

The Cultural Value of Older People's Experiences of Theatre-making: A Review

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Abstract

Although a number of existing reviews document the health and social benefits of arts participation by older people, there are none which focus specifically on theatre and drama. This article presents the findings of a study conducted as part of the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council 'Cultural Value Project'. The two-year (2013-15) 'Cultural Value Project' sought to make a major contribution to how we think about the value of arts and culture to individuals and to society. It made 72 awards: 19 critical reviews of existing bodies of research, 46 research development awards to carry out new research, and seven expert workshop awards to facilitate discussions amongst academics and practitioners. Together, these awards explored the components of cultural value and the ways in which cultural value is evidenced and evaluated. Following an extensive search of academic databases and email requests via relevant organisations and networks, 77 publications formed the basis for our own critical review. Our findings highlight the benefits and value of older people's theatre and drama participation on health and well-being; group relationships; learning and creativity; and draw attention to the importance of the aesthetic value and quality of older people's drama. Despite the recent surge of interest in this field (a third of the reviewed literature was published between 2010 and 2014), we suggest that there are multiple areas for further research.

Key words

Ageing; drama; theatre; cultural value; creativity

Literary and cultural scholars, as well as social and critical gerontologists, are increasingly interested in the artistic outputs of older people, and in how the arts may construct, perpetuate and challenge stereotypical views and existing models of the ageing process (Cohen-Shalev, 2008; Jansohn, 2004; Small, 2007). Theatre is a fruitful arena for such explorations not least because it is a cultural setting in which older people are particularly active participants. However, whilst older people may be visible as audience members and volunteers, what is less well understood is the cultural value of engaging older people in theatre-making; how this develops individuals; and the links this may or may not facilitate within communities and across generations. Ideas about what constitutes cultural value have a long history but, in the UK, it has increasingly come to be seen as a construct of policy, driven by economic concerns rather than taking account of – and arising from – the experiences of participants (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016). A decade ago, Holden (2004; 2006) delineated three interdependent elements of cultural value: instrumental values relate to social and economic impacts; institutional values relate to the esteem generated by institutions; and intrinsic values relate to the unique qualities of art forms. He asserted that all three elements are important, and called for analyses that not only focus on quantifiable outcomes, but also on affective experiences. Yet, cultural value remains a contested and debated term and there is a continuing lack of agreement over how best to assess it, or what counts as valid evidence.

When it comes to exploring cultural value as perceived and understood by older people, the difficulties are compounded because of how we construct and view these members of our society. Cultural institutions, as well as individuals, tend to hold stereotypical and deficit views of what older people are or are not capable of and will tend to write off, or ignore, their contributions to their communities and localities in cultural as in other arenas (Cutler, 2009). These ageist attitudes manifest themselves in negative assumptions and narrowed opportunities for older people to engage in cultural activities and/or develop and share the cultural capital they may have accumulated over a lifetime (Goulding, 2012). Indeed, the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) carried out an evidence review in 2014 on 'the value of the arts and culture to people and society' which refers to the challenge of the impact of an ageing population on public services and asserts the value of the arts in promoting older people's physical, mental and social well-being, particularly concentrating on the benefits of dance. However, by only focusing on well-being, the AHRC review presents a somewhat reductionist assessment of the potential cultural value of older people's participation in arts activities: an observation reinforced by a recent scoping review in this very journal looking at research on the arts, ageing and quality of life (Fraser et al., 2015).

It was to try and counter some of these limited and limiting views, and to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which drama and theatre bring value to older people and those around them, that our review was undertaken. The review was conducted as part of the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council 'Cultural Value Project' (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016). The two-year (2013-15) 'Cultural Value Project' sought to make a major contribution to how we think about the value of arts and culture to individuals and to society. It made 72 awards: 19 critical reviews of existing bodies of research, 46 research development awards to carry out new research, and seven expert workshop awards to facilitate discussions amongst academics and practitioners. Together, these awards explored the components of cultural value and the ways in which cultural value is evidenced and evaluated. Our own review took as its starting point Crossick and Kaszynska's (2014, p. 124) simple definition of cultural value as 'the effects that culture has on those who experience it and the difference it makes to individuals and society', and was driven by an overarching research question which asked:

What does the research and literature tell us about the cultural value older people derive from their involvement with theatre and drama in general, and theatre-making in particular?

An added impetus for conducting the review stemmed from the fact that, since 2009, we ourselves had been immersed in a series of linked research projects under the generic title of 'Ages and Stages'. This is an ongoing collaboration between researchers at Keele University in the UK and practitioners at the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, exploring the role of older people in the theatre and the impact theatre has on older people's lives (Bernard et al., 2015). The review thus builds on the findings, experiences, learning and networks established through 'Ages and Stages', but set within a wider academic context which is increasingly drawing the arts and humanities into explorations of the experience of old age (Cole, Kastenbaum & Ray, 2000; Twigg & Martin, 2014; 2015).

Consequently, in the rest of this article we outline the scope of the review, provide an account of the approach we took to accessing and searching the literature; and present the key findings. The article concludes with a discussion of potential areas for further research and observations on the various methods and approaches which might usefully be employed. The limitations of an article mean that we are unable to provide the fine detail of everything we found and reviewed: for this, and the full list of references for all the publications we reviewed, readers are invited to consult the main report (www.keele.ac.uk/csg/research/ageingdramaandcreativity/Rickett_Bernard.pdf).

Scope and Methods

Whilst this was not a systematic review per se, we did adopt a 'systematic approach' (Bryman, 2012) to searching and reviewing the literature. This began, as noted above, with identifying a broad research question, and was combined with a desire to be as transparent as possible about how we conducted our searches and synthesised the resulting materials. However, our approach differed from a more conventional systematic review in a number of respects. First, because of the already identified gaps in our knowledge, it had always been our intention to extend our searches beyond the major databases to include the grey literature and practitioner accounts rather than confining the review only to published reports of research studies. Second, the documents to be included were not going to be screened or rated for quality: itself a very difficult and potentially contentious issue when dealing with qualitative work in particular. Third, the tight timescale for the review (five months, part-time) did not permit us to work independently on the materials before comparing our thoughts and findings. Rather, this was an iterative process conducted through regular meetings between the two authors.

The step-by-step approach we adopted is summarised in Table 1. The exact details of the results of our searches: how many hits were found on each database, for which combinations of search terms, and the numbers selected for inclusion, can be found in the appendix to the main report.

[Table 1 – about here]

Our first searches for literature looking specifically at how older people perceive the cultural value of their involvement in drama and theatre, brought up no results. This is itself a key finding in that 'cultural value', it appears, has not been used explicitly as a framework for analysing older people's drama participation and, moreover, older participants have not been asked to reflect on their experience in this way. This lack of scholarly attention means that one way of beginning to build the knowledge-base is by searching for, and combining, writings derived from practitioner-knowledge and

experience; existing small-scale evaluations; and larger academic research projects. We therefore decided to broaden the scope of the review and to search for literature and research that explored the 'value' or 'benefits' of theatre and drama participation from the viewpoint of practitioners, researchers, and older people themselves.

Having widened our search strategy, it is also important to note that we excluded literature not in English; practical guides to producing seniors theatre and working with older people and drama; literature about arts and creative interventions where drama was just one component (e.g. arts workshops which include drama exercises alongside other arts forms); and literature on drama therapy. There is an extensive literature on arts therapy for older people but our focus was on studies that did not take an explicitly therapeutic approach.

Results

A Brief Overview

In total, 77 documents (dating from 1979-2014) were selected for inclusion in the review. The first finding of note is that our results show a sharp increase in the literature on this topic from 2000, with a third (n=25 or 32.5%) of all the included documents published since 2010. Given the nature of our review and the need to build the knowledge base from different sources, we collated our selected documents into four main types: 4 existing reviews (Table 2); 35 research articles and books (Table 3); 11 evaluation reports (Table 4); and 27 descriptive overviews (Table 5). Each table is organised alphabetically by author and year of publication. They provide information about the nature and focus of each document; details of who participated in any empirical studies; which design or methods were employed; which discipline/s or area of practice feature; and what the key findings are with respect to the benefits or value of theatre and drama with older people.

[Tables 2 - 5: about here]

Most of the documents were authored by, and originated in, the USA and the UK but there were interesting differences: from the USA we sourced mainly research articles or books (n=19) followed by descriptive overviews (n=16) and only one evaluation report; in the UK, the split between articles and books, evaluation reports, and descriptive overviews was much more even (9, 10 and 8 respectively) – the far higher proportion of evaluation reports perhaps saying something about different research traditions in the two countries and/or different stages in the development of this as a topic worthy of investigation. Despite, for example, a long tradition of community theatre-making in Africa, we found very few publications from the global south apart from a couple of research articles and books from Australia.

As can be seen from the tables, the literature we sourced covered a wide range of academic disciplines and practitioner backgrounds. Academic researchers came from disciplines including drama/theatre; education; psychology; social work; health studies; nursing and social gerontology; while a number of studies were multidisciplinary. Practitioners included theatre and freelance drama workers; community groups; workers in residential homes; and charities working with older people, intergenerational groups and the arts. Several studies were focused on pre-existing senior or intergenerational theatre groups; and several studies brought together academic researchers with theatre companies, drama groups and practitioners.

Methodologically, the tables show that the benefits of older people's involvement in theatre and drama were documented and evaluated through a range of distinctive tools and methods including: Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) or pre- and post-intervention tests with or without a control group, to check cognitive function and physical and mental health; evaluation questionnaires to assess health, personal and social benefits; qualitative interviews with participants; focus groups; and researcher/practitioner observational diaries. Of particular interest was the finding that only two projects took an explicitly arts-based approach to evaluation. Evaluation of Coventry's 50+ 'Creative Gymnasium' used ethno-drama, photography and sharing artefacts (Savin-Baden et al., 2013; Wimpenny & Savin-Baden, 2013); while evaluation of the devised theatre 'Penelope Project' in Wisconsin, USA (Mello & Voigts, 2013) took an arts-based action research and narrative inquiry approach, utilising visual records and artefacts alongside qualitative interviews and participant observation.

Having collated and reviewed this information by document type, we then analysed and organised the selected sources into eight categories. It is these eight categories which now frame our subsequent discussion.

Critical reviews and reviews of UK participatory arts projects (n=4)

As noted earlier, Step 5 of our search strategy (see Table 1) involved consulting three existing reviews focused on the impact of participatory arts on older people. Two of these were written by academics based in the USA (Castora-Binkley et al., 2010; Noice, Noice & Kramer, 2013) and one is by a UK health charity (Mental Health Foundation, 2011). All three included theatre and drama amongst the reviewed art forms, but all three found very small numbers of studies focused on this topic. Noice, Noice and Kramer (2013) included 31 studies, seven of which were in their 'theatre' category'; the MHF review (2011) also included 31 studies, with five in their 'drama' category; and Castora-Binkley et al. (2010) included 11 studies, with five in their 'drama/theatrical' category. Two of the three reviews were explicitly focused on health and well-being (Noice, Noice & Kramer, 2013; Castora Binkley et al., 2010), and all three found evidence of benefits of the arts in terms of physical and mental health, and quality of life and well-being. However, the specific benefits of theatre and drama were not elucidated.

We also sourced the Baring Foundation's (Cutler, 2009) review of UK participatory arts projects with older people. This review took place in 2009, before a change in government and consequent cuts in arts funding which have affected many organisations and practitioners. The picture it presents may therefore have changed substantially in the years since it was published. The report focuses on descriptive case studies rather than research evidence per se, but concludes that the key documented benefits are to health (physical and mental) and relationships.

Devised productions (n=9)

Devised productions conventionally arise not from the work of one writer or writers but from collaborative work by groups of people. Four publications report on devised theatre productions *actively involving older people* in the creative process; while five discuss devised theatre productions made by others *for older people's consumption* as audience members. In Australia, the 'Stories of Ageing' project (Kamler, 2001) with community-dwelling older women affirms that participants valued the opportunity for reflection, challenge and being taken seriously, and the experience was also transformative in helping them to think more positively about themselves: findings echoed in the

evaluation of 'The Penelope Project' which took place in a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) in Wisconsin, USA (Mello & Voigts, 2013). The authors show how the value and benefits for older participants included a sense of enjoyment, being challenged, taking risks, increased self-worth and a transformed view of the self. Another important dimension is the encouragement of imagination: as one participant put it, 'the greatest thing that I learned was to continue to use my imagination and let my imagination fly' (p. 57); while the production also encouraged reflection and empathy amongst audience members. Likewise, our own 'Ages and Stages' project revealed the importance of older people's affective and emotional relationship with a particular theatre; the capacity of theatre to enable people to make social connections, negotiate life transitions and pursue new or ongoing creative activities in later life; and the increased sense of well-being, purpose, self-confidence and belonging people derive from their theatre participation (Bernard et al., 2015).

The studies of older people's consumption as audience members provide evidence that the value of experiencing plays or performances about aspects of ageing and old age, is that they can variously enable people to view others (e.g. people with dementia) in more positive ways (Mitchell et al., 2006; 2011; Kontos & Naglie, 2007); can provoke and facilitate memory and reminiscence processes (Boggs & Leptak, 1991); can be a useful way of learning about and/or introducing sensitive topics (e.g. finances or widowhood) (Ritch & Brennan, 2010; Feldman et al., 2011); and can be an effective educational tool with practitioners (Kontos & Naglie, 2007). In addition, the high aesthetic quality of devised productions was commented on in both Feldman's (2011) Australian study and the evaluation of 'The Penelope Project' (Mello & Voigts, 2013).

Drama programmes and workshops (n=11)

The documents in this category focus on discrete drama training programmes and workshops: ten are research papers or evaluations and the eleventh is a short overview. Direct comparisons are difficult, not least because interventions vary in length of time (from four, six or eight weekly sessions, up to a ten-month programme of weekly sessions); and in terms of different research designs and tools. Perhaps the most well-known and long-established researchers in this area are Helga and Tony Noice from the USA. Two of their four articles included in our review are studies conducted with community dwelling older people; and two (discussed later under the theme of 'theatre and drama in care settings') report on drama interventions in continuing care facilities. Their full community-based study (Noice, Noice & Staines, 2004) showed that after as little as four weeks of theatre instruction, participants record significant improvements in cognition, recall, word generation, problem solving and psychological well-being when compared to a control group. Participants were tested again four months after the intervention and cognitive improvements had been maintained.

Other studies in both the USA and in the UK report some similar findings: Yuen et al. (2011) found that participants in the 'Seasoned Arts At the Samford for You' (SAASY) programme showed improvement in psychological well-being and health-related quality of life, most notably in the physical health component of the 36-item Short-Form Health Survey (SF-36). Participants also reported increased self-worth and self-advocacy. In Sweden, Lepp and colleagues (2003) used a focus group to evaluate a two-month weekly drama workshop programme for dementia patients and their caregivers in one care home. The carers reported beneficial effects on their relationship with the patients as patients came to express themselves more openly, grew in self-confidence and had increased interest in their surroundings. Importantly too, carers reflected that by participating in the workshop programme they

felt confirmed in their role. Similar findings are described by authors who evaluated a drama intervention by the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry in the UK (Savin-Baden et al., 2013; Wimpenny & Savin-Baden, 2013). The theatre delivered a ten-week workshop programme over a 12 month period for four groups of adults aged 50+: a city centre group; a group in a sheltered residential home; an Asian women's group; and a group of outpatients receiving dialysis. Participants were enabled to transform their views of themselves and others in ways that were beneficial for health and wellbeing: their skills and confidence improved through taking risks, they felt rewarded, developed new relationships (both through the intervention and in their daily lives), and felt valued.

Intergenerational (n=9)

Six of the documents in this category are substantial articles or reports and three are shorter descriptive pieces. The shorter pieces discuss the formation of the Hong Kong based 'All Age Drama Group', comprising people aged over 60, youth members, social workers, and volunteer drama workers (Kwok, 2003); a large-scale intergenerational community theatre project by the London Bubble Theatre Company (Petherbridge & Kendall, 2012); and an intergenerational theatre project connecting LGBTQ people in New York City (Houseal, Ray & Teitelbaum, 2013). All three emphasise how the projects built relationships across and within the generations, providing opportunities to share stories and discuss and tackle issues that may more usually keep the generations apart.

With one exception (Yang, 2013), the more substantive reports and articles all concern UK-based projects and programmes. Founded in 1989 and based in East London, the charity Magic Me is the leading provider of intergenerational arts projects in the UK and has conducted and evaluated numerous programmes with participants in care homes, community centres, universities, schools and other community settings. Within the parameters of our review, we discuss three distinct projects utilising theatre and drama (Magic Me, 2005; Mayo & McAvinchey, 2013; McAvinchey & Gilfoy, 2009). The documented value of these projects includes enabling people of different ages and cultural backgrounds to explore similarities and differences in a secure space; building intergenerational and intercultural relationships; combatting social isolation; challenging age related assumptions; and providing learning opportunities for older and younger participants alike.

Enhanced learning was also the main documented outcome of Hafford-Letchfield et al.'s (2010) evaluation of a drama project which brought together social work degree students, an older people's theatre group and three independent film makers and producers, to explore intimacy and sexuality in later life. Likewise, Johnson's (2011) evaluation of *On Ageing*: a devised theatre production put together by UK theatre companies Fevered Sleep and the Young Vic and performed at the Young Vic in 2010, shows that the production facilitated reflection on ageing both for participants and audience members: encouraging people to question assumptions about ageing.

Pre-existing senior and intergenerational theatre groups (n=16)

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the history of the development of senior theatre (Bernard & Munro, 2015), the majority of publications in this category are short descriptive overviews of programmes, projects and theatre groups based in the USA, dating from the mid-1980s to the present day. Arthur Strimling's (2004) book, *Roots and Branches*, is also included; as is one British research paper (Pyman & Rugg, 2006) about a small-scale evaluation of an old time music hall performance by an existing

community theatre group; and the only publication we found which focussed on older people as volunteers in a community theatre in Brisbane, Australia (Burden, 2000).

Susan Perlstein is a key figure in the senior theatre movement in the USA, establishing the 'Elders Share the Arts' (ESTA) programme in New York in 1979. This 'living history' programme brings older adults together with young people and schoolchildren through interactive storytelling activities, and Perlstein wrote several accounts of its work in the 1980s and 1990s. Echoing the discussion above about the outcomes of UK intergenerational programmes, ESTA's benefits – from a practitioner perspective – include: enhanced learning; community-building; challenging age related stereotypes; reinforcing the idea of both older people and young people as community resources; and enhancing participants' sense of identity, self-esteem, pride and belonging (Perlstein, 1988). In similar vein, several journal, magazine and newspaper articles describe the work of 'Stagebridge': the oldest senior theatre company in the USA which provides drama classes for older people, as well as drama and storytelling programmes. The benefits of participation, articulated by the older performers, include improved quality of life; provision of a 'safety valve' during life transitions and losses; giving performers a sense of self-worth and value; challenging stereotypes about old age; and providing a sense of 'family' (Kandell, 2006).

Reminiscence (n=5)

If a desire to perform and a love of theatre were the primary motivating factors behind the remarkable growth of the senior theatre movement in the USA, then sharing stories through reminiscence is the basis for much of the work which emerged in the UK in the 1970s and 80s. The internationally renowned 'Age Exchange' Theatre Trust was established in 1983 in London by Pam Schweitzer and, after stepping down as Director, she produced her book length guide to reminiscence theatre, drawing on her considerable experience and exploring the benefits and value to participants (Schweitzer, 2007). Together with her 30 year retrospective about reminiscence theatre (Schweitzer, 2013), she suggests that participating in theatre and drama brings many and varied benefits including: renewed energy; combatting social isolation and developing new relationships and friendships; intergenerational trust and empathy; sense of pride and ownership; increased self-confidence, value and affirmation; challenge and stimulation; creative engagement; and producing what she calls a 'community of memory'. Adding to Schweitzer's work, the evaluation of the UK National Creative Ageing Project (2002-2005) (Arigho, 2005) draws attention to the importance of risk taking for older people and asserts that reminiscence can be linked successfully with the arts within care settings.

Theatre and drama in care settings (n=16)

The use of theatre and drama in care settings is an area which appears to have grown considerably since the millennium: of the 16 documents in this category, only two short overviews pre-date the year 2000. Five other short descriptive overviews report on UK projects which use theatre and drama to positively influence attitudes and behaviour in work settings; to enable staff, residents and families to share experiences; and to encourage empathy and an appreciation of the experience and viewpoint of others. The other nine documents include an overview of theatre practices with older people in care settings in the UK, focusing on participants' views of 'home' (Nicholson, 2011), and eight substantial studies or evaluations.

Nicholson (2013) evaluated a three year Age Exchange Theatre Trust project called 'Hearts and Minds'. Whilst the evaluation was largely focused on recommendations for practice, it also highlights the value

of the programme in promoting person-centred care and encouraging listening to, and understanding the life-histories of, older people in residential care. In Manchester, the Library Theatre runs 'Storybox': a participatory project comprising workshops for people with dementia in residential, clinical and day care settings. The value and benefits of participation included having fun; the opportunity for creative expression; challenging people's roles as 'carers' and 'cared for'; creating a social space and sense of togetherness; creating memories; and empowering participants (Harries, 2013).

Two other studies look at the work of London-based theatre group 'Ladder to the Moon'. In the first of these, the London Centre for Dementia Care (2009) was commissioned to evaluate a two-week drama residency at the Rathmore House Care Home during which the home was transformed into a 'grand hotel', with actors playing out the romance between a wealthy hotel guest and a chambermaid. Residents and staff were encouraged to interact with the characters and also to exchange their own stories. In the second, 'Ladder to the Moon' worked with staff and residents at an extra care housing development in London to recreate the musical, 'Sound of Music' (Lyons & Gage, 2014). The value and benefits of both projects included greater communication (between staff and between staff, residents and families); and enhanced quality of life and well-being of residents as evidenced through increased emotive responses and improvements in self-esteem, confidence, ability to make choices and the community involvement of residents.

The community-based work of Helga and Tony Noice was discussed earlier but they have also researched the cognitive effects of theatre instruction for older people living in continuing care facilities (Noice & Noice 2006; 2009). These studies differ in significant ways to the Noices' previous work in that the participants in continuing care were older, less well-educated and living in subsidised housing. However, the results were very similar: participants demonstrated significant cognitive and affective improvement when compared with two comparison groups (one a singing group and one a non-treatment group). Similarly, whilst Anne Basting herself has provided an account of the history and processes of her well-known 'TimeSlips' programme (Basting, 2013), it has also been formally evaluated (Fritsch et al., 2009). The results showed that residents with dementia in the intervention sites were more engaged and alert, and there were more interactions between residents and staff; meanwhile, staff in intervention sites had more positive views of residents and devalued them less than in the control sites.

Reflective studies and overviews (n=7)

In this final category, we include a number of more substantive overviews and studies ranging from postgraduate theses (Coffman, 1979; Koehler, 2002) and an edited collection about older women's drama projects around the world (Marziali & Topalian, 1997), through to Anne Basting's (1998) seminal volume *Stages of Age*, and recent reflections on the potential intersections between theatre and age studies (Lipscomb, 2012).

Basting's analyses focus on issues of identity, meaning and transformation facilitated through drama: she explores the capacity of drama to represent, challenge and transform images and stereotypes of later life, as well as the ways in which certain stereotypes about age and youth might be replicated through older people's performances. She also problematises the frequent positioning of older people's drama as 'therapeutic', arguing that the value of older people's theatre is in its professional and aesthetic quality, and its ability to challenge constructs of old age and make a call for change. These themes have been picked up more recently by Lipscomb (2012) who contends that theatre is a

promising site for bringing together critical, performative and narrative approaches to the understanding of age. Like Basting, Lipscomb highlights the potential of older people's theatre to challenge ageist stereotypes and empower other older people (as audiences) to 'identify and challenge ageism in their everyday lives' (p. 130). She also calls for more academic analysis of senior theatre: 'a woefully under-researched and under-theorised' branch of the arts (p. 131).

Discussion: Dimensions of Cultural Value

In terms of the strength of the evidence, we argued at the start of this article for the necessity of broadening our search to encompass practice-based experiential evidence alongside academic research and evaluation studies. This means that a number of included documents provided only cursory descriptions of studies, projects or groups, and some did not provide full details about the number, age or gender of participants, or the methods of gaining participant feedback. Though this has limited our analyses, a more rigorous selection process would have produced very few results and would not have been appropriate for this under-developed field. That said, we would contend that findings across these documents provide converging evidence of the benefits to be gained from older people's participation in theatre and drama. Here, we discuss three particular dimensions of cultural value arising from our review as they relate to: health and well-being; improving group relationships; and opportunities for learning and creative expression. We also draw attention to a fourth area: the aesthetic value and quality of older people's drama, which is touched upon in the literature we have reviewed but is under-researched to date.

Health and well-being

Many of the studies in our review report improvements in older people's (mental) health, subjective well-being and quality of life as a result of participation in theatre and drama. Participants report decreased anxiety; decreased loneliness; increased self-confidence and self-esteem; and increased sense of value and purpose. As we have seen, the work of Helga and Tony Noice over a 20 year period has also provided strong evidence for the cognitive value of older people's involvement in drama workshops and training. Their findings consistently show improvements in cognitive functioning, memory, word generation and comprehension, and problem solving. Other work shows that older people associate their theatre participation with excitement, fun, happiness, and freeing of the imagination. These elements are perhaps more related to the 'intrinsic' value of drama: its unique qualities and the enjoyment it provides. Whilst these findings resonate with the now substantive body of literature that shows that involvement in the arts in all its forms has multiple benefits for the health and well-being of individuals and society (Fraser et al., 2015), more research is needed to understand and capture the specific merits of drama, as well as the potential impact they may have on other aspects of older people's lives. In addition, the longer term health and wellbeing outcomes are under-explored, if at all, underlining the unsatisfactory quality of much research design in this area.

Group relationships

A significant proportion of the included literature focuses on the role of theatre and drama in enhancing or transforming group relationships and improved engagement with others seems to be a particularly notable dimension of cultural value. Four types of drama project appear to be important here: those that bring generations together; those that bring people from different racial and cultural backgrounds together; those that focus on relationships between older people in residential care and

their carers and families; and those that focus on the relationship between people with dementia, their families, and health and social care professionals.

These projects all enable people to exchange stories and experiences, and develop positive views of themselves and others. Their value and benefits lie in increased trust, improved communication and understanding, and the production of a sense of togetherness amongst participants which, in turn, helps to combat social exclusion. They also provide opportunities to develop new friendships (both intra-generationally and in intergenerational and intercultural groups), or enhance existing relationships through improved understanding and empathy (this is particularly successful in residential care or dementia settings). Dramatic role play and devising appear to be particularly effective in producing a safe space for expressing and challenging age related stereotypes, and finding commonalities and accepting differences. However, we contend that research is yet to explore the specific processes and practices through which theatre and drama encourage this kind of reflection, empathy and transformation, both for participants and audience members.

Learning and creativity

Participants, researchers and practitioners frequently express the value of drama as providing opportunities for learning and creative expression for older people. Learning partly relates to improved cognition, but is more broadly about developing new skills, being challenged and taking risks in later life. Through taking on and meeting challenges, older people gain a sense of achievement, enrichment and fulfilment. Creative, drama-based activities also provide the opportunity for self-expression, play and fun. This can broaden horizons and encourage people to take on new challenges in other areas of their lives. This, we would suggest, is a particularly valuable dimension of cultural value due to common stereotypes of older people being unable, or less able, to learn new things. The cultural value of older people's learning and creativity through drama therefore has two distinct elements: as well as the impact on older people's own lives, there is a potential wider social impact through the challenging of ageist stereotypes.

Aesthetic value and quality of older people's drama

Arts participation also has aesthetic elements although, to date, very little of the research discussed in our review focuses on the aesthetic quality of older people's drama or what it feels like to have an aesthetic experience. One exception is Anne Basting's research (1995; 1998) which explores this element, particularly in reference to the power and complexity of images of age and ageing produced by older people's performances. Lipscomb's (2012) work develops these ideas but more analysis is needed in this area. Similarly, the aesthetic value and transformative potential of devised productions, derived from co-constructed research with older people, could also be explored. This could enhance our understanding of the cultural value *provided by* older people, rather than just the value they derive from their participation.

These four dimensions of cultural value are threaded through with indications that involvement in theatre and drama can help shape reflective individuals, promote understanding of others and stimulate civic and community engagement. These are also key components of cultural value which, together with the other dimensions discussed above, are reflected in the multi-layered conceptualisation of cultural value articulated by the wider 'Cultural Value Project' (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016). This UK programme has sought to move our understanding of cultural value beyond

conventional 'dichotomies such as the positive and negative traditions, arts for art's sake and art for social function, intrinsic and instrumental benefits, hedonic and eudemonic benefits, high and popular culture, audience and participants' and, instead, 'sees the experience of culture as fundamental to any discussion of cultural value' (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016: 24). Some of these dimensions have proved more difficult to evidence than others so, in the last part of this article, we turn our attention to possible areas for further research in respect of ageing, drama and creativity.

Conclusions: Areas for Further Research

As anticipated, the literature included in our review of theatre and drama covers a wide range of disciplinary perspectives and methodological approaches. However, it is notable that only a small minority of studies explicitly identify a theoretical or conceptual framework guiding their work. We would concur with Lipscomb (2012) that the lack of focus on theory potentially limits the development of this field and its capacity to contribute to wider discourses around ageing, the arts and cultural value. In addition, theory is an important element in improving the quality of research and evaluation practices across the arts more generally (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016).

The included literature also demonstrates the range of research methods, both quantitative and qualitative, which have been used to try and capture – as well as understand – the cultural value of older people's participation in theatre and drama. However, in many instances, older people are directed to articulate their experience largely in terms of its benefit to their health and well-being. Another strong focus, as we have seen, is the impact of drama participation on group relationships. Methodologically, what is missing are approaches which encourage older people to reflect on the cultural value of their participation in broader and less directive ways. We have already observed, for example, that only two studies explicitly take an arts-based approach to the evaluation of participants' experiences (Savin-Baden et al., 2013; Wimpenny & Savin-Baden, 2013; Mello & Voigts, 2013). This, we would suggest, is an approach that could be much more developed and may help to capture some of the less tangible elements of experience.

Moreover, our review, together with other work, is showing just how wide a range of potential methods, methodologies and types of evidence is now being used to develop empirical approaches to cultural value: approaches which are also challenging entrenched notions about hierarchies of what constitutes good quality research and evaluation (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016; Kaszynska, 2015). Research and evaluation comes in many different shapes and sizes and there is no simple tool kit for cultural value. That said, new combinations of existing approaches, data mining of large data sets, methods capturing the multi-sensory aspects of experience, more sensitive evaluation models, technology-enhanced approaches, economic valuation approaches, scientific methods, and neuroscientific studies of aesthetic experiences, all have the potential to be expanded in gerontological arts-based research in general, and theatre and drama-based research in particular.

Allied to this, it is evident from the review that older people have rarely, if ever, actively participated in research and evaluation processes in this field: most existing research has been devised, conducted and analysed by academic researchers and practitioners. If older people were to be more involved in the co-construction, undertaking and co-production of research and evaluation, together with using the artistic medium we are concerned with here – namely theatre and drama – to 'show' rather than just describe research findings, this may help to better articulate cultural value as it relates to drama

engagement and provide a more nuanced understanding of its dimensions and benefits (see as one example, Bernard et al., 2014).

Existing research also makes it difficult to elucidate the specific cultural value and benefits of drama for older people in comparison with other activities. Only one study compared drama participation with another art form (Noice, Noice & Staines, 2004), and three used control groups comparing drama participants with non-participants (Fritsch et al., 2009; Noice, Noice & Staines, 2004; Osgood, 1984). Nor, as we noted earlier, has research been conducted on the long-term effects of drama and theatre participation. Though a number of studies of drama interventions include post-tests, interviews or focus groups, these have generally been conducted either immediately after, or within a few weeks of, participation. We also do not know if, or how, these interventions have longer term effects on participants' creativity and other elements of their lives; and there is little data on the value of long-term participation in existing older people's theatre and drama groups.

Most of the documents reviewed included small numbers of participants and did not adequately compare participants in terms of gender, race, or age. A few included only female participants, but none compared the experiences of older men and women. A number of documents consider drama projects that intentionally brought people together from different racial and cultural backgrounds, providing a space for intercultural dialogue. However, once again there are no comparative analyses. Along with the UK and North American bias noted earlier, this limits our understanding of what role race and cultural background may play in terms of the cultural value older people may derive from their involvement in theatre and drama.

Similarly, there is also little evidence comparing the experiences of older drama participants of different ages or generations. One exception is the Noices' research on the cognitive benefits of drama instruction for older people, which has included separate studies with younger-old, relatively affluent, community dwelling participants (Noice et al., 1999; Noice, Noice & Staines, 2004), and older-old participants living in subsidised housing (Noice & Noice, 2006; 2009); showing similar cognitive improvements in each case. Likewise, projects and studies based in residential homes and care settings have tended to involve older-old people, whereas pre-existing older people's theatre groups often attract a wide age range but with more participants at the younger end. However, the current literature does not explicitly explore the cultural value of bringing together older people of different ages and generations.

Finally, a number of documents included in the review focus on drama projects for older people who are perceived to be marginalised or excluded: people living with illness or disability (particularly those with dementia and/or living in residential settings), or living in poorer areas with less access to social and cultural facilities. Though the value of drama within these contexts has been explored, social class has not been explicitly analysed as a dimension of older people's drama and theatre participation. In particular, more research is needed to explore the social demographics of different kinds of participation: e.g. participation in established older people's theatre groups vs. participation in one-off projects and interventions.

In conclusion, whilst much has been done, there is much more that could be done to further our understanding of the cultural value and benefits to be derived from older peoples' participation in theatre and drama. The review on which this article is based has begun to map out the background to this territory, providing a particular gerontological and drama-focused contribution to the discourse

around cultural value as well as to the wider field of cultural gerontology. Theoretically, methodologically and empirically, however, there is substantial scope for additional contributions: for comparative work of many kinds; for the use of longer-term and more innovative and participatory methodological approaches; and for interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaborations. Participation in senior, intergenerational and community-based theatre and drama holds out the possibility of addressing pressing social and policy concerns in imaginative and innovative ways; it is also a thought-provoking medium for conveying positive messages about growing older and challenging negative, reductionist and ageist views of later life and the creative potential of older people.

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Table 1: Summary of Search Strategy

STEP	ACTIVITY
Step One Ages and Stages literature	References collated from 'Ages and Stages' publications and references provided by our Advisory Group.
Step Two Initial database search	Search databases: Arts and Humanities Citation Index and Social Sciences Citation Index (through Web of Science); AgeLine; ASSIA (Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts); IBSS (International Bibliography of the Social Sciences); Social Services Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts (all through ProQuest); Social Care Online; OpenGrey; using the term "cultural value" in combination with old*; age*; eld*, "later life", theatre, drama, acting, senior theatre*, reminiscence theatre*. No results were found.
Step Three Revised database search	Revise search, using above databases and a range of search terms including (in combination): old*; age*; eld*; "later life"; "dementia" AND drama*; theatre/theater; acting; "senior theatre"; "reminiscence theatre"; "devised theatre"; "applied theatre"; "community theatre"; "intergenerational"; "audience"; volunteer*.
Step Four Cross-reference database results and delete duplications	
Step Five Cross-reference with critical reviews	Cross-reference above results with theatre/drama studies in existing reviews (Castora-Binkley et al 2010; Mental Health Foundation 2011; Noice, Noice and Kramer 2013).
Step Six E-mail request	Send e-mail requests via: British Society of Gerontology (BSG); The Arts and Humanities listserv (mailing list for the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) and North American Network in Age Studies); AHRC Cultural Value Programme; Manchester Valuing Older People mailing list; Age of Creativity website and twitter request.
Step 7 Cross-reference e-mail request results	Cross-reference all literature generated from the e-mail requests with the results of the database searches.

Table 2: Existing Reviews

Author/Year	Nature and focus of review	Number of studies	Age	Area	Academic discipline or area of practice	Key findings
Cutler 2009	Review of participatory arts projects with older people.	120 case studies; 25 'drama and theatre'	Over 60	UK	Arts practice	Benefits to physical and emotional health and relationships.
Castora-Binkley et al 2010	Reviews the literature on the impact of arts participation on health outcomes for older people.	11 studies; 5 in 'drama/ theatrical' category	Over 65	USA	Policy/community health	Evidence is limited, but confirms physical and mental health benefits of arts participation.
Mental Health Foundation 2011	Reviews the literature on the impact of participatory arts on older people.	31 studies; 5 in 'drama' category	Over 60 (60-96)	Various	Health Practice	Benefits to mental health and well-being; physical health; social contact, friendship and support; challenging stereotypes and changing attitudes; combating marginalisation.
Noice, Noice and Kramer 2013	Reviews the scientific literature on the enhancement of healthy ageing in older adults through active participation in the arts.	31 in total; 7 in 'theatre' category	Over 60	Various	Theatre and Psychology	Overwhelmingly positive cognitive/affective/quality of life outcomes for various participatory art forms (including theatre/drama).

Table 3: Research Articles and Books

Author/ Year	Nature/Focus	Number of participants	Age/ Gender	Country	Design/Methods	Academic discipline or area of practice	Key benefits/Value
Barnes Lipscomb 2012	Theatre as a focus for developing theory in age studies.	Various	Not specified	USA	Critical analysis; theoretical development.	English	Challenging ageist stereotypes, encouraging social change, empowering older people.
Basting 1995	Overview of growth of Senior Theatre in USA.	Various	Not specified	USA	Overview article.	Applied theatre (academic)	Growing professionalism and politicisation of ageing.
Basting 1998	Book which provides critical analysis of 8 performances that aim to catalyse shifts in the understanding of later age.	Various	Not specified	USA	Critical analysis; theoretical development.	Applied theatre; cultural gerontology	Challenging and disrupting images and stereotypes of later life; considers the ways in which stereotypes about age and youth might be replicated through performance and explores and problematises the positioning of age as a 'category of difference'.
Basting 2013	Account of the TimeSlips programme (see also Fritsch et al. 2009).	Various	Not specified	USA	Creative intervention programme for people with dementia focusing on storytelling.	Applied theatre	Recognises capacity of people with dementia for growth, engagement and meaning.
Bernard et al. 2015	Multidisciplinary project about the relationship between older people and a local theatre, culminating in a devised theatre performance, 'Our Age, Our Stage'.	79 interviews with 95 people; 10 group interviews with 51 people; 25 people involved in drama workshops.	Older people 49-92; younger people 16-19.	UK	Archival analysis; qualitative interviews; group interviews; participant observation; drama workshops; devised theatre production.	Multidisciplinary (arts/humanities and social sciences) and theatre practice.	Affective and emotional relationship between older people and a particular theatre; potential of theatre to enable social connections, negotiate life transitions, increase sense of well-being, purpose, self-confidence and belonging.
Boggs & Leptak 1991	Examined process of life review among older people attending a performance about later life issues and dilemmas.	13	Not specified	USA	Evaluated through structured interviews with 13 volunteer audience members.	Educational gerontology	Power of drama to facilitate reminiscence.
Burden 2000	Account of an action research project in a community theatre run by older female volunteers.	Unknown	All female	Australia	Action research – planning workshops facilitated by researchers to assist the women in organising and managing the group processes.	Action research	Benefits or value of theatre participation are not discussed.
Coffman	Postgraduate thesis	Various	Not	USA	PhD thesis.	Applied theatre	Enables older people to act out imagined

1979	exploring the use of creative drama with older people.		specified			(academic)	or lost roles and achieve self-actualisation. Potential of drama as creative therapy.
Davis 1985	Report on the benefits of 17 session drama workshops for older people.	15	64-87. 13 women/ 2 men.	USA	Exploratory study— quasi-experiment without control group. Content analysis of quotes by participants after each workshop examining changes over time in four psychological states using Gottschalk and Glesser scales.	Multidisciplinary (further education, adult development and ageing)	Downward trend on anxiety and one measure of hostility.
Davis 1987	Discusses the benefits of participating in creative drama activities and workshops for older adults.	Various	Not specified	USA	Report of evidence from drama participants, workshop leaders and researchers.	Further education, gerontology	Increased self-confidence, cooperation, communication skills, self-expression, relaxation, and sense of accomplishment; decreased anxiety, boredom, self-centeredness and focus on physical discomforts; capacity of theatre to help combat ageism.
Feldman et al. 2011	Evaluation of audience members' views on a research-based community theatre performance about widowhood.	29	64-96. 90% female.	Australia	Devised theatre production, evaluated through questionnaires with audience members.	Nursing and health services	Enjoyable performance, true to life, of high quality, and a useful way of learning about widowhood.
Fritsch et al. 2009	Observational study exploring the impact of TimeSlips, a creative expression programme for people with dementia and their carers (see also Basting 2013).	Unknown	Not specified	USA	Creative intervention programme for people with dementia focusing on storytelling. Evaluated through observation of intervention and control sites (nursing homes) and survey for staff.	Applied theatre – multidisciplinary evaluation	Improves the alertness and engagement of people with dementia; increases staff-resident interactions; improves staff views of people with dementia.
Hafford-Letchfield et al. 2010	Intergenerational drama project exploring older people's sexuality. Brought together older people and social work students.	Unknown	Older people over 60; university students	UK	Drama workshops. Focus groups, questionnaires, facilitator notes, participant blogs and post-it notes.	Social work	Feelgood factors from increased participation and involvement in learning; freeing up imagination and enhancing learning through drama; learning about sexuality and intimacy in later life.
Halperin 2001	Explores the potential of the purposeful use of activity in cultivating community in a life	Unknown	Not specified.	USA	Life review and performance group	Social work	Enabling intergenerational exploration of commonalities and differences, developing a sense of shared identity; opportunity take risks; exercising self-determination.

	review and performance group with bilingual elders in a community based organisation.						
Koehler 2002	Critical review of three senior theatre performances.	Various	Not specified.	USA and Canada	PhD thesis.	Theatre studies	A musical revue provided idealised, nostalgic images of older people; a street theatre production created a sense of community and a 'call to action'; a musical theatre production enabled sharing of stories and reminiscence.
Kontos & Naglie 2007	Evaluation of health practitioners' perceptions about a devised theatre production, 'Expressions of Personhood in Alzheimer's', based on ethnographic research.	43	All female	Canada	Ethnographic research leading to devised theatre production. 6 focus groups and post-performance survey.	Health studies	Relevance of the production to practitioners' practices; increased understanding; endorsement of the use of drama as an educational tool about dementia care.
Lepp et al. 2003	Report on a drama workshop programme for patients with dementia.	12 patients and 7 caregivers	Patients aged 73-95: 10 male/2 female. Caregivers all female – ages not specified.	Sweden	Weekly drama sessions for 2 months. A focus group interview was held with the caregivers one month after the programme had ended.	Health sciences	Opportunity to share joy and sorrow; enhanced communication and triggering memory for the patients; opportunity for patients to share knowledge and ability; beneficial effect on relationship between patients and carers; patients expressed themselves more openly, grew in self-confidence and had increased interest in their surroundings; carers both reflected on and felt confirmed in their role.
Marziali & Topalian 1997	Edited collection about older women's drama groups around the globe.	Various	All female	Global	7 national case studies.	Theatre practice	Opportunity to share and reflect on personal experiences; make friendships; transforming views of self and others; empowerment.
Mitchell et al. 2011	Analysis of audience experiences of a research-based drama, 'I'm Still Here', about people and families living with dementia.	48 family members, 50 health care professionals, and 8 nursing students	Not specified	Canada	Devised drama production. Audience member experiences evaluated by 15 pre/post-performance focus groups.	Nursing	Seeing anew; connecting with reverberating truths; placing and relating the self; sensing embodied impact and discerning meaningful learning; expanding understanding of perspective; affirming personal knowing. Transforming views of people with dementia.
Nicholson 2011	Reflective paper on theatre practices with older people in care settings.	N/A	Not specified	UK	Reflective paper, developing theory on drama and person-centred care.	Theatre studies	Triggering reminiscence (also explores issues and challenges to this approach). Drama as a way for care home residents to explore and negotiate 'home-making'.
Noice et al. 1999	Exploration of effect of professional acting training on the cognition of older people.	13	65-82	USA	4 week acting training programme, followed by rehearsals and performances. Single-group before/after	Psychology	Improved recall and recognition.

					design (pilot study).		
Noice, Noice & Staines 2004	Exploration of effect of drama workshops on cognition.	124	60-86	USA	RCT. 4 weeks of theatre instruction. Intervention group compared with visual arts and non-treatment group. Two post-tests.	Psychology	Increased word recall, problem solving, and psychological well-being.
Noice & Noice 2006	Exploration of effect of drama workshops on cognition of older people in a long-term care facility.	18	72-95; 13 females 5 males	USA	Twice weekly drama instruction for 4 weeks. One group pretest-posttest with two pretests.	Psychology	Increased recall and problem-solving ability.
Noice & Noice 2009	Exploration of effect of drama workshops on cognition.	122	68-93; 80% women	USA	Repeat of Noice et al. (2004) with older, less well-educated participants living in subsidised, low-income, retirement homes.	Psychology	Increased word recall, prose comprehension/ recall, word generation and problem-solving.
Osgood 1984; Clark & Osgood 1985	Book and article, both reporting results of an RCT theatre intervention.	103	Over 55	USA	RCT – 10 month weekly applied theatre programme at 7 sites. Participants compared with control group.	Applied theatre (academic)	Bringing happiness; decreasing loneliness; opportunity to express feelings, become close as a group, experience 'joy and excitement' and make lasting friendships.
Pyman & Rugg 2006	Evaluation of participation in a music hall performance by a community drama group.	8	Over 60; 5 men, 3 women	UK	Semi-structured interviews.	Dramatherapy	Developing knowledge, skills and attitudes; enrichment of lives.
Ritch & Brennan 2010	Questionnaire about older people's views on financial products used to produce a drama to inspire discussion at a World Café event.	46 world café participants	50-80; 17 males, 29 females	UK	Questionnaire; devised theatre piece; world café event/focus groups.	Business	Capacity of drama to introduce a sensitive subject in a relaxed manner and focus participants' thoughts before group conversations.
Schweitzer 2007	Book. A guide to reminiscence theatre, drawing on case studies.	Various	Not specified	UK	Reminiscence workshops and performances.	Theatre practice	Renewed energy; combatting social isolation and developing new relationships and friendships; intergenerational trust and empathy; sense of pride and ownership; increased self-confidence, value and affirmation; challenge and stimulation; creative engagement; producing a 'community of memory'.
Schweitzer 2013	A thirty year retrospective on reminiscence theatre.	Various	Covers both intergenerational	UK	The article reviews: verbatim theatre by professional actors; older people's theatre	Theatre practice	Communicating older people's life experiences; therapeutic benefits; enhancing intergenerational and intercultural relationships.

			projects and those for older people.		developed and performed by elders; inter-generational and inter-cultural work; therapeutic uses of reminiscence.		
Strimling 2004	Book. A guide to intergenerational theatre making; the story of the 'Roots and Branches' theatre company.	Unknown	Not specified	USA	Practical guide and narrative by the theatre company founder.	Theatre practice	Fostering community; bridging the differences between old and young people.
Vorenberg 1999	Overview of the senior theatre movement in the United States and around the globe.	Various	Not specified	USA and beyond	Overview article.	Theatre practice	Benefits at an individual and community level; opportunity for younger people to connect emotionally with older people.
Wimpenny & Savin-Baden 2013	Article about an arts based evaluation of a drama intervention for people over 50, delivered by a UK city centre theatre company (see also 'evaluation and reports' section).	Unknown	50+	UK	10 week workshop programme with 4 groups over 12 months (city centre group; sheltered residential home; Asian women's group; outpatients receiving dialysis). Interviews, focus groups, participant-observation of workshops, ethno-drama, sharing photographs and artefacts.	Multidisciplinary (Theatre practice; learning innovation; sustainable regeneration)	Opportunities for diverse marginalised members of a community to participate in a shared activity and transform their views of themselves and others in ways that were beneficial for health and wellbeing. Increased confidence, skills, sense of value, new relationships.
Yang 2013	Account of the 'History Alive' project in Taiwan, which brought together older people, schoolchildren and a student theatre group.	Unknown	Not specified	Taiwan	Drama workshops, rehearsals and performance. Focus groups and analysis of organisational documents.	Social work	Enjoyment; sharing experiences; playing new roles; developing intergenerational relationships; challenging stereotypes.
Yuen et al. 2011	Discussion of the effect of participation in the "Seasoned Arts At the Samford for You" (SAASY) programme on psychological well-being and health-related quality of life.	12	62-88; 11 women, 1 man	USA	Single-group design - pretest and post-test; individual interviews.	Multidisciplinary (occupational therapy, nursing, practice)	Improvement in psychological well-being and health-related quality of life, most notably in physical health; increased self-worth and self-advocacy.

Table 4: Evaluation Reports

Author/Year	Nature/Focus	Number of participants	Age/Gender	Country	Design/Methods	Academic discipline or area of practice	Key benefits/Value
Arigho 2005	Evaluation of the "National Creative Ageing Project" (2002-2005) – comprised 10 reminiscence arts projects and 4 Creative Arts Residencies, leading to reminiscence theatre and documentary film productions.	Unknown	Not specified	UK	Project Worker Training; Reminiscence projects in care settings; Creative Arts Residencies; Training workshops; Reminiscence open days and theatre performances; End-of-Year Regional Seminars.	Theatre practice	Potential of drama in developing new, innovative ways of working in care settings for older people. Importance of risk taking for older people.
Harries 2013	Evaluation report about 'Storybox', a participatory theatre and arts based intervention with dementia in residential, clinical and day-care settings, delivered by the Library Theatre, Manchester.	Unclear	Not specified	UK	Interviews with people with dementia and their carers; observations of sessions; artist diaries and reflections.	Theatre practice	Having fun; the opportunity for creative expression; challenging people's roles as 'carers' and 'cared for'; creating a social space and sense of togetherness; creating memories; empowering participants.
Johnson 2011	Evaluation of 'On Ageing', a devised intergenerational theatre production.	4 older choir members, 3 children, 50 audience members	Not specified (intergenerational)	UK	Interviews with older people; drama workshops with children; devised performance featuring children. Interviews and participant observation.	Theatre practice and social gerontology	Reflection on own ageing and intergenerational relationships.
London Centre for Dementia Care 2009	Evaluation report about a two week interactive drama residency at the Rathmore House care home, facilitated by theatre group, Ladder to the Moon	Unknown	Over 65 (majority over 80)	UK	Two week drama residency at a care homes. The care home was transformed into 'Grand Hotels'. Evaluated through film, photos, surveys, focus groups, interviews, and structured observation.	Theatre practice	Improved well-being; increased self-esteem; emotive responses; sense of community; improved communication and social connection; opportunity for creative expression.

Lyons & Gage 2014	Evaluation report about a two month drama intervention at an extra care scheme.	Unknown	Not specified	UK	Two month drama intervention at an extra care scheme, leading to a recreation of the musical, 'Sound of Music'. Residents Completed 132 questionnaires; participant comments; case studies.	Theatre practice	Better communication (between staff and residents/families); improved quality of life, confidence, ability to make choices and community involvement for residents.
McAvinchey & Gilfoy 2009	Report on 3 year programme of intergenerational arts activities.	Over 1000 involved and 679 attended events.	Not specified	UK	Drama workshops; photography and art; creative writing.	Arts practice	Enabling people of different ages to explore similarities and differences in a secure space; building intergenerational relationships; combating social isolation; challenging age related assumptions.
Magic Me 2005	'All In The Same Boat', a multi-generational, multi-ethnic, multi-faith project, exploring places participants had visited and lived in.	11 year 7 schoolchildren (only 4 attended all sessions) ; 15 Jewish Community Centre members; 3 students; 3 artists.	Not specified (intergenerational)	UK	A series of drama workshops and devised presentation. Evaluated through written reflections by participants.	Arts practice	Enabling people of different ages to explore similarities and differences in a secure space; building intergenerational relationships; combating social isolation; challenging age related assumptions.
Mayo & McAvinchey 2013	Report on 10 annual intergenerational arts projects.	10 young people and 10 older people per project.	Ages not specified (intergenerational); all female	UK	Each annual project was different. Methods included photography, storytelling, creative writing, performance, visual art and craft. Several projects culminated in live performances. Interviews with participants, partners and artists.	Arts practice	Enabling people of different ages to explore similarities and differences in a secure space; building intergenerational relationships; combating social isolation; challenging age related assumptions.
Mello & Voigts 2013	Devised theatre project set in a care home.	Unknown	Not specified (intergenerational)	USA	Drama workshops; weaving, art making, letter writing, set making; devised theatre performances. Questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, observation, video recordings and document analysis.	Academic-practice collaboration (theatre, social care)	Sense of enjoyment, being challenged, taking risks, 'letting the imagination fly', increased self-worth and transformed view of the self; enhanced sense of connectedness and togetherness between residents and staff; intergenerational sense of community and challenged stereotypes; encouraging reflection and empathy.

Nicholson 2013	Evaluation of the 'Hearts and Minds' programme of creative workshops in arts and reminiscence, led by Age Exchange and undertaken with people living with dementia and related mental health issues in residential care, from 2011-2013.	Unknown	Not specified	UK	The programme engaged participants in art, drama, dance, new media and film making. A contemporary dance piece, a feature/documentary film, and a theatre production were generated. Interviews, participant observation, literature review, workshops with key stakeholders, ethnographies of place and space mapping.	Theatre practice	Potential of drama and the arts to facilitate person-centred care and encourage listening to, and understanding the life-histories of, older people in residential care.
Savin-Baden et al. 2013	Evaluation report about an arts based evaluation of a drama intervention for people over 50, delivered by a UK city centre theatre company.	Unknown	Aged 50+	UK	10 week workshop programme with 4 groups over a 12 month period (city centre group; sheltered residential home; Asian women's group; group of outpatients receiving dialysis). Interviews, focus groups, observation, ethno-drama, photographs and artefacts.	Multidisciplinary (theatre practice; learning innovation; sustainable regeneration)	Opportunities for diverse marginalised members of a community to participate in a shared activity and transform their views of themselves and others in ways that were beneficial for health and wellbeing. Increased confidence, skills, sense of value, new relationships.

Table 5: Descriptive Overviews

Author/ Year	Nature/Focus	Number of participants	Age/ Gender	Country	Design/Methods	Academic discipline or area of practice	Key benefits/Value
Benson 2009	Account of Ladder to the Moon's drama interventions in care homes, involving 'character visitors' interacting with residents and staff in a virtual world.	Unknown	Not specified	UK	Descriptive account of interactive drama techniques.	Theatre practice	Enhanced relationships and strengthened sense of community in care homes and day centres; also has the potential to cause confusion for people with dementia.
DeBrine 1983	Describes the participation of nursing home residents in a senior theatre group.	32 (18 from adult day care programme, 11 from health-related facility, 3 from skilled nursing facility).	40-92	USA	Descriptive account.	Unknown	Increased self-esteem and confidence.
Gerstle 1992	Describes life review theatre workshops by Elders Share the Arts (ESTA) in New York City.	Various	Not specified (intergenerational)	USA	Life review workshops.	Theatre practice	Enhancing meaning and identity, which promotes sense of well-being; 'a forum (to) harness creative energies in a supportive environment.'
Hopkins 2003	Reports on reminiscence work by interactive theatre group, Ladder to the Moon, in an older persons' hospital ward.	Unknown	Not specified	UK	Descriptive account of interactive reminiscence work.	Unknown	Empowering people to tell their stories; improving atmosphere; a chance to have fun.
Houseal & Teitelbaum 2013	Account of 'Bridging the Gap' intergenerational theatre project to connect LGBTQ people of different generations in New York City.	Unknown	Not specified (intergenerational)	USA	Drama workshops; devised theatre performance.	Theatre practice	Identifying, confronting and disrupting age related stereotypes; starting a dialogue about pertinent subjects within a group; and sharing dialogue with a wider audience during the performance.
Kamler 2001	Discusses the 'Stories of Ageing' project in Australia, which explored what ageing means from the point of view of the older woman.	40	60-85; all female	Australia	Writing and video workshops facilitated by researchers over 3 years. Performance of 'We're not nice little old ladies'.	Nursing and Health	Affirmation that learning can happen throughout the life course and that ageing is a process of both change and growth; opportunity for reflection and challenge; transformed participants' self-perceptions.
Killick 2003	Report on how actors help people with	Unknown	Not specified	UK	Drama intervention in hospital wards by	Dementia practice	Helping people with dementia to express themselves.

	dementia to express themselves through the Elderflower programme in Scotland.				specially trained actors.		
Killick 2010	Describes drama workshops run by the author with the Scottish Dementia Working Group.	44 persons with dementia and 18 staff from Alzheimer's Scotland	Not specified	UK	Funshops were run in five centres.	Dementia practice	Providing an opportunity for people to relax into a carefree state of mind and laugh together.
Kwok 2003	Account of the 'All Age Drama Troupe'.	19 older members, 13 youth members, 8 social workers and support staff, 18 volunteers.	Older members aged 60 and over; other ages unclear.	Hong Kong	Drama workshops and two performances, one on intergenerational understanding, the other on prevention of elder suicide. Pre-post evaluation.	Drama	Increased self-esteem; inter and intra-generational friendships and partnership.
Hennig 2008; Kandell 2006; Newhouse 2007; Schiffman 2000; Toder 2013	Several journal, magazine and newspaper articles describe the work of Stagebridge, the oldest senior theatre company in the USA.	Various	Not specified	USA	Drama classes for older people; performances; workshops	Theatre practice	Improving quality of life; providing a 'safety valve' during life transitions and losses; giving performers a sense of self-worth and value; challenging stereotypes about old age; and providing a sense of 'family'.
Palmar & Nascimento 2002	Describes the 'Health Action Theatre by Seniors' (HATS) project which employs an interactive theatre model to address issues with diverse groups in multicultural and multilingual Canada.	Unknown	Not specified	Canada	Interactive theatre intervention.	Theatre practice	Potential of theatre to enable new forms of communication. An opportunity for issues to be debated and renegotiated.
Perlstein 1986; 1988; 1991; 1997; 1998-1999	Several articles about 'Elders Share the Arts', an intergenerational living history programme.	Various	Not specified (intergenerational)	USA	Living history workshop programmes, performances and festivals; multicultural and intergenerational storytelling.	Theatre practice	Enhanced learning; community-building; challenging age related stereotypes; reinforcing the idea of both older people and young people as community resources; enhancing sense of identity, self-esteem, pride and belonging.
Petherbridge & Kendall 2012	Intergenerational community theatre project run by London Bubble. An oral history project, 'Grandchildren of the Blitz', provided data used to produce a	200 people in stage 1 (gathering reminiscences); 25 in stage 2 (workshops and devising); 40 in	Not specified (intergenerational)	UK	Oral history; drama workshops; devising and scripting. Evaluated through interviews with participants by external researchers.	Theatre practice	Building relationships across generations; increased confidence, sense of self-value and purpose; participation in other cultural activities; reflection; engagement and citizenship.

	devised theatre performance.	stage 3 (script writing).					
Pflanzer 1992	Description of the JASA Theatre Ensemble, an older adult performing group that performs politics and poetry.	8 actors (4 men and 4 women)	Not specified	USA	Performances	Theatre practice	Dramatising and challenging clichéd images and stereotypes.
Provus & Verson 1986	Description of 'Acting Up!': a group of older people who perform skits about ageing and provide workshops.	Unknown	65-75	USA	Workshops; performances	Theatre practice	Outlet for emotional expression.
Schweitzer 2004	Discussion of reminiscence work with older people from ethnic minorities. Presents case studies and calls for more suitable resources.	Unknown	Not specified	UK	Reminiscence projects.	Theatre practice	Creating a 'community of experience' amongst participants; enabling participants to share their experiences and cultural heritage; increased self-worth; enhancing sense of identity for younger family members.
Walker 2011	Reports on the use of a 15 minute audio play, 'Night and Day', within care homes, to develop person-centred practice. Case study of two care homes.	Unknown	Not specified	UK	2 care homes used the play as the basis for a two-hour workshop for staff, residents and relatives to share experiences, discuss improve practice around night time care for people with dementia/older people.	Dementia practice	Encouragement of empathy through drama.
Wiener 2009	Case study describing two theatre projects for older people.	Unknown	Not specified	UK	Unknown	Theatre practice	Opportunity to explore creativity, reflect on ageing, confront stereotypes about growing old.
Worley & Henderson 1995	Describes a drama group designed to relieve the emotional isolation of elders concerned about the manner in which they will die.	Unknown	Not specified	USA	Description of the formation of the theatre group and audience responses. Brief post-performance questionnaire.	Unknown	Opportunity to openly discuss issues of loss and death; helped audience members feel less alone in their fears and concerns.