Athlone Institute of Technology

Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Applied Social Studies in Social Care

‘Students’ attitudes towards Intergenerational Relationships’

Patricia Kelly
A00190405

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Applied Social Studies in Social Care.

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Declaration

I declare that this project is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Applied Social Studies in Social Care. It is entirely the work of the author and has not been submitted to any other University, Institute or College, or for any other academic award in this institute. I further declare that, where reference is not given in the text, that it is entirely my own work.

Signed: _________________________________              Date: _____________

Patricia Kelly        Date: 13th April 2016
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Abstract

Age-based stereotypes can negatively influence people’s attitudes towards ageing. Therefore, this quantitative study explored students’ attitudes towards older people and intergenerational relationships; finding that intergenerational relationships may have a positive effect on improving students’ attitudes towards older people. This study further emphasises that promoting intergenerational relationships should be prioritised by all policy makers.
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Chapter One
1: Introduction

A previous college assignment on older people inspired this research. The research question was; do intergenerational relationships have a positive effect on the attitudes of college students’ towards older people?

The aim of the study was to explore students’ attitudes and awareness towards forming and maintaining relationships with older people. The objectives were to explore students’ attitudes towards befriending a person aged over 65 years, to compare students’ opinions on possible barriers to developing relationships with people aged over 65 years, and to explore and identify potential intergenerational programmes.

Chapter two examines previous research on attitudes towards older people, emphasising young people’s attitudes; and provides a justification for the research. Chapter three details the research methodology employed, whilst, chapter four reveals the results of the study. Chapter five discusses these findings with reference to previous studies, it also includes an evaluation of the methodology used, the limitations of the study, and provides recommendations for further research. Chapter six provides the conclusion of the paper.
Chapter Two
2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction
This literature review will focus on attitudes towards older people, emphasising young people's attitudes. It will also review some of the identified barriers to developing intergenerational relationships. Furthermore, this review identifies current research supported approaches to intergenerational practice.

2.2 Ageing population
The population of people aged over 60 years will double by 2050, on average people are living 20 years longer than previous generations, therefore, governments must ensure that they implement policies which will enable older people to continue participating in society (WHO, 2015). This is supported by The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing, who recommend finding novel ways of maintaining health in later life (TILDA, 2016). Additionally, generations are becoming similar in size for the first time in history; as a result of this global change in population, research in the area of intergenerational practice is growing (Biggs, 2014). The Irish Department of Health published the National Positive Ageing Strategy in 2013 (Department of Health, 2013). This policy document aims to create an age friendly society by focusing on participation, health, security and research.

2.3 Attitudes towards older people
In Ireland, Corrigan (2011) demonstrated that intergenerational relationships can give young third level students a wider perspective of the world, as well as an opportunity to adopt the skills and competencies of older people. Some of the 400 students involved in Corrigan’s Intergenerational Learning Programme (ILP) reported that the programme had given them a new perspective of older people. International studies on intergenerational relationships have also demonstrated that they can have a positive effect on improving the attitudes of college students towards older people. In the United States, a quasieperimental study on the effects of intergenerational interactions on student attitudes towards older people measured the attitudes of 43 students, 23 of whom were assigned to an intervention group, 20 to a control group. Over a six week period the intervention group e-mailed older people. The research
found a significant improvement in their attitude towards older people in comparison to the control group. The sample size of the study was small, therefore the results may not generalise (Chase, 2011).

In a larger study, Giles, Ryan and Anas (2008) measured the attitudes of 240 young, middle and older aged people. The study found that older adults were afforded more respect by younger people than by middle aged, and older people themselves. Furthermore, of the three age groups, younger people were more likely to avoid contact with older people. In reviewing the effects of intergenerational programmes on children and young people, Park (2015) found that young people can gain from their interactions with older people. In reviewing 11 previous studies to assess current research regarding intergenerational activities, Park (2015) demonstrated that although they may respect older people on the one hand, young people can have negative attitudes towards interacting with them.

Young adults who are anxious about their own future ageing can attribute to older people the negative stereotypes that they fear will describe their future selves (Allan and Johnson, 2009). This quantitative study involving 111 undergraduate students found, that challenging ageing anxiety in student populations can be developed by increasing ageing knowledge and facilitating positive interactions between younger and older people. Developing research to understand attitudes towards older people with individuals other than healthcare professionals is recommended by Kishita, Fisher and Laidlaw (2015). After reviewing 66 published articles on cross-sectional and longitudinal studies on attitudes to ageing, they recommended frequent exposure to realistic, positive images of ageing to challenge ageist attitudes.

Frequent exposure to negative media images about ageing reinforces beliefs and ingrains negative ageing stereotypes more deeply, both consciously and subconsciously (Milner, Van Norman, and Milner, 2012). This article published by The World Economic Forum maintains that internalising age-based stereotypes can lead to people living up to these negative stereotypes when they perceive themselves to be ageing, even going as far as shortening their lives because they feel bad about ageing.
2.4 Barriers to developing intergenerational relationships

A lack of policy promoting intergenerational relationships can be a barrier to developing them. In their study for the Institute of Public Health in Ireland, in an attempt to understand the concept of loneliness and to identify the most effective policy to prevent and tackle loneliness, Harvey and Walsh (2016) highlight that there are few policies or strategies that explicitly address loneliness among older people in Ireland. Loneliness affects approximately 10% of older people and because it impacts on their mental and physical wellbeing it should be prioritised by policy makers in both the health and social care areas (Harvey and Walsh, 2016).

The cost of intergenerational programmes could be a barrier to developing intergenerational relationships. In a literature review to assess research regarding intergenerational activities, Park (2015) recommended examining if spending in the area would be worth pursuing as a public health intervention for all of society. The Park (2015) review of 11 studies was dominated by research from the USA and Brazil, therefore the findings may not generalise to other countries. Although, in Ireland, Corrigan (2011) identified cost as one of the barriers to promoting and supporting intergenerational learning programmes. Developing policies and practice to address these barriers on a national and global level should allow access to this as yet under used resource (Corrigan, 2011).

Barriers to intergenerational relationships include social barriers. Spence and Radunovich (2012) outline that people are living longer and healthier lives and expect to be self-sufficient, and that this desire to live independently sees only one in eight single elderly people living with extended family. Children’s negative perceptions about older people can increase as they get older, therefore in their article for The Family Youth and Community Sciences Department, Florida, developing positive intergenerational relationships is recommended by Spence and Radunovich (2012) as one approach help to reduce these negative perceptions.

Similarly, environmental conditions can have a negative impact on individuals’ attitudes towards older people. Contact with older people in long-term care can actually reinforce stereotypes (Reyna, Goodwin, Ferrari and Goodwin, 2007). This study of 225 adult caregivers, compared using contact with older people against education, as methods to reduce stereotyping by staff. The contact measures did
not reduce stereotyping, however the researchers found that the more educated the care-givers were the less they endorsed stereotypes about older people.

2.5 Intergenerational Practice
There is a lack of clarity regarding the definition of intergenerational practice. The Beth Johnson Foundation defines intergenerational practice as “linking together a range of processes that build positive relationships between generations, bringing mutual benefits to all involved” (Beth Johnson Foundation, 2011, p.5).

International recognition of the range of benefits for individuals, communities, and societies as a whole, which can develop from intergenerational practice has led to increased interest in Ireland, in developing intergenerational initiatives (Finn and Scharf, 2012). Although there are many intergenerational programmes nationally, Finn and Scharf (2012) stress that there is difficulty in drawing together the nature of these projects, emphasising that many intergenerational programmes are not evaluated, and that the term intergenerational practice may not be a familiar one, even to people already engaged in this work.

Living Scenes is an evaluated intergenerational programme of learning and has been in operation in selected secondary schools in Ireland for the last seventeen years. In an overview of the programme, Surlis (2012) describes it as a collaborative education initiative, involving schools, teenagers and older adults, working together within a community learning environment. The overall opinion gathered from the research carried out on the programme to date suggests that, as a result of involvement in Living Scenes, participating schools have been reintroduced to their community, as learning centres promoting social capital (Surlis, 2012).

At third level education, The Intergenerational Learning Programme (ILP) at Dublin City University (DCU) grew from a 2008 PhD pilot study carried out by Corrigan (Corrigan, 2012). To date it has reached over 800 older people and over 400 DCU students. The study also found that by teaching older people computer skills the young students reported an increase in their own self-confidence, and to have benefitted positively from the mentor role of the older people.
On reviewing recent evidence, Harvey and Walsh (2016) suggest that providing opportunities for older people to participate in their communities may be more effective than befriending programmes to address chronic loneliness. Social participation and social resources are indicated by Harvey and Walsh (2016) as two factors which protect against loneliness. Nevertheless, they go on to say that programmes to address loneliness in older people need to be evidence based, evaluated from the outset, and be informed by older people themselves.

2.6 Conclusion
The literature review examined current research in the areas of attitudes towards older people, barriers to developing intergenerational relationships and intergenerational practices. In addition, the review has outlined some current national and international policies on ageing; policies emphasising the importance of ageing research. The literature review has identified a hiatus on research in this area in Ireland. The current study explores students’ attitudes to intergenerational relationships, their opinions on possible barriers to developing intergenerational relationships and it also explores potential intergenerational programmes or practices. The researcher is not cognisant of any other similar studies, and therefore this study will contribute to previous research in the area.
Chapter Three
3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction
This chapter will detail the method employed in gathering the information which was required to meet the aim and objectives of the study. The aim of the study was to explore the attitudes and awareness of fourth year Social Care Mature Students and fourth year Sports Science Students towards forming and maintaining relationships with people aged 65 years and over. The objectives were to explore students' attitudes towards befriending a person aged over 65 years, to compare students’ opinions on possible barriers to developing relationships with people aged over 65 years, and to explore and identify potential intergenerational programmes.

The chapter begins by defining research methods. It then goes on to justify the method used and outlines the pilot test study. Ethical considerations are discussed, and the chapter concludes by outlining the limitations of the study.

3.2 Method
Before selecting a method to gather the data required for the study, the researcher examined both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Qualitative research tends to focus upon small samples. Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, (1996: 281) argue that qualitative researchers 'attempt to understand behaviour and institutions by getting to know the persons involved'. One advantage of qualitative methods is the use of open-ended questions, these allow the researcher to understand and present the world as it is seen and experienced by the participants without predetermining those standpoints. However, this sampling procedure limits the possibility of generalising research findings to other settings or situations (Yilmaz, 2013).

Quantitative research uses a fixed design that coordinates in advance the research question and a detailed method of data collection and analysis (Robson, 2007). It attempts to gather relatively large amounts of data. The major advantage of this method is that it allows researchers to measure the responses of a number of participants to a limited set of questions. Nevertheless, this deductive approach and these predetermined sets of standardised responses can fail to provide insight into the participants’ individual or personal experiences (Yilmaz, 2013).
3.3 Justification of selected method
Bearing in mind the advantages and disadvantages of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, and since this quantitative method does not make significant time demands, it was considered to be the appropriate method, and also more likely to meet the three objectives of the study. It allowed a large sample size to be examined, without considerable expense, to produce quantitative data that could be analysed by statistical computer programmes.

Sample
Due to time constraints and for ethical purposes, students from the AIT campus were selected. Twenty questionnaires were distributed and returned (see appendix three). Two groups of participants, from two distinct courses were chosen in order to compare and contrast some of the results of the survey.

3.4 Procedure
Pilot test study
Prior to conducting the questionnaire, five pilot questionnaires were completed (see appendix one). Constructive feedback from these allowed for some of the questions to be altered, in order to meet the objectives of the study. Reflecting current thinking in survey design, the questionnaire included a third option in measuring gender (Westbrook and Saperstein, 2015).

Alignment of instrument
Polit & Beck (2010) define the validity of a questionnaire as the degree to which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure. On examining the results of the pilot study, the questionnaire proved to be aligned with the three research objectives.

Limiting bias
In order to limit bias, the researcher was conscious of ensuring that the questionnaire contained only neutral questions. Piloting the questionnaire also protected against bias.
3.5 Ethical considerations
A comprehensive cover letter was supplied with the questionnaire which outlined that participation was on a voluntary basis, that it was anonymous, and that the participants were not under any obligation to answer any questions they were not happy to (see appendix two).

3.6 Limitations
The limitations of the study include the short time frame allocated and that it was a small study, conducted in only one third level institute in Ireland. Therefore, it gives a general overview of the attitudes and opinions of a small group of students. How precisely the students answered cannot be vouched for. Despite that, it is trusted that the students answered the questions sincerely. Subsequently, the information gathered is considered valid and an accurate reflection of the participants’ views.
Chapter Four
4: Results

4.1 Introduction
This chapter will present the findings of the research, focusing on the three objectives of the study-

1. To explore students' attitudes towards befriending a person aged over 65 years.
2. To compare students’ opinions on possible barriers to developing relationships with people aged over 65 years.
3. To explore and identify potential Intergenerational programmes for use in Intergenerational practice.

4.2 Demographic Information
Questions 1-3 asked respondents to indicate their age, their gender and the course they were enrolled in.

Twenty questionnaires were returned. The response rate was 100%. 50% (n=10) of the respondents were enrolled in the Social Care course and 50% (n=10) of the respondents were enrolled in the Sports Science course. 85% (n=17) of participants were female, 15% (n=3) were male. 45% (n=9) were aged 16-24, 40% (n=8) were aged 25-34, 10% (n=2) were aged 35-44 and 5% (n=1) were aged 45-54.

4.3 Attitudes towards befriending a person aged over 65 years
Question 4 asked respondents about how many older friends they had.

30% (n=6) had no older friends, 15% (n=3) had one, 15% (n=3) had two and 40% (n=8) had three or more.

Social Care Students: 80% (n=8) had older friends.

Sports Science students 60% (n-6) had older friends.

Figure: 4.1 illustrates the combined responses of both groups.
Figure 4.1: Number of Older friends of all respondents

Figure 4.2: How all respondents met older friends

Question 5 asked how the respondents met this/these individuals.

Of the 14 respondents with older friends 29% (n=4) met through work, 29% (n=4) through relatives, 21% (n=3) through community programmes and 21% (n=3) specified other e.g. volunteering, friends, neighbours, family. See Figure 4.2
Question 6 asked respondents to describe their general relationship with older people.

The majority of respondents described their relationship with older people as friendly. Respectful was selected by: 78% of 16-24 years, 63% of 25-34 years, and 50% 25-34 years. One respondent described their relationship as being ‘friends’.
See Figure: 4.3

*Figure 4.3: All respondents describe their relationship with people aged over 65 years*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Type</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>co-operative</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-existent</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectful</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uneasy</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distant</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 7 asked if respondents were anxious about ageing.

45% (n=10) of respondents indicated that they were anxious about ageing and 55% (n=10) indicated that they were not anxious about ageing.

Question 8 asked of those who stated they were anxious about ageing, why they were anxious.

Of the students who were anxious about ageing, the risk of dependency was the main reason for this anxiety (43%), followed by loneliness (36%) and mandatory retirement (7%). Other reasons were chosen by 14% of the respondents. Some of the ‘other’ reasons included a ‘fear of being disrespected’, ‘work experience being dismissed’ and ‘current health problems worsening with age’.
Question 9 asked of those who stated they were not anxious about ageing, why they were not anxious.

Of the students who were not anxious about ageing 77% indicated that maintaining their independence, pursuing hobbies and intending to remaining active were the reasons they were not anxious. 8% of respondents said their family would support them and 15% indicated other reasons, including that ‘ageing was too far in the future to be anxious about’, it being a ‘natural stage in life’ and that they were ‘looking forward to the new experiences that come with older age’.

Question 10 asked respondents how they thought the media portray people aged over 65.

On average 71% of Social Care Students thought that the media portray older people negatively, and 64% of Sports Science Students, on average, thought that the media portray older people negatively. See Figure: 4.4

Students who were anxious about ageing selected 31% more negative descriptions than students without age anxiety.

Figure 4.4: How all respondents think the media portray older people
4.4 Comparing students’ opinions on barriers to relationships with older people.

Question 11 asked how likely respondents were to participate in programmes with older people.

Social Care Students: 40%: neutral, 40%: likely and 20%: extremely likely.

Sports Science Students: 20%: neutral, 70%: likely and 10%: extremely likely.

Of the 6 respondents without an older friend 67% chose neutral. 0% of respondents with an older friend were neutral, all indicated likely or extremely likely. 71% of respondents who described their relationship with older people as respectful were also the least likely to join a programme for older people. See Figures: 4.5 and 4.6
Figure 4.5: Social Care Students: likelihood of joining older person programme

Figure 4.6: Sports Science Students: likelihood of joining older person programme
Question 12 asked respondents if they were aware of age policies.
Social care respondents: 80% (n=8) were not aware of age policies and 20% (n=2) were.
Sports science respondents: 100% (n=10) were not aware of age policies.

Question 13 asked if respondents had contact with residents of nursing homes.
Social care respondents: 70% (n=7) had contact and 30% (n=3) had no contact.
Sports science respondents: 20% (n=2) had contact and 80% (n=8) had no contact.

Question 14 asked about the Importance of child contact with older people.
Social care respondents: 20% (n=2) selected ‘moderately important’ and 80% (n=8) selected ‘extremely important’.
Sports science respondents: 20% (n=2) selected ‘moderately important’ and 80% (n=8) selected ‘extremely important’.

Question 15 asked about formal education on working with older people.
Social care respondents: 100% (n=10) had formal education on working with older people.
Sports science respondents: 20% (n=2) had formal education on working with older people and 80% (n=8) did not.

Question 16 asked respondents to identify barriers to participating in an older person programmes.
Overall the biggest barrier identified by students to participating in a programme with older people was time and cost. One other barrier identified was ‘other commitments to older people in my community’. Sports Science Students indicated that a fear of insulting older people and older people becoming dependent on them was a barrier. In contrast none of the Social Care Students cited these as barriers. Sports Science Students identified 35% more barriers to participating in an older person programme than Social Care Students.
These identified barriers are illustrated in figures 4.7 and 4.8
**Figure 4.7: Social Care Students: Barriers to participating in older person programme**

- Other: 1
- Fear of insulting older people: 1
- Intimidated by older people: 1
- Lack of suitable space: 1
- Risk of dependency: 0
- Older persons health: 2
- Time/cost: 8
- Nothing in common: 0

**Figure 4.8: Sports Science Students: Barriers to participating in older person programme**

- Other: 0
- Fear of insulting older people: 2
- Intimidated by older people: 0
- Lack of suitable space: 1
- Risk of dependency: 2
- Older persons health: 1
- Time/cost: 7
- Nothing in common: 1
Question 17 was an open question. It asked if respondents were aware of any other barriers to developing friendships with older people.

Social Care Students cited: ‘Coming from different worlds’, ‘Having different skills and opinions to older people’, ‘A lack of awareness or education on older people’ and ‘a lack of resources to develop friendships with older people’. One student identified ‘a lack of understanding of intergenerational relationships’ as a barrier.

Sports Science Students cited the following five barriers: ‘cultural differences’, ‘a lack of social situations to meet older people’ and ‘having nothing in common with older people’. Other barriers identified included that ‘Older people might think you are taking pity on them’ and ‘Older peoples schedules’.

4.5 Potential intergenerational programmes for use in intergenerational practice

Question 18 asked the respondents to indicate the type programme they may consider participating in.

Intergenerational programmes involving a high level of activity were the type of programme respondents were more likely to participate in. Sport, cookery and healthy eating were the top three suggestions for intergenerational programmes.

These are illustrated in figure 4.9.

**Figure 4.9: Potential intergenerational programmes for intergenerational practice**

![Bar chart showing number of responses for different intergenerational programmes.](chart.png)
Question 19: Suggestions for intergenerational programmes

Suggestions from the respondents included, ‘bringing children into nursing homes’, ‘bringing older people into the college’, ‘Gentle exercise’. ‘Sharing stories and life experience’. ‘Walking groups, walking soccer and on ground non-contact sports’ were suggested, also that ‘work experience with older people should be mandatory for students’, with the aim of increasing solidarity between the generations.
Chapter Five
5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction
This chapter discusses the significance of the results. In answer to the research question the study found that intergenerational relationships may have a positive effect on improving the attitudes of college students towards older people. To highlight the significance of the findings, the results of this research are related to the findings of others discussed in the literature review, the objectives form the relevant headings. An evaluation of the data gathering method, the research limitations and suggestions for future research are also included in the chapter.

5.2 Objective 1: Attitudes towards befriending an older person
The current study found that intergenerational relationships may have a positive effect on improving the attitudes of college students towards older people. This result seems to be consistent with the data obtained in the United States by Chase (2011) who reported a significant improvement in students’ attitudes towards older people after developing relationships with older people. The respondents in the current study who did not have an older friend were less likely to participate in programmes with older people. Conversely, all of the respondents with an older friend indicated that they were likely or extremely likely to participate in programmes with older people. Accordingly, promoting intergenerational relationships may improve students’ attitudes towards older people.

Another interesting finding from the current study is, that in describing their relationships with older adults, the greatest number of respondents who indicated that they were respectful, were the youngest respondents. This corresponds with the study by Giles, Ryan and Anas (2008). Moreover, this current study supports Park (2015) who demonstrated that although they may respect older people on the one hand, young people can have negative attitudes towards interacting with them. Focusing the promotion of intergenerational relationships with younger students could address this issue.
On the question of anxiety about ageing, the results of this study show that the students who indicated they were anxious about ageing, were more likely to think the media portray older people negatively, than students who were not anxious about ageing. These results may reinforce the ideas of Allan and Johnson (2009) who outlined that students can attribute to older people the negative stereotypes that they fear will describe their future selves. Exploring the reasons students avoid contact with older people and the underlying reasons for anxiety about ageing could address this issue.

In addition, this study found that the greatest reasons for anxiety about ageing were the risks of dependency and loneliness. Harvey and Walsh (2016) stressed the importance of policy to address loneliness. Respondents in the current study who were not anxious about ageing justified this by indicating that they would remain active and maintain independence. This finding further emphasises the importance of the WHO (2015) world report on ageing, which stresses that governments must ensure that they implement policies which will enable older people to continue participating in society.

5.3 Objective 2: Comparing students’ opinions on barriers to relationships with older people

Of the two groups of respondents, Sports Science Students had the lowest level of awareness of policies promoting ageing. This finding may support Harvey and Walsh (2016) who highlighted a lack of policy promoting intergenerational relationships, and how it should be prioritised by policy makers in both the health and social care areas. Considering that an ageing population will affect all of society, ultimately, ageing policy should be promoted across all disciplines of third level education.

The results of the current study may further support the idea that contact with older people in long-term care can actually reinforce stereotypes. Reyna et al. (2007) suggested that contact with older people in long-term care can actually reinforce stereotypes. The current study found that Social Care Students had a significantly higher level of contact with older people in long-term care than Sports Science Students, and more Social Care Students than Sports Science Students think that the media portray older people negatively.
Furthermore, Social Care Students may be more likely than Sports Science Students to live up to negative stereotypes when they perceive themselves to be ageing. Milner, Van Norman, and Milner (2012) found that frequent exposure to negative media images about ageing reinforces beliefs and ingrains negative ageing stereotypes more deeply. As a protective measure Social Care Students could be made aware of the literature on contact with older people in long-term care and the effects of negative media images of ageing.

One promising result from this study was that both groups of respondents indicated that it was important or extremely important for children to have contact with older people. It is promising because Spence and Radunovich (2012) reported that children’s negative perceptions about older people can increase as they get older. The current study found that both groups of respondents indicated time constraints or cost as the main barrier to participating in a programme with older people. These results are in accordance with the Irish study by Corrigan (2011). Modifying learning programmes to connect students and older people could address these time constraints. Dublin City University Students earn credits for participating in their intergenerational programme (Corrigan, 2011).

Interestingly, Sports Science Students indicated more barriers than Social Care Students, therefore, the current data highlight the importance of the Kishita, Fisher and Laidlaw (2015) study which recommended that further research is needed to understand the types of interventions which can improve ageing knowledge. They recommended developing research to understand attitudes towards older people with individuals other than healthcare professionals.

5.4 Objective 3: Potential intergenerational programmes for use in intergenerational practice

The results of this study have shown that the respondents with older friends, developed these relationships through work or relatives, with fewer meeting through community programmes. Harvey and Walsh (2016), recommended providing opportunities for older people to participate in their communities. The results of this current study could further highlight the need for community programmes aimed at older people who are not in services, or who do not have family to support them.
One unanticipated finding from the current study is that more Sports Science Students than Social Care Students were likely to participate in an older person programme; this was despite their lack of formal education on working with older people, and the fact that they cited more barriers to participating with older people. This finding further upholds the recent report by Harvey and Walsh (2016) who outlined that because loneliness impacts on mental and physical wellbeing, it should be prioritised by policy makers in both the health and social care areas.

Intergenerational programmes involving a high level of activity were the types of programme respondents were more likely to participate in. Finding novel ways of maintaining health in later life is recommended by TILDA (2016). Kishita, Fisher and Laidlaw (2015) recommended that further research is needed to understand the types of interventions which can improve ageing knowledge. Furthermore, intergenerational programmes should be informed by older people themselves (Harvey and Walsh, 2016)

5.5 Evaluation of method
The questionnaire gathered the required data sufficiently, although it could have included questions on how much contact the respondents with older friends had with older people.

Limitations
Although the research has accomplished the aim of the study, it has its limitations. Particularly, the short time frame allocated for it and that it was a small study, conducted in only one third level institute in Ireland. Therefore, it gives a general overview of the attitudes and opinions of a small group of students. However, comparing two distinct groups of students provided a broader understanding of the research question.

Suggestions for future research
A larger study with greater time resources, undertaken at some point in the future may address these limitations.
Chapter Six
6: Conclusion

The current study found that intergenerational relationships may have a positive effect on improving students’ attitudes towards older people. The students with older friends were more likely to participate in intergenerational programmes, although time constraints were identified as the main barrier to intergenerational practice. Intergenerational programmes involving a high level of activity were identified as the types of programmes respondents were more likely to participate in.

The two groups of students described their relationships with older people positively, describing them as friendly and respectful. Nevertheless, the possible effects of ageing anxiety and negative media images may need to be addressed by students, to examine the underlying reasons for ageing anxiety.

Recommendations
In order to reflect strategic pillar seven of AIT Strategic Plan 2014-2018; to construct and embed a sustainable and measurable approach to civil engagement; perhaps, an intergenerational programme should be embedded within AIT’s curriculum.

In addition, opening up more discussion on ageing anxiety and the impact of negative media images of ageing, across the faculties, may produce some interesting debate. Inviting students, especially the younger students, from a wide range of disciplines within AIT and older people themselves could provide another platform to learn from and reflect on our attitudes and opinions of ageing.


Appendices
Appendix One Pilot Study
Appendix One

Pilot Study

A pilot survey among undergraduate students about their attitudes towards intergenerational relationships and the barriers to intergenerational relationships. Exploring and identifying potential intergenerational activities.

General demographic questions

Question 1. What is your Gender?
- Male
- Female
- Other (please specify) ____________________________________________________________

Question 2. What is your age?
- 16-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 or older

Question 3. Which course are you enrolled in?
- Sports Science
- Social Care

Questions for Objective 1. To explore students’ attitudes towards befriending a person aged over 65 years.

Question 4. Is there anyone aged 65 or over whom you would regard as a friend? (Select one)
- None
- One
- Two
- Three or more
Question 5. If you answered yes to question 4, how did you meet this person? (Select one)

- Work
- Hobby
- Community programme
- Through a relative
- Through a work colleague
- Other (please specify) __________________________

Question 6. Which of the following words best describes your general relationship with people aged 65 or over? (More than one can be selected) (National Council for the Elderly, 1993).

- distant
- wary
- sympathetic
- friendly
- uneasy
- respectful
- non-existent
- co-operative
- interested
- other (please specify below)

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

Question 7. Are you fearful or anxious about growing old? (National Council for the Elderly, 1993).

- Yes
- No

Question 8. If you answered yes to question 7, is this because? (More than one can be selected) (National Council for the Elderly, 1993).

- Mandatory retirement
- Risk of dependency
- Risk of loneliness
- Any other reason (please specify below)

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
Question 9. If you answered no to question 7 is this because? (More than one can be selected)

☐ You have hobbies and will remain active
☐ You will maintain your independence
☐ Your family will support you
☐ Any other reason (please specify below)

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Question 10. How do you think older people are portrayed by the media? (More than one can be selected)

☐ difficult ☐ supportive ☐ inspiring ☐ uninteresting ☐ interesting ☐ cantankerous
☐ optimistic ☐ unhappy ☐ easy going ☐ conservative ☐ flexible ☐ other (please specify below)

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Question 11. How likely would you be to join a community programme to engage with older people?

☐ Extremely unlikely
☐ Unlikely
☐ Neutral
☐ Likely
☐ Extremely likely
Questions for Objective 2. To compare students’ opinions on possible barriers to developing relationships with people aged over 65 years.

Question 12. Are you aware of any current Irish Policies which promote ageing?

○ Yes (please specify) ______________________________________________________________
○ No

Question 13. Do you have contact (through your employment or personally) with older people who are living in a long term residential care home?

○ Yes
○ No

Question 14. Do you think it is important for children to have contact with older people? (Select one)

○ not at all important ○ low importance ○ neutral ○ moderately important ○ extremely important

Question 15. Have you had any formal education on working with older people?

○ Yes ○ No

Question 16. What might prevent you from participating in a community programme involving working with older people? (More than one can be selected)

□ nothing in common □ time constraints □ older people’s health problems □ risk of older person becoming dependent

□ no suitable place to meet □ feel intimidated by older people □ fear of insulting them □ other (please specify below)

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_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________
Question 17. Are you aware of any barriers to developing friendships with older people? If so, you may give details below if you so wish.

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___________________________________________________________________

Questions for Objective To explore and identify potential intergenerational programmes

Question 18. Which of these, programmes would you consider participating in with older people (More than one can be selected)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>☐ teaching / learning computer</th>
<th>☐ sharing cookery skills</th>
<th>☐ drama projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ playing bingo / board games</td>
<td>☐ lobbying on issues</td>
<td>☐ gardening projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ taking part in dancing</td>
<td>☐ joining Age-Friendly initiatives</td>
<td>☐ teaching / learning healthy eating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ sharing sewing / knitting skills</td>
<td>☐ taking part in / organising quizzes</td>
<td>☐ learning &amp; playing sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ art projects</td>
<td>☐ drama projects</td>
<td>☐ none of these</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 19. Do you have any suggestions for programmes which could bring older and younger people together, enabling them to build positive relationships to benefit both age groups? If so, you may give details below if you so wish.

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Thank you for your time and assistance
Appendix Two Cover Letter
Appendix Two

Questionnaire Cover Letter

Dear Participant,

I invite you to participate in a research study entitled: AIT Students’ attitudes towards Intergenerational Relationships.

I am a fourth year Applied Social Studies in Social Care Mature Student, studying with the Department of Lifelong Learning, and am in the process of writing my Applied Research Project. The Aim of the research is to explore the attitudes and awareness of fourth year social care mature students and fourth year Sports Science students towards forming and maintaining relationships with people aged 65 years and over.

The enclosed questionnaire has been designed to collect information on: students’ attitudes towards befriending a person aged over 65 years, students’ opinions on possible barriers to developing relationships with people aged over 65 years and to explore and identify potential intergenerational programmes.

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You may decline altogether, or leave blank any questions you don’t wish to answer. There are no known risks to participation beyond those encountered in everyday life. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous. Data from this research will be kept secure at all times and reported only as a collective combined total. No one other than the researcher will know your individual answers to this questionnaire.

If you agree to participate in this project, please answer the questions on the questionnaire as best you can. It should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The questionnaire will be collected from you by the researcher after completion. If you have any questions about this project, feel free to contact Patricia Kelly at: A00190405@student.ait.ie

Thank you for your assistance in this important endeavour.

Sincerely yours,

Patricia Kelly
Appendix Three Questionnaire
Appendix Three

Questionnaire

Question 1. What is your Gender?
○ Male
○ Female
○ Other (please specify) ________________________________

Question 2. What is your age?
○ 16-24
○ 25-34
○ 35-44
○ 45-54
○ 55-64
○ 65 or older

Question 3. Which course are you enrolled in?
○ Sports Science
○ Social Care

Question 4. Is there anyone aged 65 or over whom you would regard as a friend? (Select one)
○ None
○ One
○ Two
○ Three or more

Question 5. If you answered yes to question 4, how did you meet this person/s? (More than one can be selected)
□ Work
□ Hobby
□ Community programme
□ Through a relative
□ Through a work colleague
□ Other (please specify) ________________________________
Question 6. Which of the following words best describes your general relationship with people aged 65 or over? (More than one can be selected)

- [ ] distant
- [ ] wary
- [ ] sympathetic
- [ ] friendly
- [ ] uneasy
- [ ] respectful
- [ ] non-existent
- [ ] co-operative
- [ ] interested
- [ ] other (please specify below)

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Question 7. Are you fearful or anxious about growing old?

○ Yes
○ No

Question 8. If you answered yes to question 7, is this because? (More than one can be selected)

- [ ] Mandatory retirement
- [ ] Risk of dependency
- [ ] Risk of loneliness
- [ ] Any other reason (please specify below)

________________________________________________________________________
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Question 9. If you answered no to question 7 is this because? (More than one can be selected)

- [ ] You have hobbies and will remain active
- [ ] You will maintain your independence
- [ ] Your family will support you
- [ ] Any other reason (please specify below)

________________________________________________________________________
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Question 10. How do you think older people are portrayed by the media? (More than one can be selected)

- difficult
- supportive
- inspiring
- uninteresting
- interesting
- cantankerous
- optimistic
- unhappy
- easy going
- conservative
- flexible
- other (please specify below)

___________________________________________________________________
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Question 11. How likely would you be to join a community programme to work with older people?

- Extremely unlikely
- Unlikely
- Neutral
- Likely
- Extremely likely

Question 12. Are you aware of any current Irish Policies which promote ageing?

- Yes (please specify)
- No

Question 13. Do you have contact (through your employment or personally) with older people who are living in a long term residential care home?

- Yes
- No

Question 14. Do you think it is important for children to have contact with older people? (Select one)

- not at all important
- low importance
- neutral
- moderately important
- extremely important
Question 15. Have you had any formal education on working with older people?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Question 16. What might prevent you from participating in a community programme involving working with older people? (More than one can be selected)
☐ nothing in common  ☐ time constraints/cost  ☐ older people’s health problems  ☐ risk of older person becoming dependent
☐ no suitable place to meet  ☐ feel intimidated by older people  ☐ fear of insulting them  ☐ other (please specify below)
_________________________________________________________________________________
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Question 17. Are you aware of any barriers to developing friendships with older people? If so, you may give details below if you so wish.
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Question 18. Which of these, programmes would you consider participating in with older people (More than one can be selected)

- teaching / learning computer
- sharing cookery skills
- drama projects
- playing bingo / board games
- lobbying on issues
- gardening projects
- taking part in dancing
- joining Age-Friendly initiatives
- teaching / learning healthy eating
- sharing sewing / knitting skills
- taking part in / organising quizzes
- learning & playing sports
- art projects
- Music
- none of these

Question 19. Do you have any suggestions for programmes which could bring older and younger people together, enabling them to build positive relationships to benefit both age groups? If so, you may give details below if you so wish.

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Thank you for your time and assistance