’s (2008) study, depressive symptoms decreased significantly among a sample of slightly depressed older adults involved in an intergenerational movement program, as measured by the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS; Yesavage et al., 1982). Interestingly, depressive symptoms worsened among the older adults in the control group which lacked an intergenerational component (Hernandez & Gonzalez, 2008). Additionally, in a study by Kamei et al. (2011) the older adults exhibited a significant increase in health-related quality of life (HRQOL) a significant decrease in depressive symptoms over the course of the intergenerational program.

Beyond improved mental health and quality of life, involvement in intergenerational programs is also linked to the promotion of active aging among older adults. Active aging is the “process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age” (Teater, 2016, p. 4). Using surveys with both open- and closed-ended questions, Teater (2016) explored the effects of an intergenerational program on older adults perceived health and well-being and ability to age actively. Participants reported that involvement in the program enhanced their confidence, self-esteem, social skills, emotional health, and general well-being. Furthermore, they emphasized that participation in the program aided them in becoming more connected to their community (Teater, 2016). Thus, the results of
this study support the use of intergenerational programs as a means of improving mental health and well-being and promoting active aging among older adults.

For older adults with dementia\(^6\), the impact of intergenerational programs on mental health and well-being is mixed. Several studies found positive mental health outcomes (Chung, 2009; George, 2011; Jarrott & Bruno, 2003) and one had no impact (Isaki & Harmon, 2015). Regarding the positive impacts, older adults with dementia experienced more positive affect during intergenerational activities (Jarrott & Bruno, 2003) and demonstrated a decrease in stress (George, 2011) and improved psychological functioning (Chung, 2009) following participation in intergenerational programs. However, Isaki and Harmon (2015) found that involvement in an intergenerational reading program did not have a significant impact on participants’ affect as measured by the Mini-Mental State Exam (MMSE; Folstein, Folstein, & McHugh, 1975).

**Social interaction/participation.** Since older adults are at a heightened risk for social isolation, providing opportunities for social interaction and encouraging social participation is imperative. In addition to the lack of contact between different generations, poor physical and mental health, geographic location, low morale, being a carer, and communication and transportation difficulties are all factors that contribute to social isolation (Findlay, 2003). This is a concern for older adults as being socially isolated is linked to risk of poor cognitive function, hospitalization, health problems, and mortality (Shankar, Hamer, & Steptoe, 2017). Addressing social isolation has been a primary policy focus in Canada recently, with several targeted interventions being developed to support the population of older adults (Government of Canada, 2017). In the report *Who’s at Risk and What Can Be Done of It? A Review of the Literature on Social Isolation of Different Groups of Seniors* (Government of Canada, 2017), The National

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\(^6\) The term *dementia* is defined as “a family of diseases characterized by cognitive decline” (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2015, p. 309).
Seniors Council (NSC) recommended intergenerational programs as an effective method of combating social isolation. A previous study found that the social interaction of older adults increased during intergenerational programming (Short-DeGraff & Diamond, 1996). More recently, in their pilot study investigating an intergenerational choir involving college students and older adults with Alzheimer’s disease, Harris and Caporella (2014) found that participation in the choir lessened the social isolation of the older adults. It should be noted that this study had a relatively small sample size, lacked a control group, and the data were collected through only one focus group and observations during the eight-week program (Harris & Caporella, 2014). Based on existing research, intergenerational programs appear to be a successful in reducing social isolation among older adults (Gualano et al., 2018); however, further research is needed.

**Engagement.** Intergenerational programs may also serve as a means of enhancing engagement among older adults. Engagement can be defined as, “social action with others or in planned and purposeful activities” (Winchell, Rowe, & Simone, 2018, p. 497). Research suggests that older adults residing in nursing homes spend a lot of time not engaged in any meaningful activity. For instance, in their province-wide study involving older adults living in designated assisted/supportive living facilities (DAL) and long-term care facilities (LTC), researchers found that during their waking hours and not including time spent receiving treatment or care related to activities of daily living, 47% of DAL and 56% of LTC residents spent little or no time involved in meaningful activities (Strain, Maxwell, Wanless, & Gilbart, 2011). Moreover, increasing engagement is particularly important for older adults with dementia as prolonged lack of stimulation may amplify symptoms such as depression, apathy, loneliness, and boredom. For individuals with dementia, engagement in appropriate and meaningful activities is correlated
with increased positive emotions, improved activities of daily living, decreased problem behaviours, and improved quality of life (Cohen-Mansfield, Dakeel-Ali, & Marx, 2009).

Research has shown that older adults display more active engagement during the period of time that they are involved in an intergenerational program. For example, Morita and Kobayashi (2013) assessed changes in engagement/behaviour, facial expression, visual attention, and intergenerational conversation of older adults involved in an intergenerational program with preschool children. The older participants were divided into either a performance-based program, where they just listened to children’s responses on questions, or a social-oriented program, where they were actively involved in playing games with the children. Engagement/behaviour was measured, and researchers differentiated between constructive and passive engagement. Constructive engagement is when individuals are actively engaged and participating in an activity; whereas, passive engagement is when individuals primarily watch and listen during an activity. Overall, older adults in the social-oriented program displayed significantly more constructive behaviour, smiles, and intergenerational conversation. However, older adults in the performance-based program demonstrated more visual attention with the other generation (Morita & Kobayashi, 2013), suggesting that different formats for intergenerational contact may elicit distinct styles of engagement.

Intergenerational contact has also been linked to improved engagement among older adults with dementia. Older adults residing in aged-care facilities appear to be more engaged during intergenerational activities compared to usual activities (Baker, Webster, Lynn, Rogers, & Blecher, 2017). For instance, Low et al. (2015) assessed the impact of an intergenerational program involving residents of an aged-care facility who displayed dementia symptoms and children attending a co-located preschool. Researchers observed levels of engagement of the
older adults based on the following categories: “active engagement (participated in or commented on the activity), passive engagement (listened or watched the activity), self-engagement (did something other than the target activity), disengagement (did not engage with any activity), pleasure, and sadness” (Low et al., 2015, p. 230). Participants in the intergenerational program displayed significantly higher passive engagement and enjoyment as well as less self-engagement compared to the control group who received usual care. However, participants in the intergenerational program did not differ on quality of life, agitation, or sense of community when compared to the control group and improvements in levels of engagement did not continue beyond the program (Low et al., 2015). Evidently, involvement in an intergenerational program can improve the engagement of older adults with dementia symptoms, though it remains unclear whether such benefits will continue over time. Additionally, researchers have explored whether participation in an intergenerational program is beneficial when participants of both generations exhibit emotional, behavioural, cognitive, or physical challenges. Overall, nursing-home staff reported enhanced socialization and communication among the older adults, which continued for an extended time period following each visit with the children (Burgman & Mulvaney, 2016).

In terms of engagement, the impact of Montessori-based intergenerational programs involving older adults with dementia has also been researched. A study conducted by Camp et al. (1997) involved older adults with dementia and children in a shared-site intergenerational program where the older adults served as instructors to teach the children Montessori-based

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7 Montessori-based intergenerational programs for dementia are derived from the Montessori teaching method, which involves practices such as "use of motor learning in activities, offering freedom of choice in an ordered manner, providing culturally relevant context for activities, creating activities that are of interest, providing empathy and high expectations for success, allowing learning from peers, and creating a learning environment that is structured to allow the support needed to facilitate success" (Camp & Lee, 2011, p. 367).
activities. During the Montessori-based intergenerational activities, older adults with dementia symptoms did not demonstrate any instances of disengagement, as observed by the researchers (Camp et al., 1997). More recently, Camp and Lee (2011) examined engagement levels of older adults with dementia during several Montessori-based intergenerational activities and found that levels of engagement were very high, as indicated by scores on the Menorah Park Engagement Scale (Skrajner & Camp, 2007). However, such high levels of engagement among older adults with dementia were not sustained upon completion of the intergenerational program (Camp & Lee, 2011).

Evidently, researchers agree that intergenerational contact can enhance interim levels of engagement among older adults (Baker et al., 2017; Burgman & Mulvaney, 2016; Low et al., 2015; Morita & Kobayashi, 2013) and may be particularly beneficial for individuals with dementia symptoms (Camp et al., 1997; Camp & Lee, 2011). Further research is warranted to determine the longstanding impact of intergenerational contact on levels of engagement among older adults.

Types of Intergenerational Programs

Service-learning programs. A common type of intergenerational programming is service learning. Intergenerational service-learning programs link community service with specific learning objectives (Freeman & King, 2001). By definition, service learning is "a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities" (Penick et al., 2011, p. 2). Freeman and King (2001) discuss the following three main types of service-learning programs: direct service (hands-on and face-to-face interactions), indirect service (projects support and meet the needs of unseen individuals), and civic action or
advocacy work (projects inform policymakers regarding decisions that may impact the community). Each service-learning program is developed uniquely based on the needs of the community, the program goals, and the population involved (Powers et al., 2013).

Several researchers have explored the potential benefits of participating in intergenerational service-learning programs for both older adults and students (Borrero, 2015; Freeman & King, 2001; Zucchero, 2010). In a study conducted by Freeman and King (2001), preschool children visited the community senior centre to have lunch with and discuss books with older adults. Based on observational reports of researchers and staff, some benefits of the program included enhanced cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development for the preschool children and enriched social interactions among the children and older adults (Freeman & King, 2001). Additionally, in a study by Borrero (2015), undergraduate students and older adults were involved in a collaborative, service-learning research project where the older adults served as mentors and provided constructive feedback to the undergraduate students. Both the students and older adults reported that they viewed the experience as primarily positive and expressed an interest in spending more quality time with members of the other group (Borrero, 2015). Similarly, Zucchero (2010) explored the impact of older adults involved in an intergenerational service-learning program with undergraduate students enrolled in a developmental psychology class. Following the program, the older adults emphasized/reported that they: developed strong relationships with the students, experienced changed views of younger adults, found a new appreciation for memoirs and reminiscence, and served as role models for the students (Zucchero, 2010). Evidently, service-learning intergenerational programs can be beneficial to both younger and older individuals.
**Shared-site programs.** Another popular format for promoting intergenerational contact is shared-site programs. An intergenerational shared-site encourages daily intergenerational contact in a common facility that is used by members of multiple generations (Whiteland, 2013). The outcomes of intergenerational shared-site programs have been widely researched. For instance, Heyman and Gutheil (2008) explored the experiences of various participants of an intergenerational shared-site program in a co-located child and elder day care facility. Focus groups were conducted with older adults, children, caregivers, and staff. The focus groups elicited the following themes: emotions, relationships, family environment, respect/admiration, and engagement challenges. Overall, all four focus groups emphasized the benefits of the shared-site program for all participants involved (Heyman & Gutheil, 2008). Similarly, in a study evaluating an intergenerational shared-site program involving Girl Scouts and older adults residing in an assisted living facility, Biggs and Knox (2014) conducted focus groups with the Girl Scouts, their parents, the residents, and staff. Focus group participants described many benefits of the program, including increased opportunities for learning and relationship-building, social interaction, and personal changes (Biggs & Knox, 2014). Additionally, MacKenzie, Carson, and Kuehne (2011) found that participation in an intergenerational shared-site program enabled elementary school students and older adults to form valuable social connections. Overall, intergenerational shared-site programs offer a unique opportunity for members of different generations to build relationships and learn from each other.

**Summary and Rationale for this Research**

Intergenerational programs have been increasing in popularity worldwide since the early 1980s (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019). Overall, such programs appear to be mutually beneficial for both younger and older individuals (Martins et al., 2018). While there is substantial literature on
intergenerational programs, existing research is limited in a number of ways. Research on this topic is extremely heterogenous with regard to study design, theoretical orientation, type of intergenerational contact, program context, and study measures. Many studies are descriptive in nature, non-systematic, and lacking clearly defined outcomes as well as a formal evaluation of the effects of intergenerational contact (Giraudeau & Bailly, 2019; Gualano et al., 2018; Martins et al., 2019). While most research has examined the experiences of both generations in an intergenerational program, fewer studies have focused solely on the older adults involved (Jarrott, 2011; Martins et al., 2019). Moreover, research exploring the outcomes of intergenerational programs in Canadian samples is limited. Finally, to date, no community-engaged research has been conducted on a Canadian intergenerational program.

**Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this exploratory, community-engaged Masters’ thesis project is to provide a foundation for understanding the experiences of older adults involved in an intergenerational program in a town in south-central Ontario, Canada. This project aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the experience of older adults involved in the GrandPals program?
2. What factors motivate older adults to participate in the GrandPals program?
3. What is the impact of GrandPals on older adult participants?
   a. How does intergenerational contact influence the mental health and well-being of older adults involved in the GrandPals program?
   b. How does involvement in the GrandPals program impact older adult’s social participation/social network?
Chapter 3: Methods

Research Design

This research project was an exploratory, community-engaged, qualitative investigation of the experiences of older adults involved in GrandPals.

GrandPals. The GrandPals project launched in 2014 with the goal of connecting students and older adults to encourage friendship, social engagement, and mutual learning. In this intergenerational program, fifth-grade students from a local elementary school are paired with older adults from either the retirement residence where GrandPals takes place or the surrounding community. Throughout the school year, the students and their older partners, referred to as GrandPals, meet weekly to discuss and explore various topics. Over the course of this time, the students are responsible for writing a life story about their GrandPal based on conversations that they had with their GrandPal. The program culminates with a celebratory gala where the students present the stories to their GrandPals, parents, and community members (GrandPals, 2018).

Community-engaged scholarship. This community-engaged research project involved a partnership between the research team, GrandPals, and the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute (CESI) at the University of Guelph. CESI is an intermediary organization within the University of Guelph that connects university and community skills and resources to address and enhance research goals identified by the community (CESI, 2019).

Community engagement is a “collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (Thompson, 2017, p. 9).

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8 Community can refer to various stakeholders, including “community collaborators, community organizations, local government, funders, advocacy organizations, citizen groups, and individual community members” (Thompson, 2017, p. 10).
Community-engaged scholarship “involves the researcher in a mutually beneficial partnership with the community and results in scholarship deriving from teaching, discovery, integration, application, or engagement” (Thompson, 2017, p.14). According to Jordan (2007), engagement entails a partnership and a bidirectional exchange of ideas, information, and expertise. Additionally, shared decision making between the researcher and the community members is vital. Within the practice of community-engaged scholarship, various levels of engagement exist, which are as follows in order of increasing levels of engagement between the researcher and community: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and co-lead (Jordan, 2007).

Aligned with the principles of community-engaged scholarship, the partnership between the research team and our community partners at GrandPals was mutually beneficial and ongoing throughout the research project. The partnership between the research team and GrandPals was originally established through CESI based on a need identified by the community partners. Initially, our community partners, the classroom teachers/facilitators of GrandPals, reached out to CESI expressing an interest in learning more about the experiences of the older adults involved in the intergenerational program and the potential impact that this program may have. In early conversations with our community partners, they indicated that they had already conducted initial some evaluations with students and recognized the need to better understand perspectives of the older adults. After meeting with the classroom teachers/facilitators of GrandPals several times to gain an idea of they were hoping to achieve through research, CESI connected them to a faculty/student team whose research aligned well with their interests. Throughout this project, CESI has continued to support the partnership between the research team and our community partners at GrandPals. The research team had multiple meetings with the classroom teachers/facilitators of GrandPals, who helped define the research purpose,
methods, and questions. As well, a meeting was held with previous participants of GrandPals, who provided feedback on what they would like to learn more about through research.

**Ethical considerations.** Before beginning this project, ethics approval was granted from the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Guelph in November 2018 (see Appendix B for REB certificate). Additionally, since GrandPals is affiliated with a school, members of the REB at the University of Guelph recommended getting ethics approval from the Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB), which was obtained in January 2019 (see Appendix C for UGDSB certificate).

**Sample**

**Eligibility criteria.** Older adults involved in GrandPals at the time of study were eligible to participate in this project. There were no exclusion criteria as all individuals currently involved in GrandPals were invited to participate in the research. Recruitment for GrandPals is done by our community partners, the classroom teachers/facilitators of GrandPals. Their recruitment process entails attending an initial meeting at the retirement residence in August to promote GrandPals to the residents, and another meeting in September for the formal sign up. Involvement in GrandPals requires a long-term commitment as the program runs weekly throughout the school year, from September until June. A total of 17 older adults were involved in GrandPals in the 2018-19 school year who were eligible to participate in this project.

**Recruitment.** Initial recruitment for this project occurred through word-of-mouth and partnership with the classroom teachers/facilitators of GrandPals. The classroom teachers/facilitators of GrandPals shared a recruitment poster via email with the GrandPals and informed them of the option to participate in this research (see Appendix D for Recruitment Poster). The recruitment poster provided sufficient information to ensure that participants were
aware of the scope of the study as well as contact details for further information, as per Braun and Clarke’s (2013) recommendations. I also attended several weekly GrandPals sessions in order to reduce the burden on participants to contact the researcher. Those who were interested in participating had the opportunity to contact me directly in-person during those GrandPals sessions or via email or telephone. Once potential participants confirmed interest, I contacted them to arrange an interview time and location that was mutually convenient. Most participants preferred to meet either before or after their regularly scheduled GrandPals sessions in the same location which GrandPals takes place. Prior to conducting the interviews, I contacted the retirement residence to reserve a private space for the interviews.

Study Procedures

The data were collected through a semi-structured qualitative interview with each participant. Braun and Clarke (2013) define an interview as “a one-on-one method of collecting qualitative data, where a participant responds to a researcher’s questions” (p. 332). The semi-structured interview approach ensures that the researcher has some pre-planned questions to guide the interview but also allows both the researcher and participant the freedom to discuss important and potentially unanticipated topics (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The interview guide (see Appendix E for Interview Guide) and semi-structured questions were developed in collaboration with our community partners at GrandPals as well as CESI.

The interviews were conducted at the retirement residence in a private space. Before starting each interview, I reviewed the information letter (see Appendix F for Information Letter) with every participant to ensure that they fully understood the research purpose and process. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions prior to signing the consent form (see Appendix G for Consent Form) and responding to the optional demographic questionnaire (see
Appendix H for Demographic Questionnaire). The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure that participants’ responses were captured precisely.

**Participant Characteristics**

This research project had a final sample of 11 participants whose ages ranged from 61-99 years, with a mean age of 78.3 years old. One participant did not complete the optional demographic questionnaire. Of the participants in this project, seven identified as female and three identified as male; all of the participants’ gender aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth. In terms of sexual orientation, all of the participants identified as heterosexual. Most participants were born and raised in Canada with two individuals indicating that they immigrated to Canada. For the most part, participants reported their race as Caucasian and their ethnicity as Canadian. The majority of participants were married/living with a partner in a common-law relationship. All of the participants were retired and indicated varying levels of education. Finally, most participants rated their overall health status as Very Good and their overall mental health status as Excellent or Very Good (For more information on participants characteristics, see Table 2, Participant Characteristics).

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<th>Analysis</th>
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Bachelor’s degree
University degree or certificate above bachelor’s degree
Other

Canadian Citizenship
Born and raised in Canada
Immigrant to Canada

Race
Caucasian

Ethnicity
Canadian

Overall Health Status
Excellent
Very good
Good
Fair
Poor
Other

Overall Mental Health Status
Excellent
Very good
Good
Fair
Poor
Other

- Data Analysis

**Thematic analysis.** The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s (2013) thematic analysis process. Thematic analysis, which is “a method for identifying themes and patterns of meaning across a dataset in relation to a research question” is the most commonly used method to analyze qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 175). Braun and Clarke (2013) outlined the following steps of thematic analysis: (1) Transcription, (2) Reading and Familiarization, (3) Coding, (4) Searching for Themes, (5) Reviewing Themes, (6) Defining and Naming Themes, and (7) Writing. (p. 202 – 203). An inductive thematic analysis approach was used for analyzing
the data. Initially, I analyzed the data as a whole to identify the prominent themes and then I analyzed the data through the lenses of the research questions in order to answer them.

I began the thematic analysis process, *Reading and Familiarization*, by familiarizing myself with the data. Since I conducted all of the interviews myself, I was already quite familiar with the data. As well, immediately following each interview, I wrote brief notes about the interview commenting on the general experience, my initial thoughts and feelings, things to keep in mind and recommendations for the next interview. Within 24 hours of each interview, I listened to the audio recordings of the interviews to get further acquainted with the data. Upon completion of all of the interviews, I began the transcription process, which took approximately four weeks. I repeatedly listened to the audio recordings of the interviews using iTunes Player and transcribed all of the interviews using Microsoft Word on a password-protected, encrypted laptop. I initially read through the transcripts to further familiarize myself with the data. Then I re-listened to the audio recordings of the interviews while following along with the transcripts to ensure that the verbatim transcripts accurately reflected the audio recordings. Afterwards, to safeguard the privacy of the participants, I anonymized the data by purposefully altering or removing any personally identifiable information from the data. I then immersed myself within the data and re-read the transcripts multiple times, highlighting initial ideas and items of interest.

According to Braun and Clarke (2013), the next phase of thematic analysis, *Coding*, involves “identifying aspects of the data that relate to your research question” (p. 206). During this phase, I constructed an exhaustive list of codes that I identified within the data. Using NVivo, a qualitative data analysis computer software, I coded all relevant patterns across the dataset. Throughout this process, when I encountered a piece of text that did not fit well with the existing codes, I created a new code. Once the initial coding was finished, I reviewed the codes
to ensure consistency and accuracy. Then, I re-examined my initial list of codes and further condensed particular codes that seemed too similar. Afterwards, I created a new document in NVivo and re-coded the dataset using the updated codes. Throughout this process, I met with my advisor, Dr. Kim Wilson, several times to discuss the codes. Together, Dr. Kim Wilson and I reviewed hard copies of the transcripts.

During the next phase of thematic analysis, Searching for Themes, I began to search for patterns, or themes, across the dataset, using the codes as a guide. Braun and Clarke (2013) define a theme as a “patterned meaning across a dataset that captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, organized around a central organizing concept” (p. 337). Through repeatedly reviewing the codes, I generated a preliminary list of potential theme ideas. After taking a break from data analysis and allowing for some distance from the data, I revisited the themes with a renewed perspective.

Afterwards, I commenced the next phase, Reviewing Themes. During this phase, I reviewed the entire dataset, including the codes and specific excerpts to determine whether the themes fit well with the data. This process resulted in certain themes being either combined or rejected entirely to ensure that the themes appropriately reflected the data (see Appendix I for Initial Themes, Subthemes, and Codes).

The following phase, Defining and Naming Themes, occurred in collaboration with my advisor. Together, Dr. Kim Wilson and I further defined the initial themes and generated theme names. This process involved me verbally explaining the initial themes to Dr. Kim Wilson while she noted key words that I used to describe the themes. Throughout this process, referred to as triangulation, we compared patterns across the dataset, thus further validating the results (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This resulted in the development of four themes and two subthemes. In
addition, an undergraduate research assistant (URA) independently reviewed the transcripts and conducted their own analysis. Afterwards, we met to compare the themes and found consistency in our analyses (see Appendix J for URA’s Coding Mapped onto Themes).

Finally, the last phase of thematic analysis, *Writing*, allowed me to further explore the themes and responses to research questions. Through this phase, I was able to make connections between the themes and the research questions, broadening and deepening my understanding of participants’ experiences.

**Trustworthiness.** To enhance the trustworthiness of this qualitative research project, I incorporated the following: documentation of the development of codes and themes, reflexive note-taking and journaling, researcher triangulation, peer debriefing, and thick descriptions. In addition, I provided a clear, detailed description of the data analysis process, further supporting the trustworthiness of this study (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell, Norriss, White, & Moules, 2017).
Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

In the following section, the results and associated discussion are presented. Initially, the themes generated through thematic analysis of the data are discussed. Afterwards, in a broader discussion, the research questions and theory are revisited. In addition, the broader discussion highlights strengths and limitations of the research, explores potential implications of the research, and provides recommendations for future research in this area.

The main themes that were identified in the data are: Connections, Reciprocity and the Role of Age, Reminiscence and Reflection, and It Takes Work: Investments into an Intergenerational Program. The first theme, Connections, encompasses the connections formed between the students and older adults through involvement in GrandPals. The second theme, Reciprocity and the Role of Age, relates to the exchange of knowledge and experiences amongst members of different generations. The third theme, Reminiscence and Reflection, describes the recollection and reflection upon past experiences which occurred. Finally, the fourth theme, It Takes Work: Investments into an Intergenerational Program, acknowledges the work required of those involved to support a successful intergenerational program.

Connections

The first main theme I identified throughout the data is Connections. This theme depicts the meaningful, genuine connections fostered between the older adults and the students through GrandPals. Participants spoke about enjoying relating to and interacting with the students, with one individual emphasizing “[…] how enjoyable it is relating to kids of that age” (Participant 7). Similarly, another participant highlighted her enjoyment of the students, “[…] they’re delightful each in their own way […] We do enjoy them and that’s for sure” (Participant 6).
Some participants spoke about having a genuine love for the students. For instance, one individual stated, “[…] the kids are wonderful […] you just love the kids” (Participant 9). Furthermore, another participant described this connection as reciprocal, emphasizing that the students seem to wholeheartedly like her too:

*I love them. I love that they—they love me too like I went to this breakfast with my granddaughter that they had at the school and all my GrandPals came to sit with me and one of them sat down and said, “I want you to know I’m coming to sit with you instead of my dad.” […] My god that was so cute […] The camaraderie with the kids, I really love it. I really love that they genuinely seem to like me. And I genuinely like them.*

( Participant 4)

As shown through this quotation, participants emphasized that their connections with the students were mutual. This pattern of mutual connections aligns with Zucchero’s (2010) study, in which participants described a reciprocal relationship with their younger partners. In this way, this project aligns with prior research, highlighting the significance of the connections between older adults and younger people involved in an intergenerational program. Such findings are of value as social connectedness is a key component of health and well-being during older adulthood (Ontario Ministry of Senior Affairs, 2017).

Additionally, participants highlighted how GrandPals can provide an opportunity for an older person to have an important role in the lives of young people. One participant shared that for folks who do not have grandchildren, being involved in GrandPals may allow them to experience that role:
I know that there are some people um who are involved with the program who uh they
don’t have grandchildren. So, this is really neat. And I think it would be so neat […]

Really feeling that role. (Participant 2)

For one participant who does not have grandchildren, this role was similar, albeit not equal, to
that of a grandparent:

You know I mean no I’m not their grandparent and I meet their grandparents usually
because they come to the big gala […] So, we’re lucky enough to meet and the children
talk about their grandparents. So, um you know you’re not their grandparent. You’re
their friend. (Participant 6)

As shown through these quotes, some connections formed between the students and older
participants were comparable to a grandparent-grandchild relationship. Relatedly, Gamliel and
Gabay (2014) also found that engagement in an intergenerational program, “encouraged bonds
that simulated those of a grandparent with a grandchild” (p. 609). Experiencing this type of role
can be valuable as grandparenting is associated with high levels of satisfaction, meaning, and
sense of purpose for older adults (Thiele & Whelan, 2008).

Moreover, one participant highlighted that even for those who do have grandchildren,
GrandPals provides an additional opportunity to be involved with young people.

[…] we’ve got eight grandchildren but like they’re at a distance and even then, their
parents are still busy […] So, we actually have like the two from last year like they just-
they just become grandchildren. (Participant 10)

Evidently, folks that have grandchildren can also benefit from the connections formed through
GrandPals.
In addition, some participants spoke about how connections are formed in various ways. For example, one participant highlighted that a particular student often chose to work with her when his usual GrandPal was unavailable, “I had one today I’ve had him two or three times […] he comes to me when he- when his GrandPal is not here” (Participant 11). As shown through this quote, even if folks are connected with their younger partner, they can build connections with other students in the program as well.

Moreover, participants seemed to be grateful that the students wanted to maintain an ongoing connection with them. This ongoing connection is best illustrated by the following quote: “So you really […] you actually get a friend for-life” (Participant 10). In addition, one participant stated: “I have been gratified to have the kids come back. […] I see the kids come here or I see them at the school, and they make a point of coming and talking to me” (Participant 3). Similarly, another individual said: “I’ve been fortunate that I’ve been able to see uh some of the children […] in years after” (Participant 6).

Another participant emphasized that the students really want to stay connected with them even after the program had completed:

I find uh like last year in the GrandPals um the kids wanted- well one of the children um she wanted um to come and meet me in the summer like after- after the program was over […] She did come over with her mom and another friend and uh like we have a room downstairs where there’s all this kind of sports equipment and everything and uh so she- she really enjoys that […] They still want to connect after- after they’re finished GrandPals. (Participant 7)

Similarly, other researchers found that some partnerships formed during intergenerational programs turned into friendships, which continued upon completion of the program (Andrew,
King and Lauder (2016) even emphasized that such ongoing connections attested to the effectiveness of an intergenerational program. An important distinction between King and Lauder’s (2016) study and this project is that their study involved undergraduate students.

Additionally, some participants expressed joy from observing the development and growth of the students over time. For example, one participant said, "I think what I like most is watching the children grow up over the year" (Participant 6). Another participant also highlighted their delight in seeing the students mature:

> [...] it’s interesting to see them developing because when I first volunteered, I thought it was just for the fall, I didn’t know it was for the whole year [...] I mean I can see the benefit of it- of it lasting for the year [...] ‘Cause you see them- them developing and growing and- and changing too. (Participant 2)

As well, participants seemed to look out for and truly empathize with the students in varying ways. A few participants mentioned that they empathize with the students during the winter months when they walk from the school to the retirement home to attend GrandPals. For example, one participant shared, “I watch those kids come over sometimes and I feel so bad for them [...] I just feel for the kids [...] when they’re traipsing over I just- the snows up to here” (Participant 4).

Likewise, another participant expressed:

> The poor kids sometimes you know [...] We drive over and that’s okay like 30 seconds or 45 seconds to go from the car into the building but when they have to go from the school. [...] It probably takes 10 or 15 minutes and fudging [sic] through the snow and it’s cold.

(Participant 5)
Additionally, one participant spoke about early group formation and highlighted that that process can be difficult for the students, underscoring how quickly attachments are formed:

 [...] it was a little up and down in the beginning like in terms of the groups got switched around two or three times you know, and I felt like that was a little unsettling for the kids more than me, you know. Like I had two little girls and they didn't want to go and so on and so on and you know, they survived it [...] they were just, you know, they had sort of attached really quickly like I mean I was surprised by that and um you know I'd only known them a few- and then they were- they had to go in another group and uh I don't think they were all thrilled about that. (Participant 2)

As shown through these quotes, participants demonstrated genuine empathy and concern for the students, striving to create the most positive experience for them.

Along with empathizing with the students, a few participants spoke about providing support to the students. For example, one participant shared:

Last year um my girl [...] her father actually divorced her mother during that year and uh, so I think I became a bit of a love person to her in a way, you know [...] Another support- a bit of a support [...] not that I said anything special or anything you know; you just were there. That was a difficult year for her. [...] She would talk about it. [...] I just didn’t want to say very much. (Participant 10)

Similarly, another participant also spoke about supporting a student during their parents’ divorce simply by listening:

The children you know they have- there has been- I know last year there was a marital breakdown. So uh- but he’s- they’re well-adjusted and both parents have gone- moved on and had other partners and so on and you know- but you know you’re sort of
he wanted to talk about you know not- not what’s on here you know the program thing
but you know his weekend with his mom or […] (Participant 8)

Through these examples, it is evident that the participants play an important role as an empathic, support person for the students while involved in GrandPals, strengthening the connection between them.

In sum, involvement in GrandPals seemed to encourage the development of meaningful connections between the students and older adults. Participants truly cherished their friendships with the students; some of these relationships even persisted after the program completed. A few participants discussed the joy they gained from seeing the students grow over time. Finally, participants seemed to empathize with and provide support to the students.

**Reciprocity and the Role of Age**

The second theme is *Reciprocity and the Role of Age*, which relates to the sharing of knowledge and experiences between the students and older adults, acknowledging the unique and important roles of each generation in the success of the program. As shared by one participant, “[…] [we] have the opportunity to meet the different children from different backgrounds and that um they- you have the opportunity to share with them about yourself because that’s part of what they’re looking for” (Participant 6). This theme is divided into two subthemes: *Learn from the Students* and *Contribute to the Students*.

**Learn from the students.** Participants spoke about learning a great deal from the students. For example, one participant said, “I learn a lot from the kids” and emphasized that the knowledge exchange is mutual: “But you learn so much too from the children. […] There’s a lot of give and take, you know” (Participant 8).
As well, some participants discussed the value of gaining insight into the experiences of students. One individual even shared that being involved in GrandPals helps him relate to their own grandchildren, “[…] it gives [us] an insight of what are kids going through […] what the grandparent- or grandkids are going through at a certain age, what they’re thinking of and how they think” (Participant 5). Evidently, for this participant, learning more about the experiences of young people through GrandPals contributed to his connection with his grandchildren.

Along with gaining insight into their experiences, another participant highlighted how being involved in GrandPals helps her stay up-to-date on what young people learn in school: “[…] it keeps us current with what they’re doing in school and stuff like that” (Participant 6). Moreover, several participants indicated that they learned more about technology from the students. For example, one participant said, “They taught me how to use my iPhone” (Participant 3). Interestingly, Gamliel and Gabay (2014) investigated whether involvement in an intergenerational technology program contributed to the empowerment of each generation. The researchers found that the use of technology provided a platform for intergenerational interactions, exchange of knowledge, and empowerment (Gamliel & Gabay, 2014). Thus, the fact that several participants mentioned learning more about technology from the students involved in GrandPals is noteworthy as the use of technology is important in the promotion of lifelong learning and active aging among older adults (Diaz-Lopez, Lopez-Liria, Aguilar-Parra, & Padilla-Gongora, 2016).

Many participants also talked about enjoying getting to know different students and learning about their unique experiences, personalities, and backgrounds. This is best illustrated through the following quotation: “I like the experience of the different children and their backgrounds and everything […] and their- their you know, the personalities […] different
families and everything” (Participant 6). As made evident by this quote, participants liked discovering new things about the students as they became better acquainted over time.

For a few participants, learning about the students was a main highlight of the program. For instance, when asked why he enjoys GrandPals, one participant said, “Well, just talking to the kids and getting their reaction to things” (Participant 3). Likewise, another participant indicated that what she liked most about the program was, “Just hearing about [the students’] experiences” (Participant 11). This supports another qualitative study conducted in the United Kingdom on intergenerational practice, which highlighted that older adults residing in a care home, “enjoyed learning through young people’s experiences” (Cook & Bailey, 2013, p. 416).

Interestingly, it appeared as though participants’ positive experiences with the students in GrandPals did not necessarily align with their expectations of young people. When participants talked about the students, they seemed to compare their interactions with them to the expectations they have of young people in that age group. This is best illustrated by the following quotation:

*I find uh about the age that they are I think- I think they’re eleven or twelve [...] They’re at a perfect age because they um they’re still really interested in everything and yet they haven’t got to the point where they’re sort of more like teenagers and think they know everything, you know. [...] They still want to learn things. [...] I know that um the kids as they go into grade five um are- like see when they’re- when they’re grade- in grade four they’re less mature but as they get into grade five they’re more mature but they haven’t got to the point where they have an attitude yet or they know everything- they think they know everything. [...] They’re at this point they’re really open to new ideas and everything like that.* (Participant 7)
Similarly, another participant spoke about their expectations of young people:

*I didn’t know what to expect behaviour wise you know, cause you have a (laughs) natural concern about that (laughs) [...] and like they’re not- they’re not- they don’t have the negativity that uh probably comes later, you know, when they get older.* (Participant 8)

Other participants further highlighted how the students in GrandPals are unlike other youth, with one participant saying she enjoys working with young people, “[…] when they’re not smart alecks or you know, how sometimes kids outside of a program like [GrandPals] can be pretty…it’s not like that here” (Participant 4).

As shown through these quotes, participants spoke about their initial uncertainty around working with the students. Participants seemed to be worried about the appropriateness of the age group and perhaps had some initial ideas about what it would be like to work with the students. However, they were pleased to learn that they could have positive interactions with young people in that age group. For instance, participants often emphasized that the students were respectful and well-prepared, with one participant saying, “[…] I think the kids have been very respectful. […] They’ve been super patient and very kind” (Participant 2). This coincides with previous research that that older adults have more positive views of young people following involvement in an intergenerational program (Belgrave, 2011; Gamliel & Gabay, 2014; Meshel & McGynn, 2004).

In addition, several participants highlighted how impressed they were by the students and their accomplishments. This is best illustrated through the following quotation:

*I was amazed at- at what they were able to accomplish at that age, you know, they’re only what ten, eleven years old. […] Their insight of uh just communicating with GrandPals and you know, putting out their um- the histories of their- or they're only ten years old I guess, what’s gone through from uh age one to age ten […] And what they’ve done and*
how they’ve approached different problems, etcetera, etcetera. So, I’m amazed at-
their knowledge at that point. (Participant 5)

Similarly, another participant spoke about being impressed by the students, hoping that their parents could also revel in their achievements:

And also useful would be to make sure the uh parents get a chance to see the kids do their formal presentation and use the mic and public speaking cause uh that impresses me that we have fifth graders who are experienced public speakers. [...] They’re not gonna be \[laughs\] afraid to run for office or run from office! (Participant 1)

As shown through these quotes, participants had certain ideas of what young people could accomplish, which seemed to be challenged through involvement in GrandPals.

In addition, participants seemed to be grateful for the genuine enthusiasm and engagement of the students. Participants appeared to value that the students were truly interested in the program. This is best illustrated by the following quotation:

What I like most about it is that um the kids are so enthusiastic about it. That they really obviously uh they show their joy being a part of it. I can honestly say I’ve you know, been observing other kids beyond my own little group that I have, everyone seems to be engaged. I don’t see anybody not engaged in the program. So, uh it’s really nice to see that with the kids. And that they’re really taking an honest interest in the older people that they’re you know, with- the adults in the program. (Participant 2)

Similarly, other participants also spoke about the students’ enthusiasm, with one participant saying, “[…] they really get into it and so do you. […] They love coming here” (Participant 9). Another individual expressed, “[…] they want to come […] I haven’t seen any uh- any of the children I’ve had that didn’t want to be here, you know” (Participant 8). Evidently, it seems like
the participants were both a bit surprised but grateful to learn that the students were interested in
the program and sincerely wanted to spend time with them. Similarly, Zucchero (2010) found
that older participants were surprised by the investment and dedication demonstrated by students
involved in an intergenerational service-learning project. Although, the students involved in the
study by Zucchero were college students as opposed to the grade five students in GrandPals.

Overall, participants learned a lot from working with the students. Contrary to their initial
expectations of young people, participants were impressed by the students’ behaviour and
accomplishments. Finally, participants were pleased to learn of the students’ enthusiasm for the
program and, ultimately, their interest in working with the older adults.

**Contribute to the students.** Along with learning from the students, participants talked
about how involvement in GrandPals enabled them to share their own experiences and wisdom.
For instance, one participant spoke about what the students may learn from her:

> Well, they learn about a lot of different countries because I’ve lived in a lot of different
countries. And um- uh they learn about my nursing and the fact that I collect teddy bears
and that kind of thing. [...] But I lived all over the world as a child [...] They learn about
these different places and we look at them on the map and you know, so they have an idea
of where- where you’ve been and what you’ve experienced, you know. (Participant 6)

In addition, several participants emphasized how the students would ask them about their
lives and sincerely seemed interested in hearing about their experiences. This is most evident
through the following quotation:

> [...] they want to know about your life you know, what were- what was I doing when I
was their age and it’s hard for them to understand that I grew up in a- you know, went to
school in a one-room schoolhouse [...] What was that like, you know. And walking to
school every day and uh yeah- it’s just uh- and growing up on a farm now they’re very interested in that. (Participant 8)

Similarly, one participant shared, “But the other day I told them about the way telephones were when I was a- a little girl. Oh, were they ever excited about that! […] They pick up on our stories like crazy!” (Participant 10).

As shown through these quotes, in talking about their experiences, participants were able to teach the students how things have changed over time. One participant even incorporated a physical map into these discussions to demonstrate the evolution of the town.

*What we did last year, we were gonna do it again today, is we went to the town and got maps, so we’d bring it in and give each one a map. Now they gotta find- okay “we live on such a such street” okay they find that and find the numbers it relates to and we’ll find it. I had my guy-one guy brought his map every week and we were going over it- he wanted to know something more. And I just grew up down here on the corner of town, so I know the town- the town as it was backwards, you know.* (Participant 9)

Another participant spoke about her natural inclination to educate the students about the past:

*And you do have this innate feeling that you want to teach them about the past and cause you get to think that all they know is computers you see, and I’m sure that’s probably not right but- so you want to teach them what it used to be like.* (Participant 10)

Evidently, participants wanted to offer their wisdom and guidance to the students and seemed to feel that their contribution was of value. This aligns with prior findings that older adults in an intergenerational program, “valued contributing to the development and education of younger generations” (Cook & Bailey, 2013, p. 418). The benefits of feeling valued, particularly for older adults, is of importance to my study. Research has shown that feeling valued and important has
implications for mental health, especially among older adults. As such, intergenerational programs can provide opportunities for older adults to make meaningful contributions, encouraging feelings of value (Chippendale, 2013).

In addition, one participant highlighted that, for the students, interacting with and learning from the older adults, “[…] helps children to understand um elderly people in a different way” (Participant 2). Furthermore, another participant talked about how she thinks the students view her after spending time together during GrandPals: “I think they um uh think that I’m uh kind, and funny, friendly, and that- all that kind of stuff” (Participant 7).

Overall, participants spoke about sharing their experiences and wisdom with the students, which may ultimately contribute to the young people having more positive views of older adults. In this way, my study contributes to the well-studied belief that involvement in an intergenerational program can improve elementary school-age students’ attitudes toward older adults (Cummings et al., 2002; Dunham & Casadonte, 2009; Pinquart et al., 2000).

In conclusion, the theme, Reciprocity and the Role of Age, demonstrates that intergenerational programs such as GrandPals can provide a platform for a reciprocal exchange of knowledge and experiences between younger people and older adults. Such reciprocity is mutually beneficial, challenges stereotypes, and provides members of each generation with a valuable role. These results support previous findings that younger and older people both have unique forms of knowledge which are valuable and empowering when exchanged (Gamliel & Gabay, 2014).
Reminiscence and Reflection

The third main theme, *Reminiscence and Reflection*, encompasses the processes of reminiscence\(^9\) and reflection\(^10\) that were elicited through this program. Many participants highlighted that the themes explored in each weekly meeting, and questions asked during GrandPals sessions (e.g., ‘adventures in the great outdoors’ and ‘what does friendship mean to you?’) are thought-provoking and encourages them to reflect on their lives. This is best illustrated through the following quotation:

*It makes you sort of stop and think you know, you don’t think of the questions that they’re asking uh [...] On a day to day or- or you don’t think of the answers until the questions are presented to you. [...] It just makes you- you know think of- of the questions itself, you know. [...] So that’s another thing that- that’s sort of opened up my eyes and said okay you know, sit back and think of- of life itself or whatever it is. [...] I think the themes uh sort of makes you as a GrandPal you know, think about [...] just life in general or whatever.* (Participant 5)

Additionally, one participant mentioned how the questions encourage her to think about parts of her life that have not been in the foreground of her memory, “[…] they challenge me too cause some of the questions they ask me, I haven’t thought about that aspect of my life for a long time” (Participant 8). Similar to this, another participant shared, “To answer some of the questions it’ll bring up some things that you hadn’t thought about” (Participant 9). Evidently, the themes and specific questions asked during GrandPals stimulates reflection on past experiences.

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\(^9\) The term *reminiscence* can be defined as “the act of remembering events and experiences from the past” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019).

\(^10\) The term *reflection* refers to “serious and careful thought” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019).
Moreover, one couple, who are both involved in GrandPals, spoke about how the program keeps them thinking, highlighting the benefits of participating as a pair:

*It keeps us thinking. [...] I think we’re lucky and I think- I’ve decided that if you do this program, you’re well to do it as two because we sit down the night before and we go over all the questions. And we can bring- things can come up in our mind- oh yeah, he helps me remember and the other way around. But if you’re one person it can be more difficult.*

*It’s a lot more fun this way!* (Participant 10)

As shown through these quotes, for the older adults involved, engagement in GrandPals inspired thinking and reflection.

In addition, several participants also spoke about reminiscences prompted through participation in the program. For example, one individual indicated that, “It brings back a lot of memories” (Participant 10). Many participants highlighted how the different themes help them recall specific, related memories:

*And this [theme]- this one’s gonna be travel. It’s made us think back [...] We had an adventure where we went to Sicily and then uh our car was stolen. [...] The theme travel got us back- or got me back to that time uh I thought about uh going to Sicily and also having our car stolen and-and the pitfalls of-oh having to go notify the insurance company, notify the rental company, report the theft to the police.* (Participant 5)

Similarly, another participant mentioned how a certain theme encouraged an associated memory:

*Like the [theme] this week is on animals. So, we were going over stuff like last there- or one time we had a beaver in the barn [...] He’d just wandered up from the bush you know, and we turned him around and wandered him back to the bush.* (Participant 9)
Along with the recollection of past events, one participant spoke about remembering meaningful moments with his siblings:

Well, the memories I have too also is one of the things that- that sort of opens up my memory [...] I have four brothers and four sisters and just-just the way you're brought up and the hardships and-and closeness that we have. [...] Three of my siblings have passed away right now so there's only five of us left [...] And it just makes you think back on-on things that happen over our life. (Participant 5)

These findings coincide with the results of a study conducted in Japan by Kamei et al. (2011) which found that older adults sometimes reminisced during weekly intergenerational sessions, of which was promoted by conversations with the children. Common topics of these reminiscences included, “their past, deceased family members, and local cultural traditions” (p. 101). In my study, although the process of reminiscence was positive for many participants, a few individuals highlighted that reminiscence can sometimes provoke painful memories. For instance, one participant shared, “It brings back some things you’d rather not have brought back” (Participant 8). Another participant identified that although GrandPals does not bring up difficult memories for her, she noticed that it does for others:

I know some people in the program have decided not to continue because it brought up too many sort of sad memories. [...] It hasn’t- it hasn’t affected me that way [...] But it has affected- I know it’s affected other people that way. (Participant 7)

As shown through these quotations, while reminiscing can be very positive, it is important to be aware of potential feelings associated with recalling certain past experiences. The finding that intergenerational programs may promote reminiscence of both happy and sad memories was also briefly mentioned in Zucchero’s (2010) study. Future research should further explore this area in
order to best support older adults who reminisce of difficult memories during an intergenerational program.

Another noteworthy pattern throughout the interviews is that, for many participants, all of whom were retired, involvement in GrandPals seemed to help them stay connected to their past work. This is most evident in the following excerpt:

*I have been doing-doing that kind of thing virtually all of my life. I mean in-in uh high school I wanted to be a teacher because I didn’t like the way I’d been taught. [...] [GrandPals] gave me a chance even in retirement to still be engaged with the work that I’ve done all my life.* (Participant 1)

Similar to this individual, another participant, who also has a teaching background, spoke about wanting to work with children again:

*I thought you know, I think I could- I think I would likely enjoy working with children because I hadn’t had you know, that opportunity for many years. [...] And I always taught you know, grade two and three so I knew these children would be a little older, so I wasn’t sure just what to expect.* (Participant 8)

Additionally, other participants shared their previous experience working with children:

*When we were on the farm, we used to do school tours [...] So we’d have kids out there kindergarten to probably grade three [...] And they’d have a tour basically of the barn [...] Funny part is, they may be there to have their lunch so the highlight would be sitting on the wagon in the shop on bales of hay having their lunch.* (Participant 9)

One participant also mentioned that they were familiar with the aims of intergenerational programs from their past career: “I’ve been involved with some things before just though that I
used to do as a child and youth worker. So, um I-I understand how those-what the goals are of most of these programs” (Participant 2).

As shown through these quotes, many participants spoke about working with children in the past. It seems that for these participants, being involved in GrandPals gave them an opportunity to work with children and thus remain connected to their past career and roles. For older adults, maintaining a connection to a past career is beneficial because work is often associated with a sense of purpose and pleasure (Government of Canada, 2017).

Additionally, some participants also discussed how involvement in the intergenerational program connects them to their youth: “It makes me feel younger” (Participant 11). Likewise, another participant indicated, “I think it keeps us young” (Participant 10). As shown through these quotes, engagement in GrandPals inspired youthful energy, helping participants remember and remain connected to their past.

Overall, participants spoke about the reflection and reminiscence which occurred through GrandPals. Participants discussed that GrandPals is thought-provoking and encourages recollection of past events and experiences; a few participants highlighted that it may also bring up painful memories. For many participants, the intergenerational program seemed to help them stay connected to their past work. Finally, some participants mentioned that being involved in GrandPals reconnected them to their younger days.

**It Takes Work: Investments into an Intergenerational Program**

When discussing their experiences with GrandPals, participants highlighted several challenges and barriers to involvement in this type of intergenerational program. The fourth and final theme is *It Takes Work: Investments into an Intergenerational Program*. 

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While participants feedback on GrandPals was largely positive, a few barriers to accessibility were identified. Common barriers included program length and time commitment, scheduling, and unpredictability. Most participants spoke about the program length, highlighting that they felt that it was too long. This is most evident through the following excerpt:

*I think the only thing that if I was to offer some advice to the program, would be to um shorten it. I think it’s a bit long for the whole school year- most of the school year […] I do think that the full school year is a little long. […] I’d like to see something shorter and a little more prescriptive.* (Participant 2)

As demonstrated through this quote, concerns surrounding the program length was a significant topic throughout the interviews. One participant even mentioned that the required time commitment was actually deterring people from joining GrandPals:

*[…] the experience has been good and the people who are running it are trying very hard. I think they’re running it a little too long. It’s uh- it’s difficult to get GrandPals who will uh take the length that they want. A full-a full year. […] It’s not that hard for me cause I live here. But uh I notice that uh the number who are doing it from here who have done it before have dropped off. And they say that the reason is the uh the commitment- time commitment is too much for them.* (Participant 3)

Another participant similarly stated: “[…] it’s a good experience for anybody to get involved in um again they would probably want to get involved but maybe because of the length they may lose interest or whatever it is” (Participant 5). Evidently, being involved in an intergenerational program requires a significant time commitment from participants.

In addition, a few participants highlighted how the program is often impacted by the unpredictability of the weather.
The only challenge (laughs) that I have found is uh with the weather because for some reason every Wednesday has been not such such great weather and uh there’s been uh well one time I couldn’t get there because of the weather but um and then another time school was cancelled because of the weather. So, I would say those were the only challenges- environmental! (Participant 2)

As shown through this quote, unfavourable weather conditions seem to impact the accessibility of the program, making scheduling and transportation more difficult. In response to these accessibility barriers, a few participants suggested alternative options.

Maybe once every two weeks might be better or something. Or not having it for so long or have a break during the real heavy winter months. Maybe from um September to November or even December and then stop till March maybe. (Participant 4)

In sum, it is important to highlight common barriers to accessibility to acknowledge the commitment of participants as well as address areas of improvement. This aligns with the results of a study conducted by Ayala et al. (2007) which identified several barriers to intergenerational programming in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Regarding the accessibility of intergenerational programs for older adults, Ayala et al. (2007) highlighted transportation, scheduling and timing, language and culture, safety, and physical and/or emotional health of seniors as the most common barriers. Ultimately, these barriers may impact older adults’ desire and ability to participate in intergenerational programs. However, of note is that the study by Ayala et al. (2007) conducted telephone interviews with service providers of intergenerational programs rather than participants, which is an important difference from the current research project.

In addition, some participants highlighted how, at times, involvement in an intergenerational program can be demanding and requires sufficient energy to participate. For
example, one participant shared, “It’s high energy work. […] It’s focus and concentration for an hour and that’s high energy” (Participant 1). Moreover, another participant indicated, “It’s a little overwhelming at times” (Participant 11). This demonstrates that substantial energy is required from older adults to actively participate in an intergenerational program. Consequently, a few participants talked about feeling fatigued after the GrandPals sessions. For example, one participant stated, “I was almost tired after we’d talked and yakked so much” (Participant 10). Another participant similarly spoke of their fatigue; however, they also emphasized that the rewards outweigh the work required:

I know I find it- I- I’m usually absolutely exhausted at the end of the hour because they’re you know, they're coming at you at all angles (laughs). […] It is exhausting because it- after the hour you've you know, you’re overwhelmed with all the- everything that’s gone on and you- you could do with a good nap. But uh I mean we- we do enjoy them and that’s for sure, you know. Otherwise we- well I wouldn’t come back if I wasn’t- if I wasn’t enjoying it. (Participant 6)

In addition, several participants discussed how it sometimes takes work to keep the sessions on track if the students are unfocused or distracted, which may contribute to their fatigue following GrandPals sessions. This is best illustrated by the following quote:

I have to rein them in sometimes cause they get going on a tangent and pull out their phones and we’ve had to ban phones […] One day it was really bad and the teacher even noticed and he came over and I said “It’s okay I got it” and he says “Oh I know you got it but I want you to tell me when you know, when they’re misbehaving” and I said “Oh they weren’t really misbehaving, they’re just goofing off”. It was a bad day! They’re not usually like that so- so that was all. (Participant 4)
Similarly, another participant also spoke about managing distractions; however, they mentioned liking the work that is required to maintain a focused conversation with the students:

*I enjoy the fact that we- we have to do a little bit of homework so that we can at least stimulate the conversation because the conversation is very easily distracted you know, we're off at a tangent before we know where we are (laughs) [...] and I'm right there with them (laughs) you know, off at that tangent.* (Participant 6)

Evidently, while being involved in an intergenerational program entails an ample amount of energy on behalf of the older adults, it is still enjoyable and worthwhile for many individuals.

Along with the investments required of the participants, a successful intergenerational program also involves work from the program facilitators. Many participants spoke about the efforts demonstrated by the teachers especially with regard to educating and preparing the students. This is best illustrated by the following quotation:

*I think that that speaks a lot to how the teachers have um uh prepared them before entering into the program. [...] I’m sure they did a lot of sensitivity training with them on how to um you know, what to expect, how to react, what’s appropriate, what’s not appropriate, and it really shows. I think the kids have been very respectful um they’ve been patient [...] I’ve been really pleased with that like seeing that I think the teachers have put a lot of work into it.* (Participant 2)

Similarly, another participant said, “[...] [the students] interact really well together and they’re obviously- I’m always impressed that the teachers have them so well prepared for each session you know, they’ve- they’re well prepared” (Participant 8). As shown through these quotations, participants recognized the efforts of the teachers and investment into the students to ensure that the program is successful. This is congruent with Ayala and colleagues’ (2007) study which
highlighted that, “successful intergenerational programs require the knowledge, skills, comfort, attitudes, and commitment of staff to work effectively with different generations” (p. 56).

As well, throughout the interviews, some participants seemed to emphasize that it takes a certain kind of person to do well in an intergenerational program. In doing so, participants spoke about qualities that would make a good GrandPal. For example, one participant stated:

*I think you have to have a- you have to have a love for children, and you have to be up open to the different experiences that children have nowadays because they’re- they may not be the same as when we were growing up. So, you have to have an open mind about that kind of thing [...] (Participant 8)*

Another participant highlighted how she recommends the program to folks that she believed would be a good fit:

*I’ve been talking to a few of the people here and I said, “You know with the experiences you have and the stories you have that I hear from you, you would be wonderful and would be very good with the children.” (Participant 11)*

Furthermore, when reflecting upon their own experiences and abilities, although they recognized the advantages of participating in an intergenerational program, some individuals seemed to feel that being involved in this type of program may be more beneficial for others. This is best illustrated through the following excerpt from a GrandPal who participated in the program who was community dwelling (versus living in the partner retirement residence):

*I think with where I am in my own life um and where I- where I’ve observed other people who were adults- meaning adults in the program and where they are with their own life it could be- it’s you know, different. Because I- I don’t live here and I’m out and about all the time connecting whereas I know that there are people who live here, and they don’t*
connect half as much as I have an opportunity to. So, I think it’s really for them it’s fantastic. [...] And a lot of them they’re— they don’t have any younger children. I have two grandchildren [...] So, for me yes of course it’s— it’s a very— it’s great. I enjoy it and it’s good for me um but I think it’s even better for some people who— who don’t have those opportunities. (Participant 2)

Similarly, another participant highlighted that although she likes being involved in GrandPals, she does not feel like it essential to her overall well-being, “[…] not that I don’t enjoy it. I’m not saying that. It’s just not something I needed to fulfill any need per se, you know” (Participant 4).

Finally, although participating in GrandPals requires work, it important to note that most individuals expressed an interest in continuing involvement with the program in the future. However, participants highlighted many factors that contributed to their decision to stay involved including the time commitment, busy schedules, caregiving responsibilities, and concerns regarding their own health and wellness. This is best exemplified through the following excerpt:

'It takes commitment and I am fully committed, and I’ll see it to the end. That being said, with other things that I have in my life too, I don’t know. I don’t know. I think I would do it again. I’m not sure about next year um but I definitely would participate in this again. […] I mean I most likely will, but I can’t guarantee it and some of that depends on my you know, my mother is elderly and um I- I take care of her at times too. So, it depends on her health too. […] Right now, I can do it. I can’t talk about next year at this point. […] But I- it’s something I plan to stay involved with if I can. (Participant 2)

A few participants spoke about their concerns and uncertainty surrounding their health and ability to continue involvement with GrandPals. For example, one participant stated:
I probably will not do it again because it is high energy work and uh at this stage in my life my physician gives me six months to a year, maybe less, maybe more kind of thing [...] I could not guarantee that I could uh last another year with GrandPals so there’s no point in starting. (Participant 1)

Similarly, when asked if they would participate in GrandPals again, another participant said:

I don’t think so. I don’t know. I don’t know whether I’ll be here (laughs). At my age I play it one day at a time. [...] I would want to but I don’t know whether I could do it or not. [...] It’s a bit of an effort. [...] Quite an effort. (Participant 11)

Overall, participants spoke about various investments that are required to be involved in GrandPals. It is evident that many factors contribute to the success of an integrational program, including time commitment, planning, and efforts of both younger and older participants as well as the program facilitators. Some participants highlighted the qualities of a good GrandPal and spoke about the potential benefits of this program for others. Ultimately, while participants recognized that being a GrandPal takes work, they emphasized that it is worth it.
Chapter 5: Broader Discussion

The research questions for this project were:

1. What is the experience of older adults involved in the GrandPals program?
2. What factors motivate older adults to participate in the GrandPals program?
3. What is the impact of GrandPals on older adult participants?
   a. How does intergenerational contact influence the mental health and well-being of older adults involved in the GrandPals program?
   b. How does involvement in the GrandPals program impact older adult’s social participation/social network?

Though discussed separately, the core themes generated through my thematic analysis of the data and participants’ responses to the research questions are inevitably intertwined. Ultimately, the themes that emerged from the data are linked to the research questions and our overall understanding of the experiences of older adults involved in GrandPals. The following three sections connect the findings explicitly to each of the research questions.

Research Question #1: Experience

My first research question examined older adults’ experiences involved in GrandPals. In general, participants spoke very positively about their time in GrandPals. Given that the primary aim of this study was to understand the experience of older adults involved in an intergenerational program, the fact that participants enjoyed the program is of value. Participants commonly described GrandPals as fun, enjoyable, and positive. For example, one participant said, “On the whole I- I’ve enjoyed it very much” (Participant 6). Similarly, another individual
spoke about their rewarding experience with GrandPals: “[...] it’s been a positive experience. I haven’t had any um regrets about uh participating in it” (Participant 2).

Although participants had difficulty identifying specific reasons why they enjoyed GrandPals so much, a common pattern throughout the interviews was that their experience in the intergenerational program was a positive one. For example, when asked why she plans to continue involvement in GrandPals, one participant explained, “Just um the- the overall um effect of it. The whole- I- I think it’s a great- I think it’s a really great program. […] Nothing specifically, it’s just like- I just think it’s a really good program” (Participant 7). Similar to this individual, many participants spoke about their overall experience as being positive rather than providing specific reasons for their contentment with the program.

Additionally, most participants highlighted that they would recommend the program to other older adults, further affirming their positive appraisal of the program. For instance, one individual emphasized, “I would recommend it to anyone” (Participant 4). Participants’ recommendations provide further evidence for the quality of the intergenerational program.

Overall, as identified through my thematic analysis, folks had a positive experience involved in GrandPals. In particular, the connections they had with the students, the opportunity to share their knowledge and also reflect upon their own experiences enhanced the experience. People had a good experience and, yet, it took work; the various investments required of participants to engage in an intergenerational program impacts their overall experience.

**Research Question #2: Motivation for Participation**

My second research question explored factors that motivate older adults to participate in GrandPals. On the whole, participants indicated various motivating factors for involvement in the intergenerational program. Some participants discussed learning of the program simply by
living in the retirement residence where it occurs on a weekly basis. It was quite common for participants to express an interest in joining GrandPals after observing the program firsthand. For instance, one participant spoke about learning of the program and his decision to get involved:

*I think it had been going on for two years before I got here. I think it started the year that the retirement residence opened, and I came here two years after that. So, I’ve been involved three years. Um, why? I don’t know it seemed a reasonable thing to do that’s about all I can say. […] I was just living here and […] I just saw it […] Because it was already occurring, so I saw these kids coming in.* (Participant 3)

Similar to this individual, another participant indicated that she learnt about the program through seeing the students at the retirement residence where she lives: “I’ve been here for three years and I knew about it. […] I saw the children coming and I thought I’d like to join in. […] Because I like the young people” (Participant 10).

Moreover, some participants mentioned hearing about the program by word of mouth through church involvement. One participant spoke about her introduction to the program:

*I did it for the first time last year and it was only because this person in the- in the church here in town was asking for volunteers and course I’m not somebody who “Oh here I am! Here I am” (laughs) So when he approached me […] He knew my- some of my background and said “I think you would really enjoy this” and he explained a little more and then I talked to somebody in church who had done it before so I learned more about the program from them and I thought well you know, something- it is something that I could do.* (Participant 8)

Additionally, one couple indicated that their decision to join GrandPals was motivated by their granddaughter’s involvement in the program. Another participant mentioned that her
granddaughter asked her and her husband to join, “Well actually, it was my granddaughter. She’s in the program and she actually called and asked us cause she said they didn’t have enough people at the centre” (Participant 4).

In addition, aligned with the theme, Connections, for some participants, a longing to connect with young people served as a primary motivation for joining the intergenerational program. A few participants highlighted that not having any grandchildren was their primary motivation for involvement in GrandPals. For example, one participant shared, “I originally decided to participate because I know I would never have grandchildren of my own and that’s why I became involved. […] To relate to young- young children” (Participant 6).

However, several participants who do have grandchildren emphasized that GrandPals provides them with an additional opportunity to connect with young people. Participants seemed to identify with the separation of the generations as they mentioned several factors that contribute to reduced face-to-face intergenerational interactions. This is most evident through the following excerpt:

[…] nowadays with some many people living far away from their families, families aren’t all in the same town anymore like the olden days so to speak. And um- and uh you know, a lot of kids they have grandparents, but they might be living in another country or they never really have a chance to see them due to distance or- or what have you. So, um-um I think this gives kids a chance to uh get to know what it would be like almost to have that feeling of an elderly person who has an invested interest in your well-being. (Participant 2)

Furthermore, while he acknowledged the impact of geographic distance on relationships with his children and grandchildren, one participant highlighted the use of technology to facilitate communication between the generations: “My children are either in California or in
New Zealand. So, uh we interact with- with both sets of kids and the grandkids via uh the Skype equivalent or Facetime” (Participant 1).

In sum, participants shared varying motivational factors for involvement in GrandPals. While some individuals spoke about gaining access to the program through living in the retirement residence, other participants were encouraged to join by friends, family, and community members. Finally, a yearning to connect with young people motivated several individuals to get involved in the intergenerational program.

**Research Question #3: Impact of GrandPals**

My third research question, which was divided into two segments, investigated the impact of GrandPals on older adult participants. The first part of the question looked at whether intergenerational contact through GrandPals had an impact on participants mental health and well-being. The second part considered whether involvement in GrandPals influenced participants’ social participation/social network.

**Mental health and well-being.** Interestingly, when asked about the direct impacts of GrandPals on mental health and well-being, most participants did not feel that involvement in the intergenerational program affected their mental health and well-being. However, these participants simultaneously described several indirect ways in which engagement in GrandPals impacts their mental health and well-being. This is best illustrated through the following excerpt:

*For my mental health- I can’t say it has had a lot to do with my mental health. Overall well-being- it’s nice to feel like you’re participating in something that will advance young-young people in some way. That makes a difference in their life um yeah-yyeah, I think you know, you feel good about it and when you feel good about something that does improve your self-esteem.* (Participant 2)
This is similar to another participants’ response:

I don't know if I would be able to sort of pin-point that. I mean I just know that I enjoy it, you know. And- and look forward to seeing them each week, you know. [...] But um I don't know that it's improved my mental health in any way. (Participant 6)

While these participants denied the explicit, direct influence of involvement in GrandPals on their mental health and well-being, it is evident that participants acknowledged more implicit, indirect effects of this program on their mental health and well-being.

Moreover, several participants highlighted that being involved in GrandPals helps them stay busy and active, which may have a positive impact on their mental health. For example, although one participant denied any significant impact of GrandPals on his mental health, he did acknowledge that it keeps him busy: “I don’t think that the GrandPals program as such has had any effect on my mental health, but it may have- may have in the sense that it keeps me occupied” (Participant 3). Similar to this participant, another individual stated that GrandPals “[...] gets me involved and gets me energized” (Participant 11).

In addition, one participant highlighted how participation in the program is a healthy distraction from other stressors in her life:

We have you know, we have a fun time. We you know, laugh and carry on and as somebody said to me “Well it’s good that you’re doing this because it takes you away from all the other stuff that’s going on in your life” (laughs) And as so true! Because for that hour that you’re with them and you’re right into all of this stuff so all the other stuff that goes on in your life is you know, is not in focus at all. [...] But people know that it- that I enjoyed it- enjoy it very much and that it’s something that’s you know, good for me cause it does uh take your mind off other things you know, that are going on. [...] I look
forward to coming every week. [...] And then I feel good when I leave [...] I think you know, health wise it keeps you mentally alert and you know, it’s just- it’s just overall a good experience. [...] So, I think it’s you know, you’re just in a- in a good frame of mind.

(Participant 8)

Similarly, another participant highlighted that her connection with the students feels good, “the rapport I have with the kids feels really good and it’s- it’s upbeat” (Participant 4).

Along with encouraging participants to stay busy and active, for some participants, involvement in GrandPals seemed to contribute to perceived improvements in self-esteem and a sense of purpose and meaningfulness. This is most evident through the following quote:

*Well, I think it- it sort of makes you feel appreciated and uh you know, you have a sense of well-being that you have accomplished things in your life that you didn’t know you could do. And uh- and that you still have lots to give, you know.* (Participant 8)

Perceived improvement in self-esteem has been mentioned in research on intergenerational programs (Teater, 2016). This aligns with previous findings by Teater (2016) which found that participation in an intergenerational program enhanced older adults’ self-esteem. Additionally, another study by Murayama et al. (2015) found that intergenerational programs contribute to strengthened sense of meaningfulness, an important component of sense of coherence (SOC), which is associated with improved mental health.

Overall, on the surface, most participants denied the influence of GrandPals on their mental health and well-being. However, through further analysis of participants’ responses, it appears that intergenerational contact may impact older adult’s mental health and well-being in various ways including helping them stay busy, enhancing self-esteem, as well as cultivating a sense of purpose and meaningfulness. Additionally, as identified through my thematic analysis,
participants’ meaningful connections with the students seemed to facilitate an exchange of knowledge and experiences and reminiscence on the past, which may have an influence on participants’ mental health and well-being.

**Social participation/social network.** Participants were also asked if GrandPals had any impact on their social participation/social network. A few participants spoke about being connected to each other through either GrandPals or other initiatives in the community. For example, one individual highlighted, “[…] I’m socially connected with several people in the program” (Participant 7). Another participant talked about her connections with other older adults in the program:

> Um, I can honestly say that most of the people that I know through GrandPals, aside from the students and the teachers who I’ve met, um I have known because I’ve been involved with other community um groups that- that have connected with elderly people in this building. So, I know most of the GrandPals. […] I mean not well, most- most of them, but to see them, to say hello […] (Participant 2)

Whereas a few participants mentioned being fairly socially connected to fellow older adults in the program, other individuals felt that the program did not have a significant impact on their social participation/social network. This is best illustrated by the following excerpt:

> […] I know most of the people in this place. […] And um it-it does-it does bring us together beforehand because we sit and chat you know about each other’s week or whatever. But um I mean that would be the only big impact. (Participant 7)

Although participants acknowledged a general familiarity with one another, most participants highlighted that they have limited opportunities to connect. For instance, one individual spoke about not having time to make connections with the other GrandPals:
I don't think it's had any impact on my social network. Um, we don't normally get a lot-we don't get any time, as a matter of fact, uh as people working with the GrandPals to meet as a group and talk about our experiences so-so I don't-I don't have much contact with- or don't have any more contact with those people that I do with anybody else who's a resident here. (Participant 1)

This is similar to the experience another participant, who indicated:

Well, you don't really get- oh well once let me see- cause they haven't-like this time they haven't-haven’t had us get together. Last year I think we did get together one time [...] so no- no you don’t really get to know the other GrandPals. I can’t say that I know them. [...] And then you know once you do your hour well everybody’s off you know we don’t stand around and talk [...] Because everybody’s got somewhere to be or to do. [...] So, it’s not like you can you know hang around and talk. (Participant 8)

Overall, for most participants, GrandPals did not contribute to enhanced social participation/social networks with fellow older adults involved in the program. Although, participants did develop meaningful connections with the students, which was made evident through my thematic analysis of the data.

**Theoretical Discussion**

In the literature review, I highlighted how Erikson’s theory is useful in understanding why intergenerational programs are mutually beneficial for both younger and older individuals.Aligned with Erikson’s theory (1963), for older adults, intergenerational programs provide opportunities for generativity while simultaneously promoting identity exploration and formation for younger people involved. Similar to previous research, my research demonstrates that older adults share valuable knowledge and experience with younger people and vice versa. In
particular, the theme Reciprocity and the Role of Age highlights this process of generativity and the benefits of exchanging wisdom. Participants enjoyed sharing stories of the past with the students and one participant even spoke about this as an innate feeling. Ehlman and colleagues (2014) discussed various activities that are associated with generativity among older adults, including volunteering and teaching a skill. For the older participants, it appears that volunteering with GrandPals, sharing knowledge gained through their experiences, and teaching the students about the past may promote generativity. In addition, Kessler and Staudinger (2007) suggested that, within the context of an intergenerational program, “identity formation is expressed in the adolescents’ curiosity and attentiveness toward the older person in order to gather information about the self and the world” (p. 698). As discussed within the theme Connections and Reciprocity and the Role of Age, participants emphasized that their connections with the students were mutual and highlighted the student’s genuine enthusiasm and engagement in the program. Although the students in GrandPals were not interviewed for this research project, based on discussions with the older participants it appears that the students demonstrated curiosity and attentiveness towards the older adults, which can be considered a means of promoting identity development (Kessler & Staudinger, 2007). In this way, my research aligns with previous research supporting the use of Erikson’s theory in the both the development of and research on intergenerational programs.

In addition, the contact hypothesis was discussed in relation to intergenerational programs, suggesting that these programs provide a suitable environment for decreasing prejudice and developing connections between younger and older people. To review, Allport (1985) recommended the following criteria for positive intergroup contact: equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation, and support of an institution or authority. Through the lens of the
contact hypothesis, the GrandPals program seems to meet the suggested criteria. For example, both the students and older adults are equally engaged in the program, are exploring the same topics weekly and are working towards presentation of the stories at the celebratory gala. All of this is done with the ongoing support of the teachers, school, and retirement residence. My research aligns with this theory in several ways. The theme Connections shows that GrandPals provided an opportunity for younger and older individuals to develop meaningful friendships. Furthermore, within the theme Reciprocity and the Role of Age, I highlighted how participants expectations of young people seemed to be challenged through participation in the program. In this way, my research further substantiates the use of Allport’s contact hypothesis in regard to intergenerational programs.

**Strengths and Limitations**

This research addressed an important gap in the literature on intergenerational programs by focusing exclusively on the experiences of the older adults involved in a Canadian-based intergenerational program. A key strength of this research is that it was community-engaged and involved ongoing collaboration between the research team and our community partners at GrandPals. Additionally, the use of interviews as a research method allowed for an in-depth exploration. Ultimately, this research project contributes to the Canadian literature on intergenerational programs and provides a base for understanding older adults’ experiences involved in GrandPals and the potential impacts of this program.

A main limitation of this research project is the sample size ($n=11$) and the homogenous nature of the group (e.g., the majority of the sample was white, cis-gendered, and heterosexual). Although there are some limitations to the sample, it is important to note that only those currently involved in GrandPals at the time of study were eligible to participate in this research
project. Further, this year, the GrandPals program itself experienced unique challenges with recruitment and lacked the required amount of older adult participants when the program commenced. With a total of 17 older adults enrolled in GrandPals, recruitment for this research project was constrained and, therefore, the sample is limited. It is noteworthy, however, that the response rate for this project was 65%. In addition, for a small project using thematic analysis with interview data, Braun and Clarke (2013) suggested a sample size of 6-10. Thus, the final sample size of this research project is sufficient.

Another limitation of this research project is the length of responses and richness of data from some interviews. Most interviews were scheduled either before or after the weekly GrandPals sessions out of convenience for the participants. However, when thinking about common responses within the theme *It Takes Work: Investments into an Intergenerational Programs*, perhaps scheduling interviews on the same day as GrandPals may have further contributed to participant’s fatigue. In hindsight, it may have been beneficial to schedule interviews on alternative days when participants felt more well-rested.

Finally, although the community-engaged aspect and mutually beneficial partnership with GrandPals is a major advantage, the possibility that participants may have perceived me to be doing a program evaluation is also a potential limitation of this research project. At times, some participants critiqued the program and made recommendations rather than discussing their experiences. When this occurred, I clarified the purpose of the research project and my role.

**Implications of Research**

Overall, this exploratory research project has implications for intergenerational programs and also how the government and policy-makers consider the experiences of seniors when developing supports for older adults. In particular, the theme *It Takes Work: Investments into an*
Intergenerational Program, highlights some concerns regarding the accessibility of intergenerational programs. In *Aging with Confidence: Ontario’s Action Plan for Seniors*, the Government of Ontario (2017) prioritized inclusion, diversity, choice and self-determination, and safety and security for all older adults. This strategy underscored the importance of accessibility in the development of programs and services to support older adults (Government of Ontario, 2017). While intergenerational initiatives have great potential to enhance the well-being of older adults, the government and policy-makers must consider who can be involved in these types of programs and how to facilitate inclusion and active engagement. Ultimately, older adults should be consulted in the development of intergenerational programs to ensure accessibility for all.

In addition, this project highlights a few practical constraints of conducting research in this area. The various stakeholders involved in the development of a school-based, intergenerational program results in additional complexities and unanticipated challenges with regard to studying this topic. For example, the research design and timing of this project required several modifications accommodate the affiliated schools schedule, obligations, and expectations. However, such trials demonstrate the need for flexibility when doing research in general and especially community-engaged research. Finally, based on the results of this research project, several recommendations can be provided to GrandPals to improve the experience of older adults involved in the program.

**Areas for Future Research**

Future research should further explore the experiences of older adults involved in intergenerational programs, particularly in a Canadian context. In regard to the GrandPals program, including the teachers and students in future studies on GrandPals would provide insight into the experiences of everyone involved in the program. Additionally, conducting a
formal program evaluation of GrandPals is important to further assess the program’s impacts and further improve its effectiveness. Employing a mixed-methods or quantitative research design to measure specific outcomes would be valuable to further understand the impacts of intergenerational programs on older adults. As well, recruiting a more diverse sample would be a beneficial addition to this research. Further examining the experiences of diverse groups of Canadian older adults of varying abilities would promote increased understanding of the impacts and potential benefits of involvement in an intergenerational program on older adults. With an aging population and rising interests in intergenerational initiatives, this is an important area of future research.

**Conclusion**

This Masters’ thesis project aimed to understand the experiences of older adults involved in the GrandPals intergenerational program. Overall, through thematic analysis, four core themes were generated from the data: Connections, Reciprocity and the Role of Age, Reminiscence and Reflection, and It Takes Work: Investments into an Intergenerational Program. This program encouraged the formation of authentic, valuable connections between the older adults and students involved. Additionally, participants emphasized the mutual sharing of knowledge and experiences which occurs. Participants also highlighted that involvement in GrandPals stimulates thinking and encourages recollection of the past. Finally, although participants enjoyed GrandPals, they also acknowledged the amount of work and varying investments required to participate in an intergenerational program.

Several other patterns emerged from the data in response to the research questions. Ultimately, participants’ experiences involved in GrandPals were positive. Individuals in this study spoke about varying motivations for participating in the intergenerational program.
Overall, involvement in GrandPals seemed to be beneficial for the older adult’s mental health and well-being. However, while participants developed connections with the students and a few folks made friends with fellow GrandPals, most individuals did not feel that involvement in the program had an impact on their social participation/social network.

Overall, this research contributes to an increased understanding of the experiences of older adults involved in GrandPals, a school-based, intergenerational, service-learning program in Canada. The current study has implications for future research in this area as well as policy with regard to developing effective supports for older adults. With the aging population and growing attention to intergenerational initiatives, understanding the impacts of these programs is necessary to improve existing programs and enhance the experiences of older adults involved.
References


Jarrott, S. E. (2011). Where have we been and where are we going? Content analysis of evaluation research of intergenerational programs. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, 9*(1), 37–52. doi:10.1080/15350770.2011.544594


Strain, L. A., Maxwell, C. J., Wanless, D., & Gilbart, E. (2011). Designated assisted living (DAL) and long-term care (LTC) in Alberta: Selected highlights from the Alberta Continuing Care Epidemiological Studies (ACCESS). Retrieved from https://era.library.ualberta.ca/items/ee411e3f-9ce6-4d9e-addf-0a41dde3a21b


Appendices

Appendix A- Summary of Review Articles

Table 2. Summary of Review Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Program Participants</th>
<th>Study Design</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 articles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on older adults: 4 studies</td>
<td>Qualitative: 3 studies</td>
<td>Japan: 3 studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Published in English</td>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on both generations: 50% of the studies</td>
<td>Both quantitative and qualitative: 1 study examined in both categories</td>
<td>Israel: 1 study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Studies assessing the benefits of IG programs for children and older adults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Studies with adults 60+ and children 5-12 years of age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27 articles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on older adults: 15 studies</td>
<td>Non-randomized trial design: 5 studies</td>
<td>Japan: 7 studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Published in English, Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese</td>
<td></td>
<td>Program evaluation: 3 studies</td>
<td>Cause and effect research: 1 study</td>
<td>Australia: 2 studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Studies considered IG programs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Operators/staff opinions: 2 studies</td>
<td>Static group comparison design: 1 study</td>
<td>UK: 1 study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Studies with school or pre-school children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Longitudinal study: 2 studies</td>
<td>Canada: 1 study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exploratory study: 2 studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quasi-experimental research design: 1 study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Content analysis of nonfamilial intergenerational evaluation research published between 1970 and 2007</td>
<td>Sample size &lt; 50: 45% child samples, 53% older adult samples</td>
<td>Focus on children/youth: 35%</td>
<td>Qualitative: 43%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>128 articles</td>
<td>Sample size &gt; 50: 27% child samples, 7% older adult samples</td>
<td>Focus on older adults: 21%</td>
<td>Both quantitative and qualitative: 32%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Published in English</td>
<td>Focus on both generations: 38%</td>
<td>Focus on perceptions of stakeholders: 5%</td>
<td>Short-term, longitudinal, pre- and post-test comparisons: 60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarrott (2011)</td>
<td>Systematic review of articles published between 2008 and 2016</td>
<td>Sample size of youth: ranged from 7 to 760</td>
<td>Focus on children/youth: 4 studies</td>
<td>USA: 9 studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 articles</td>
<td>Sample size of older adults: ranged from 6 to 400</td>
<td>Focus on older adults: 2 studies</td>
<td>Japan: 3 studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Published in English</td>
<td>Focus on both generations: 10 studies</td>
<td>Focus on both generations: 10 studies</td>
<td>Australia: 2 studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Studies with adults 50+ and youth &lt;30 years of age</td>
<td>Focus on perceptions of stakeholders: 5%</td>
<td>Pre-post-test design: 7 studies</td>
<td>Israel: 1 study</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other notes:
- Jarrott study: 3 studies
- Qualitative study: 1 study
- Survey: 1 study
- Mixed-methods design: 2 studies
- Multi-method multi-informant assessment: 1 study
- Controlled trial: 2 studies
- Randomized control trial: 1 study
- Martins et al. study: 16 articles
- USA: 9 studies
- Japan: 3 studies
- Australia: 2 studies
- Israel: 1 study
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental or case study design</th>
<th>Sample size &lt;40: 7 studies</th>
<th>Sample size between 40 and 100: 5 studies</th>
<th>Sample size &gt;100: 4 studies</th>
<th>Case-control design: 2 studies</th>
<th>Canada: 1 study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix B- REB certificate

The members of the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board have examined the protocol which describes the participation of the human participants in the above-named research project and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2nd Edition.

The REB requires that researchers:
- Adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB.
- Receive approval from the REB for any modifications before they can be implemented.
- Report any change in the source of funding.
- Report unexpected events or incidental findings to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants, and the continuation of the protocol.
- Are responsible for ascertaining and complying with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements with respect to consent and the protection of privacy of participants in the jurisdiction of the research project.

The Principal Investigator must:
- Ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of facilities or institutions involved in the research are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.
- Submit an Annual Renewal to the REB upon completion of the project. If the research is a multi-year project, a status report must be submitted annually prior to the expiry date. Failure to submit an annual status report will lead to your study being suspended and potentially terminated.

The approval for this protocol terminates on the EXPIRY DATE, or the term of your appointment or employment at the University of Guelph whichever comes first.

Signature: Date: November 12, 2018

Stephen P. Lewis
Chair, Research Ethics Board-General
Appendix C- UGDSB certificate

UPPER GRAND
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

RESEARCH PROPOSAL APPROVAL

Research Application No.: December 5, 2018

External [X] Internal [ ]

Title of Research Project: Understanding the Impact of GrandPals on Older Adult Participants

Researcher/Investigator: Dr. Kimberley Wilson & Nicole Leibowitz
Phone #: 519-824-4120 53003
nleibowi@uoquelphe.ca

Project starting date: February 1, 2019  Project Completion date: May 1, 2019

This research project has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Police Record Checks have been forwarded to the Chair of the Research Liaison Committee.
2. Police Record Checks must be forwarded to Amy McDonald prior to the study commencing.
3. All conditions as outlined in the application form 204-1, as applicable will be followed.
4. The collection and use of personal information will be protected as per the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, in accordance with form 204-3.
5. Only the schools listed below will be used for this research project.
6. Participation of any research project is at the discretion of the school Principal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF SCHOOLS SUGGESTED FOR THIS RESEARCH PROJECT</th>
<th>NAME OF PRINCIPAL</th>
<th>PHONE NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery Village Public School</td>
<td>See website for details</td>
<td>See website for details</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chairperson of the Research Liaison Committee: [Signature]

Date: [Signature]

Adopted 2005 06
ARE YOU A GRANDPAL?

HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

We are looking for volunteers who are involved in GrandPals to participate in an interview (~1 hour) for a research study.

Your participation will help us gain a better understanding of the impacts of involvement in GrandPals on older adults.

For more information:
Email: nleibowi@uoguelph.ca
Phone: 519-824-4120, Ext. 53003
Appendix E- Interview Guide

1. To start with, I’d like to know more about your decision to get involved with the GrandPals program.
   a. How did you learn about GrandPals?
   b. Why did you decide to participate in GrandPals?
   c. What appealed to you about GrandPals?
   d. Is this similar to any other initiatives that you have been part of?
2. Can you tell me about your experience with GrandPals so far?
   a. What do you like/enjoy? (Any challenges?)
3. What are the most positive aspects of growing older?
4. Can you tell me about your social network/relationships?
   a. How often do you see friends/family?
   b. What factors prevent you from seeing friends/family?
   c. How much time do you spend with children?
5. What do you like most about GrandPals?
   a. What do you not like about GrandPals? (Any problems?)
6. What makes you want to continue to participate in GrandPals?
   a. Will you participate in the future?
7. What impact (if any) does GrandPals have on your mental health and well-being?
8. What impact (if any) does GrandPals have on your social network/social participation?
9. Does being involved in GrandPals help you build relationships/friendships?
10. Can you tell me about your experience with the students involved in GrandPals?
   a. Did you enjoy working with them/getting to know them?
   b. Can you describe what it was like working with the students?
   c. What have you learned from working with the students?
   d. What do you think the students have learned from working with you?
11. If you were talking to your friends about the GrandPals program, what do you think is important to share with them?
   a. What would you tell someone about GrandPals?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add? (Ask me?)
Appendix F- Information Letter

**Title:** Understanding the impact of GrandPals on older adult participants

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Kimberley Wilson and Nicole Leibowitz from the Department of Family Relations & Applied Nutrition and University of Guelph, Canada.

**Purpose of the Study**

Intergenerational programs foster friendships between members of younger and older generations by providing opportunities to engage in mutually beneficial, planned activities with the purpose of exchanging skills, knowledge and expertise. Recently there has been significant interest in promoting intergenerational interactions to combat risks associated with the current generational gap. We hope that the findings from this study help us better understand the impact of participation in an intergenerational service learning program (GrandPals) on older adult participants.

**Procedures**

If you choose to participate in this research study, the research team will arrange times and dates for you to participate in an interview at Chartwell Montgomery Village in a private space. The interview should take no longer than 60 minutes. The interview will include demographic questions and open-ended questions to gain insight on your experiences being involved in the GrandPals program. Audio recordings of each interview will be collected. After discussing the details of the study, participants will be asked to sign a consent form.

**Participation & Confidentiality**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may also choose to skip any questions. You may withdraw at from the study up until transcription of the interviews is complete without any penalty. If you would like to withdraw from the study, you can do so by informing the researcher. Please note, however, that once the student researchers’ (Nicole Leibowitz) MSc thesis and publications are complete you will not be able to withdraw your data from the study, as the results will be published.

*Every effort will be made to make sure that all data collected is held securely. We will never share your personal information with anyone else.*

All collected data will be stored on a password-protected, encrypted laptop that is stored in a secure location.

**Potential Risks**

Some people may find some of the questions about mental health and social participation uncomfortable or upsetting to answer. You may choose to skip any questions you would prefer.
not to answer or stop participating in the study at any time. If you experience any discomfort during the study, you are encouraged to contact your family doctor, a mental health professional in your area, or the researchers (contact information is provided below). We have also provided links to useful resources that you can use when you feel upset by any of the questions asked.

**If, at any point during the study, you feel upset, you are encouraged to contact a local crisis line, call emergency services, or go to your local Emergency Department.**

**To find a helpful resource in your area please visit:**
Canadian Mental Health Association, Peel Dufferin Branch
15 Brenda Blvd, Orangeville, ON L9W 3Y5
519-941-0465

Headwater Health Care Centre
100 Rolling Hills Drive, Orangeville, ON L9W 4X9
519-941-2410

**Potential Benefits**

Although there is no direct benefit to you by participating in this study, research has shown that taking part in intergenerational research may help some people better understand some of their own experiences. You may find helpful the resources provided about mental health. Findings from this study can help us to better understand the experiences of people, which may further the development of resources for those struggling with their mental health. If you are interested in receiving a summary of the findings, please contact the study researchers. We are happy to share the findings with you.

**Ethics & Contact Information**

This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board for compliance with federal guidelines for research involving human participants. If you have any questions regarding your rights and welfare as a research participant in this study (REB #18-10-023), please contact:
Director, Research Ethics; University of Guelph; reb@uoguelph.ca; 519-824-4120 ext. 56606.
You do not waive any legal rights by agreeing to take part in this study.

If you have any questions after the completion of the study, you may contact by Dr. Kimberley Wilson

Please save and print a copy of this information letter to keep for your records.

Thank you for your participation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dr. Kimberley Wilson</th>
<th>Nicole Leibowitz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>MSc Student Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. of Family Relations &amp; Applied Nutrition</td>
<td>Dept. of Family Relations &amp; Applied Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Guelph</td>
<td>University of Guelph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guelph, ON N1G 2W1</td>
<td>Guelph, ON N1G 2W1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:kim.wilson@uoguelph.ca">kim.wilson@uoguelph.ca</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:nleibowi@uoguelph.ca">nleibowi@uoguelph.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>519-824-4120 ext. 53003</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G- Consent Form

**Project Title:** Understanding the impact of GrandPals on older adult participants

**Investigators:**
Kimberley Wilson, MSW, PhD, Assistant Professor, Family Relations and Applied Nutrition (FRAN), University of Guelph

**Co-Investigator:**
Nicole Leibowitz, BASc, Master’s Student, Family Relations and Applied Nutrition (FRAN), University of Guelph

My signature on this sheet indicates I agree to participate in a study led by Dr. Wilson and Nicole Leibowitz. The purpose of this project is to better understand the impact of participation in an intergenerational service learning program (GrandPals) on older adult participants. My signature also indicates that I understand the following:

- I understand to my satisfaction the information regarding participation in this study;
- I am a volunteer participating on my own time and can withdraw up until transcription of the interviews is complete;
- My participation in this research study will be recorded by audio taping in the interviews and verbatim quotes (that exclude identifying information) may be included in future publications and reports;
- The research procedures, risks and benefits have been fully explained to me;
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions regarding this study and am satisfied with the answers to my questions;
- I understand that my decision to participate or not participate in the study will not affect the services or care I receive from collaborating organizations. Partner organizations will receive a summary of the findings, but I understand that they will not include any direct identifiers and they will not know who participated;
- Information gathered from this study will be shared with and may be used for additional education and publication purposes in a manner that will protect my identity;
- This consent will be reviewed with me throughout the study to ensure that I am fully informed;
- A summary of the results from this research will be made available in report form by September 2019 if I email a request to the researchers (Kimberley Wilson, kim.wilson@uoguelph.ca)
- I am encouraged to ask the researchers any questions at any time during my participation;
- I can withdraw from this study up until transcription of the interviews is complete by notifying the researcher that I wish to stop my participation;
- I am agreeing to be contacted by a member of the research team for participation in the second phase of interviews.
With this understanding, I agree to participate in this research.

Participant Name: _______________________________________________________________

Participant Signature: _________________________________ Date: ___________________

☐ Please check if you agree to be contacted by a member of the research team for any clarification and/or for invitation to a new phase of this research.
Appendix H- Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your age?
   ______________________

2. What is your current marital/partner status?
   ○ Single
   ○ Married/living with a partner in common-law relationship
   ○ Widowed
   ○ Divorced
   ○ Separated
   ○ Other (please provide details):
     ______________________

3. What gender do you identify with?
   ______________________

4. What sex were you assigned at birth?
   ______________________

5. What is your sexual orientation?
   ○ Heterosexual (sexual relations with people of the opposite sex)
   ○ Homosexual, that is lesbian or gay (sexual relations with people of your own sex)
   ○ Bisexual (sexual relations with people of both sexes)
   ○ My sexual orientation isn’t listed. Please self-identify:
     ______________________

6. What is your working status? (e.g., working full-time, working part-time, retired, etc.)? If retired, what was your previous job?
   ______________________

7. What is the highest degree, certificate or diploma you have obtained?
   ○ High school diploma or GED
   ○ Non-university certificate or diploma from a community college
   ○ Trade certificate or diploma from a vocational school or apprenticeship training
   ○ University certificate below bachelor’s level
   ○ Bachelor’s degree
   ○ University degree or certificate above bachelor’s degree
8. In general, how would you describe your health?
   - Excellent
   - Very good
   - Good
   - Fair
   - Poor
   - Other: ____________________

9. In general, how would you describe your mental health?
   - Excellent
   - Very good
   - Good
   - Fair
   - Poor
   - Other: ____________________

10. Are you an immigrant to Canada? If yes, please specify your country of origin:

                                _____________________________

11. Please identify the race(s) that you most identify with (e.g., Hispanic, Asian, Caucasian, etc.):

                                _____________________________

12. Please identify the ethnicity that you most identify with? (e.g., Canadian, French-Canadian, Guatemalan, Persian, etc.):

                                _____________________________
## Appendix I - Initial Themes, Subthemes, and Codes

### Table 3. Initial Themes, Subthemes and Codes

| Connections |  |
|-------------|  |
| **Enjoy the youth** | **Connections with youth** | **Opportunity for role in children’s lives** | **Interesting to see them developing/growing** | **Look out for youth/empathize with them** |
| **Enjoy relating to/involvement with youth** | **Ongoing connection with children** | **They just become grandchildren** | **Good students** | **Support for youth** |
| **Fun to be with the kids** | **You get a friend for life** | **Look forward to seeing them** | **Kids are really interesting** | **Love the kids** |
| **Great kids** | **They still want to connect after** |  |  |  |

### It Takes Work to be a GrandPal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connections</th>
<th>Time commitment</th>
<th>High energy work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>It’s overwhelming at times (the program)</strong></td>
<td>Takes work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tiring (the program)</strong></td>
<td>It’s an effort (the program)</td>
<td>Access to program through living in retirement residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investments</strong></td>
<td>It takes focus and concentration</td>
<td>Caregiving responsibilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Reminiscence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connections</th>
<th>Reflection/Thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brings back memories</strong></td>
<td>Processing past memories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brings up sad memories</strong></td>
<td>Themes/questions make you think about life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Engagement/Enthusiasm of Youth

<p>| Connections |  |
|-------------|  |
| <strong>Good age</strong> | <strong>Open-mindedness</strong> | <strong>Children are well prepared</strong> | <strong>Kids are so enthusiastic about it</strong> | <strong>Youth are interested in it (program)/they want to come</strong> |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations/stereotypes of young people</th>
<th>Learned not to be judgemental</th>
<th>Children are respectful</th>
<th>Kids are engaged in the program</th>
<th>Youth enjoy it (the program)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They (youth) still want to learn</td>
<td>Impressed by/proud of youths’ accomplishments</td>
<td>Impressed by youth</td>
<td>Enthusiasm of the students</td>
<td>Kids are really into it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learn from Youth</th>
<th>Contribute to Youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Like hearing about their (youths) experiences</td>
<td>Learn about youth from different cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insight into what kids are going through</td>
<td>Learn from the youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeps us current with what they’re (youth) doing in school</td>
<td>Learn about technology from kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy learning about/getting to know different children</td>
<td>Enjoy getting their (youth) reactions to things</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reciprocity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good for both participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparing to Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparing to others/othering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ 1: Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommend to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s upbeat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

104
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ2: Motivation for participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geographic distance (from grandchildren)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3a: Mental health and well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program as a distraction from what’s going on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeps you busy/occupied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youthful energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3b: Social participation/networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection to youth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J- URA’s Coding Mapped onto Themes

Table 4. *URA’s Coding Mapped onto Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>URA’s Coding</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive intergenerational relationship and communication</td>
<td>Connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficial for both grandparents and non-grandparents</td>
<td>Connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocal relationship – beneficial to both sides</td>
<td>Reciprocity and the Role of Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>A way to learn new things – culture, technology, knowledge from the elderly</td>
<td>Reciprocity and the Role of Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old memories</td>
<td>Reminiscence and Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length time commitment</td>
<td>It Takes Work: Investments into an Intergenerational Program</td>
</tr>
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<td>Good/high retention rate</td>
<td>It Takes Work: Investments into an Intergenerational Program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Revised Themes and Subthemes

- You get a friend for life
  Connections
  - Kids sharing
  - Mutual, genuine, reciprocal

- It takes work to be a grandparent
  - Better for them, not me

- Reminiscence, Reflection, and Reciprocity
  - Inward
  - Past work

- Identity, Meaning, and role of age
  - Expansions of youth
  - Challenges and program
  - Roles they play
  - Self-esteem