

# Cultural Value

## Ageing, Drama and Creativity: a critical review

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Arts & Humanities  
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## **Executive Summary**

*Ageing, Drama and Creativity* is a critical review focused on the cultural value older people derive from their involvement in theatre and drama. Though there are existing published reviews on the impact of participatory arts on older people, there is no review of the literature focused specifically on theatre and drama. 77 documents were reviewed as part of this study. They include published and unpublished research studies, evaluation reports, and descriptive overviews published as short pieces in journals, newspapers and magazines. The documents were generated through academic database searches and e-mail requests via relevant organisations and networks. They have been categorised and analysed according to these themes: devised productions; drama programmes and workshops; intergenerational drama; pre-existing senior and intergenerational theatre groups; reflective studies and overviews; reminiscence drama; theatre and drama in care settings; and volunteering. This literature highlights the benefits and value of older people's theatre and drama participation particularly on **health and well-being; group relationships; and learning and creativity**. A fourth area, **the aesthetic value and quality of older people's drama**, is touched upon but is under-researched to date. Though there has been a recent surge of interest in this field (a third of the reviewed literature was published between 2010-2014), we suggest that there are multiple areas for further research. In terms of methods, there is a need for arts-based evaluation approaches, longitudinal studies, and co-research with older people. Research also needs to analyse effects of gender, race, class and age on older people's participation in theatre and drama. Also, more complex research on the interplay between the intrinsic and instrumental value of participation is needed. Support is needed for more systematic evaluations of one-off drama projects and existing older people's theatre groups. This could be achieved through the facilitation and support of sustainable relationships between academic researchers and practitioners.

## **Key words**

Ageing; drama; theatre; cultural value; creativity; arts.

# Contents

<b>Introduction and Methods</b>	<b>4</b>
Background	4
Scope of the review	6
Methodology summary	6
<b>Results</b>	<b>8</b>
Overview of included literature	8
Exclusions	8
Existing reviews	9
Results table	9
Devised productions	26
Drama programmes and workshops	28
Intergenerational	30
Pre-existing senior and intergenerational theatre groups	32
Reflective studies and overviews	34
Reminiscence	35
Theatre and drama in care settings	36
Volunteers	38
<b>Discussion</b>	<b>39</b>
Strength of the evidence	39
Methodologies	40
Theoretical/conceptual frames	41
The cultural value of older people’s drama and theatre participation	41
Health and well-being	42
Group relationships	42
Learning and creativity	42
Aesthetic value and quality of older people’s drama	43
<b>Conclusion and Implications</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Appendix: Methodology</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>59</b>

# Introduction and Methods

## Background

This review is focused on the cultural value older people derive from their involvement in theatre and drama, drawing from both academic and practitioner literature and research. The review is funded by the AHRC Cultural Value Project, which called for critical reviews on existing bodies of research, methodologies and evidence relating to elements of cultural value (AHRC 2013).

Our interest in this area began with the 'Ages and Stages' project, an ongoing collaboration between Keele University and the New Vic Theatre, exploring the role of older people in the theatre and the impact theatre has had on older people's lives (Bernard et al. 2013). Our research, and that of others, led us to identify a gap in our knowledge: whilst we knew quite a lot about the practice of undertaking creative drama-based projects with older people, our conceptual and empirical understandings of how cultural value was viewed by the participants in these projects was much more limited. Building on the findings, experiences, learning and networks established through 'Ages and Stages', we proposed to conduct a review of literature to shed light on this issue.

The impetus for this project also derives from our commitment to critical gerontology and to what Holstein and Minkler (2007) have termed 'passionate scholarship'. Critical gerontology, combined with passionate scholarship, provides an important corrective to the negative and ageist assumptions which pervade our society. The review is also set against the wider background of developments in 'cultural gerontology' which, over the last decade, has been expanding gerontology and our understandings of later life considerably (Cole, Kastenbaum and Ray 2000). Cultural gerontology and critical gerontology together provide an approach which acknowledges the wider social and cultural context of ageing; engages with new theorising and new methodologies which cut across the social sciences and the humanities; and recognises the skills, abilities, contributions and life experiences of older people rather than automatically framing ageing as 'a problem to be solved' in contemporary society (Baars et al. 2006, 2013; Bernard and Scharf 2007; Ray and Cole, 2008).

It is also evident that literary and cultural scholars as well as social gerontologists have become 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; Johnson 2004; McMullan 2007; Small 2007). Theatre is a particularly fruitful context for such investigations not least because it is a cultural arena 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 itself; how this develops individuals; and the links this may or may not facilitate within communities and across generations.

In addition, 'cultural value' is itself a contested and debated term and there is a continuing lack of agreement over how to assess cultural value or what counts as valid evidence (O'Brien 2010). Holden (2004; 2006) delineates 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 asserts that all three elements are important and calls for analysis that not only focuses on quantifiable outcomes, but also affective experiences. The AHRC evidence review on 'the value of the arts and culture to people and society' (2014) asserts that the intrinsic should always be the starting point when talking about cultural value, but research is needed to demonstrate instrumental outcomes. Also, there can be a 'spillover' effect, whereby intrinsic values that can be seen as personal and private can have instrumental benefits in terms of cultivating citizenship and sense of community (AHRC 2014: 11). However, there is inherent difficulty in separating cultural value into these dimensions in the first place; more research is needed to problematise them and to explore the complex dynamics of cultural experiences and effects.

Forms of analysis of cultural value have also been debated. Some commentators focus on the potential of economic valuation methodologies to capture cultural value, stressing the compatibility of this type of evidence with policy maker agendas (Bakhshi 2012; Chapell 2014; O'Brien 2010). In contrast, Belfiore (2010) makes a call for more disinterested research (as opposed to advocacy driven research) that provides reflexive, open-ended critique. Holden (2006: 56) also calls for more *public* engagement in the conceptualisation and generation of cultural value.

The AHRC review (2014) 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 review presents a somewhat reductionist view of the potential cultural value of older people's participation in arts activities.

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. It is 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 this review was proposed.

Thus, the overarching research question this review was intended to address was:

*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?*

In order to answer this question, the review focuses on findings from research and practice, and on the methodologies, designs and conceptual frameworks that have been used.

## **Scope of the review**

The scope of this review had to be revised and broadened following initial searches. The first searches for literature looking specifically at how older people perceive the cultural value of their involvement in drama/theatre, brought up no results. '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. We therefore decided it would be necessary to broaden the search to look for literature and research focusing on the 'value' or 'benefits' of older people's drama involvement. We also included literature that explored these benefits from the viewpoint of practitioners and researchers as well as older people themselves.

77 articles, reports and books were found (dating from 1979-2014). Three of these are existing reviews: two in peer-reviewed journals (Castora-Binkley et al. 2010; Noice, Noice and Kramer 2013); and the third is a published report on the impact of participatory arts projects in the UK (Mental Health Foundation 2011).

## **Methodology summary**

We took a 'systematic approach' (Bryman 2012) to the literature and research so that we could be as transparent as possible about how our searches were conducted and/or the comprehensiveness of our coverage whilst, at the same time, being open to where our searches and networks led us. The PI (Miriam Bernard) and RA (Michelle Rickett) met at regular intervals to review progress and redefine search parameters where necessary.

Our strategy for searching and reviewing the published literature began with the sources we had already accumulated over the course of the 'Ages and Stages' project. These included literature sourced for journal articles and conference presentations, along with recommendations from the 'Ages and Stages' Advisory Group.

We then searched the following major academic 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.

Search terms included (in combination); old\*; age\*; eld\*; "later life"; AND drama\*; theatre/theater; acting; "senior theatre"; "reminiscence theatre"; "devised theatre"; "applied theatre"; "community theatre"; "intergenerational". Where large numbers of results were generated, we limited the search to relevant subjects/classifications (theatre/drama; cultural studies; gerontology; health studies; social care; psychology; sociology; education). We did not include or exclude literature according to chronological age categories (e.g. over 65). We included literature that identified participants as 'older people' with or without providing a specific age range. Some of the literature on dementia interventions did not refer to the age of participants, but these examples were included as it was clear that most people who took part were older. For practical purposes, we only selected studies published in English, but we were still able to include a range of international literature. After collating results from each database, we then cross-checked them and deleted all duplications.

We then consulted three existing reviews on the impact of participatory arts on older people (Castora-Binkley et al. 2010; Mental Health Foundation 2011; Noice, Noice and Kramer 2013), cross-referencing the studies they reviewed against those generated by our searches.

In order to cross check our searches and include as much 'grey' literature as possible, we then sent out e-mail requests to a number of organisations, asking for any references to literature and research focusing on older people's theatre and drama participation (see Appendix). The following organisation mailing lists were used:

- 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.

References generated through these requests were cross-referenced with, and if necessary added to, the results of our database searches and documents. A number of additional references were found through the e-mail requests, particularly relating to grey literature and information about ongoing projects.

# Results

## Overview of included literature

77 documents were selected for inclusion in the review. As well as existing reviews, research studies and evaluations (n=50), they also include descriptive accounts of older people's theatre making, featured as short pieces in journals, magazines and newspapers (n=27). This was in order to capture a greater diversity of experiences and to include more voices of practitioners.

As expected, 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. A number of studies were multidisciplinary. Practitioners included theatre and freelance drama workers; community groups; 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. Several studies brought together academic researchers with theatre companies, drama groups and practitioners.

The benefits of older people's involvement in theatre/drama were documented and evaluated in the literature we reviewed using a number of distinctive tools and methods. These included:

- RCTs (Randomised Controlled Trials), or pre- and post-intervention tests 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.
- Researcher/practitioner observational diaries.

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 and Savin-Baden 2013); while evaluation of the devised theatre 'Penelope Project' in Wisconsin, USA (Mello and Voigts 2013) took an arts-based action research and narrative inquiry approach, utilising visual records and artefacts alongside qualitative interviews and participant observation.

## Exclusions

We excluded the following areas of literature:



- Drama therapy: there is a wide literature on arts therapy for older people but our focus was on studies that did not take an explicitly therapeutic approach.
- Practical guides to producing seniors theatre and working with older people and drama.
- Literature not in English.
- Literature about arts/creative interventions with drama as just one component (e.g. arts workshops which include drama exercises alongside other arts forms).

## Existing reviews

As noted earlier, we consulted three existing reviews focused on the impact of participatory arts on older people (Castora-Binkley et al. 2010; Mental Health Foundation 2011; Noice, Noice and Kramer 2013). Two of these were written by academics based in the USA (Castora-Binkley et al. 2010; Noice, Noice and Kramer 2013) and one is by a UK health charity (Mental Health Foundation 2011). All three of the reviews included theatre/drama amongst the reviewed art forms. However, all three reviews found very small numbers of studies focused on theatre/drama. Noice, Noice and Kramer (2013) included 31 studies in total, 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 and Kramer 2013; Castora Binkley et al. 2010). All three reviews 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. Two of the three reviews (Castora-Binkley et al. 2010; Mental Health Foundation 2011) pointed out that the evidence is limited and there is a need for more empirical studies focused on the benefits of the arts for older people.

We also consulted 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 may therefore have changed substantially in the five years since it was published. The report focuses on case studies rather than research evidence per se, but also includes a section on 'personal/societal benefits' drawing from research literature. It concludes that the key documented benefits (of participatory arts generally) are to health (physical and mental) and relationships.

## Results table

The following results table separates the literature according to these four categories:

- Research articles and books (n=36)
- Evaluation reports (n=11)
- Descriptive overviews (n=27)
- Existing reviews (n=3)

## Results Table

### Research Articles and Books

Author/ year	Study theme	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 the growth of Senior Theatre in the 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. Also 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. 2014	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 aged 49- 92; younger people aged 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 the process of life review among older people who attended a theatre 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 – a series of planning workshops were facilitated by the researchers to assist the women in organising and managing the processes of their group.	Action research	Benefits or value of theatre participation are not discussed.
Coffman 1979	Postgraduate thesis exploring the use of creative drama with older people, including accounts of sessions held in Yellowstone County, Montana.	Various	Not specified	USA	PhD thesis.	Applied theatre (academic)	Enables older people to act out imagined or lost roles and achieve self-actualisation. Potential of drama as creative therapy.
Cutler 2009	Review of participatory arts projects with older people.	Various	Over 60	UK	Practice review.	Arts practice	Benefits to physical and emotional health and relationships.
Davis 1985	Report on the benefits of 17 session drama workshops for older people.	15	Aged 64-87. 13 women and 2 men.	USA	Exploratory study—quasi-experiment without control group. Content analysis of quotes by participants after each workshop session examining changes over time in four psychological states using the 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 (RBCT) performance about widowhood.	29	Aged 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. Evaluated by focus groups, questionnaires, facilitator notes, participant blogs and post-it note feedback.	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 review and performance group with bilingual elders in a community based organisation.	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.

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. Evaluated through 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 and 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	The opportunity to share joy and sorrow; enhanced communication and triggering memory for the patients; the opportunity for patients to share their knowledge and ability; beneficial effect on the 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; opportunity to 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 through 15 pre and 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	Aged 65-82	USA	4 week acting training programme, followed by rehearsals and performances. Single-group before-after design (pilot study).	Psychology	Improved recall and recognition.
Noice, Noice & Staines 2004	Exploration of effect of drama workshops on cognition.	124	Aged 60-86	USA	RCT. 4 weeks of theatre instruction. Theatre intervention group compared with visual arts intervention group 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	Aged 72-95; 13 females and 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	Aged 68-93; 80% women	USA	Repeat of Noice et al. (2004) but with older, less well-educated participants living in subsidised, primarily 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	Aged 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.

AGEING, DRAMA AND CREATIVITY

Pyman & Rugg 2006	Evaluation of participation in a music hall performance by a community theatre group.	8 (5 men, 3 women)	Aged over 60	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 was used to produce a drama to inspire discussion at a World Café event for older people.	46 world café participants	Aged 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 (covers intergenerational projects and projects for older people)	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 projects and those for older people.	UK	The article reviews: verbatim theatre by professional actors; older people's theatre developed and performed by groups of elders; inter-generational and inter-cultural work; therapeutic uses of reminiscence.	Theatre practice	Communicating older people's life experiences; therapeutic benefits; enhancing intergenerational and intercultural relationships.
Strimling 2004	Book. A guide to intergenerational theatre making, through 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	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). Evaluated by interviews, focus groups, participant-observation of workshops, ethno-drama, and 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. Evaluated through focus groups and analysis of organisational documents of the 'History Alive' project.	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 the psychological well-being and health-related quality of life of older adults.	12	Aged 62-88; 11 women, 1 man	USA	Single-group design - pretest and post-test and individual interviews. Programme included a 6-week acting class and four public performances.	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.



**Evaluation Reports**

<b>Author/ year</b>	<b>Study theme</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Age/ gender</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Design/ Methods</b>	<b>Academic discipline or area of practice</b>	<b>Key benefits/value</b>
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 arts 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. Evaluated through 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	Aged 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'. Evaluated through 132 evaluation questionnaires completed by residents; illustrative comments by participants; case studies	Theatre practice	Better communication (between staff and 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 (intergenerational - emphasis on people over 75)	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.	Between 4 and 11 year 7 schoolchildren (11 in total but only 4 attended all sessions) ; 15 members of	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.

		the Stepney Jewish Community Centre for Jewish Elders; 3 university students; 3 artists.					
Mayo & McAviney 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, performance, creative writing, visual art and craft. Several of the projects culminated in live performances. This document includes a research report utilising interview data 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. Evaluated through questionnaires, focus groups, depth interviews, participant 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. Evaluation methods included 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). Evaluated by interviews, focus groups, participant-observation of workshops, ethno-drama, and 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.

**Descriptive Overviews**

<b>Author/ year</b>	<b>Study theme</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Age/ gender (if specified)</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Design/ Methods</b>	<b>Academic discipline or area of practice</b>	<b>Key benefits/value</b>
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. Examples of their work and the techniques used are described.	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, and 3 from the skilled nursing facility.	Aged 40-92	USA	Descriptive account.	Unknown	Increased self-esteem and confidence.
Gerstle 1992	Highlights the activities of the life review theatre workshops that Elders Share the Arts (ESTA) conducts 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 an 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', an intergenerational theatre project to connect	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

	LGBTQ people of different generations in New York City, culminating in a devised theatre performance, 'Step Right Up'.						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	Aged 60-85; female	Australia	Writing and video workshops facilitated by researchers over a 3 year period. Culminated in a performance, '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 dementia to express themselves through the Elderflower programme in Scotland.	Unknown	Not specified	UK	Drama intervention in hospital wards by specially trained actors.	Dementia practice	Helping people with dementia to express themselves.
Killick 2010	Describes drama workshops run by the author in collaboration 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 supporting staff, and 18 volunteer drama workers.	Older members aged 60 and over; other ages unclear.	Hong Kong	Drama workshops and two performances, one on the theme of intergenerational understanding and the other on prevention of elder suicide. Pre-post evaluation.	Drama	Increased self-esteem; inter and intra-generational friendships and partnership.
Hennig 2008; Kandell	Several journal, magazine and newspaper articles describe the	Various	Not specified	USA	Drama classes for older people; performances;	Theatre practice	Improving quality of life; providing a 'safety valve' during life transitions and losses; giving performers a sense of self-worth and value;

2006; Newhouse 2007; Schiffman 2000; Toder 2013	work of Stagebridge, the oldest senior theatre company in the USA.				workshops		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	Provides a number of living history programmes. Includes living history workshop programmes, performances and festivals; multicultural and intergenerational storytelling programmes.	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 in 2011. An oral history project, 'Grandchildren of the Blitz', provided data used to produce a devised theatre performance.	200 people involved in stage 1 (showing and gathering reminiscences); 25 in stage 2 (workshops and devising); 40 in stage 3 (script writing).	Not specified (intergenerational - older people and schoolchildren)	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.
Pflanzer 1992	Description of the JASA Theatre Ensemble, an older adult performing group that provides	8 actors (4 men and 4 women)	Not specified	USA	Performances	Theatre practice	Dramatising and challenging clichéd images and stereotypes.

	politics and poetry for its audience.						
Provus & Verson 1986	Description of 'Acting Up!', a group of older people who perform skits about ageing and provide workshops.	Unknown	Aged 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 issues and improve practice around night time care for people with dementia and older people in general.	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, evaluated through a 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.



**Existing Reviews**

<b>Author/year</b>	<b>Type of study</b>	<b>Number of studies reviewed</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Academic discipline or area of practice</b>	<b>Key findings</b>
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	Aged 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	Aged 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	Aged over 60	Various	Theatre and Psychology	Overwhelmingly positive cognitive/affective/quality of life outcomes for various participatory art forms (including theatre/drama).

After collation, the documents were also categorised and analysed thematically, as follows:

- Critical reviews (n=3)
- Review of UK participatory arts projects (n=1)
- Devised productions (n=9)
- Drama programmes and workshops (n=11)
- Intergenerational (n=9)
- Pre-existing theatre groups (n=15)
- Reflective studies and overviews (n=7)
- Reminiscence (n=5)
- Theatre and drama in care settings (n=16)
- Volunteers (n=1)

The following sections discuss the included documents according to these thematic categories.

### **Devised productions**

*9 documents were focused on devised productions. The first 4 publications below discuss devised theatre productions actively involving older people in the creative process.*

In a short descriptive article, Kamler (2001) discusses the 'Stories of Ageing' project in Australia, which explored what ageing means from the point of view of older women. Over three years, researchers worked together with 40 women aged 60-85 in writing and video workshops to produce stories that captured the experience of growing older, culminating in a multimedia performance, 'We're not nice little old ladies', performed in a community theatre setting. The value of this project was its affirmation that learning can happen throughout the life course and that ageing is a process of both change and growth. Older 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.

Palmar and Nascimento (2002) provide a short overview of the 'Health Action Theatre by Seniors' (HATS) project in Toronto, Canada. A troupe of older adults from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds use interactive theatre to address issues such as elder abuse, gambling, mental health, substance abuse, home and street safety, nutrition, environment, and caregiving. In this example, drama enables a new form of communication between diverse groups: by producing largely mimed plays, linguistic barriers are overcome and audiences are actively involved by entering into discussion with actors and facilitators about issues addressed in the plays.

Mello and Voigts (2013) evaluate 'The Penelope Project', a devised theatre project based on the story of Penelope in Homer's *Odyssey*. The project took place within Luther Manor, a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) in Wisconsin in the US, and brought residents and staff together with members of a theatre company (the Sojourn Theatre Company) and students and staff from a local university (the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee). Residents took part in the project in a number of ways, including

acting, weaving, art making, letter writing and decorating Penelope's room. The project was evaluated through qualitative methods including evaluation questionnaires, focus groups, depth interviews, participant observation, video recordings and document analysis. 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' (57). The staff at Luther Manor also frequently mentioned a sense of challenge and 'stretching' themselves, which was initially discomfiting but led to a positive, 'transformative' experience. The project also enhanced a sense of connectedness and togetherness between residents and staff. Students valued the sense of community they derived from their involvement in the project, identified similarities between themselves and older participants and felt that their assumptions about older people had been challenged and transformed. The production also encouraged reflection and empathy amongst audience members. Audience members tended to comment either on the community-based aspect of the production or its aesthetic quality.

Bernard et al. (2014) discuss the 'Ages and Stages' project, which comprised archival research, 79 interviews (with 95 individuals) and 10 focus groups with older people involved in the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, UK. This research data was then used to devise a theatre production about the role of theatre in older people's lives, *Our Age, Our Stage*, performed by an intergenerational group. The research 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.

*A further 5 publications discuss devised theatre productions made for older people's consumption as audience members.*

A study by Boggs and Leptak (1991) in the USA explores the effect of a theatre performance about old age on older audience members. Structured interviews were conducted with 13 audience members. The project revealed the particular quality of drama in provoking and facilitating reminiscence.

*I'm Still Here* was a Canadian research-led drama production exploring the experiences of people and families living with dementia. The production was performed for a number of audiences comprising people with dementia, their families and health professionals. The performances were evaluated through pre- and post-performance focus groups and questionnaires (Mitchell et al. 2006; 2011). Researchers identified seven 'patterns of synergy' provoked by the performance: seeing anew; connecting with reverberating truths; placing and relating the self; sensing embodied impact and discerning meaningful learning; expanding understanding of perspective; and affirming personal knowing. They conclude that the play has a transformative effect on audiences: as a result of 'experiencing' the play, audiences view people with dementia in a more positive way – and 'seeing *differently* gives rise to different ways of *being with*.'

In a similar vein, Kontos and Naglie (2007) explore the effects of a dramatic production about Alzheimer's disease on health practitioner audience members. The Canadian production was created from ethnographic research on personhood in Alzheimer's. Although older people were not involved in the devising or performing process, the project is included in this review as older people's experiences formed the core of the production. Its value was largely related to its relevance to practice: through six focus groups and post-performance questionnaires, practitioners expressed that it was relevant to their work, increased their understanding and effectively utilised drama as an educational tool.

Ritch and Brennan (2010) discuss a dramatic production about older people's views of financial products, used as a trigger to inspire discussion at a UK World Café event for older people. After watching the production, participants discussed it in circulating groups. The researchers conclude that the drama was successful in introducing a potentially sensitive topic in a relaxed manner and focusing participants' thoughts.

Feldman et al. (2011) discuss audience responses to a devised theatre production about widowhood staged in venues in Victoria, Australia. 29 older people completed quantitative questionnaires incorporating semi-structured qualitative sections. Results showed that the majority of participants found the performance enjoyable, true to life, of high quality, and a useful way of learning about widowhood.

## **Drama programmes and workshops**

*11 publications are focused on discrete drama training programmes and workshops: 10 of these are research papers or evaluations and the final one discussed below is a short overview.* This category includes programmes and workshops that do not fit into the other themed categories (e.g. the 'theatre and drama in care settings' category, which also includes examples of drama programmes).

Osgood (1984), and Clark and Osgood (1985), report on an RCT comprising pre- and post-tests on 103 older people who participated in a weekly theatre programme for ten months in Virginia, USA. 95% of participants were black. Participants were matched to a comparison group of 27 non-participants. Test score results showed that participants were happier and less lonely than non-participants. These subjective feelings are associated with the opportunity to express feelings, become close as a group, experience 'joy and excitement' and make lasting friendships. Participants at five sites also identified themselves as feeling younger than non-participants.

Davis (1985) explores the effect of participation in 17 drama workshops for older adults in the USA. Quotes provided by participants after each session were content-analysed to examine changes in psychological states, and revealed a downward trend on anxiety and one measure of hostility. In a broader article, Davis (1987) outlines the emotional, expressive, and social benefits of drama programmes. Personal and social benefits include increased self-confidence, cooperation, communication skills, self-expression, relaxation and sense of accomplishment, and decreased anxiety, boredom, self-

centredness and focus on physical discomforts. Davis also asserts that older people's theatre can help combat ageism through sharing performances with audiences.

In the USA, Helga and Tony Noice have conducted a number of studies over a 20 year period, exploring the cognitive and psychological effects of older people's participation in drama workshops and training using pre- and post-participation tests. Two of the four articles included in this review are studies conducted with community dwelling older people (Noice et al. 1999; Noice, Noice and Staines 2004): one a pilot study and one a full study with 124 participants. The full study included three groups: theatre, art appreciation, and a non-treatment control group. After four weeks of theatre instruction, the theatre group showed significant improvements in cognition, recall, word generation, problem solving and psychological well-being when compared to the control group. The singing group also improved, but less significantly and in fewer areas. Participants were tested again four months after the intervention and cognitive improvements had been maintained.

Lepp et al. (2003) report on a weekly drama workshop programme for dementia patients and their carers in a care home in Sweden, which took place over two months. 12 patients (10 women and 2 men) with moderate and severe dementia, and their seven female caregivers, participated in the programme. The programme was evaluated through a focus group with the caregivers. The benefits of the programme, as articulated by the carers, were: the opportunity to share joy and sorrow; enhanced communication and triggering memory for the patients; and the opportunity for patients to share their knowledge and ability. Carers also reported that this had a beneficial effect on their relationship with the patients in their daily lives, as patients expressed themselves more openly, grew in self-confidence and had increased interest in their surroundings, and the carers both reflected on, and felt confirmed in, their role.

Yuen et al. (2011) evaluate the effect on well-being of participation in the 'Seasoned Arts at the Samford For You' (SAASY) programme in the USA, which included a six-week acting class and four performances. Analysis was through pre- and post-tests and interviews with participants: participants completed the General Wellbeing Schedule (GWBS) and the 36-Item Short-Form Health Survey (SF-36) at the beginning of the programme, and one month after it ended, and were interviewed to explore the perceived impact of the theatre programme on their well-being. Results showed improvement in psychological well-being and health-related quality of life, most notably in the physical health component of the SF-36. Participants also reported increased self-worth and self-advocacy. The researchers suggest that further research is needed to validate the findings, utilising a wait-listed control group and collection of outcomes both immediately after participation, and three months later.

Savin-Baden et al. (2013) and Wimpenny and Savin-Baden (2013) report on an arts-based evaluation of a drama intervention by the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry. 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. Evaluation methods included interviews, focus groups, participant-observation of workshops, ethno-

drama, and sharing photographs and artefacts. This is one of only two research studies in this review using arts-based methods of evaluation (see also Mello and Voigts 2013). The evaluation revealed that participation provided opportunities for diverse marginalised members of a community to connect and participate in a shared activity and transform their views of themselves and others in ways that were beneficial for health and wellbeing. Participants' 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.

In a short descriptive piece, Wiener (2009) describes two UK theatre projects with older people (facilitated by the Lawrence Batley Theatre in Huddersfield) which challenged stereotypes about ageing through performance, and enabled participants to develop their creativity.

## **Intergenerational**

*9 documents were selected, of which 6 were substantial articles or reports and 3 were shorter descriptions.*

Magic Me, a UK intergenerational arts charity, has conducted and evaluated a number of arts projects and programmes with participants in care homes, community centres, universities, schools and other community settings (Magic Me 2005; Mayo and McAvinchey 2013; McAvinchey and Gilfoy 2009). Magic Me programmes incorporate a number of art forms, but there are also distinct projects utilising theatre and drama. The documented value of these projects include enabling people of different ages to explore similarities and differences in a secure space; building intergenerational and intercultural relationships; combatting social isolation; and challenging age related assumptions.

- 'All in the same boat' (Magic Me 2005) was an intergenerational drama project in London, bringing together older people from a community centre for Jewish elders with Year 7 schoolchildren from a local school. Through a series of drama workshops facilitated by Magic Me theatre artists and local university students, this multi-generational, multi-ethnic, multi-faith group explored how, despite their differences, they were 'in the same boat'. The benefits of the project (assessed through written reflections by students and participants) included increased communication and understanding across generations, increased social networks (particularly for older people), and the development of more positive attitudes towards older people (for the younger participants).
- 'Our Generations' (2009) was a three year programme of intergenerational arts projects in East London between 2006 and 2009. It is included in this review as drama was a key component of four of the projects. Two of these projects brought together schoolchildren and older people in care settings to explore the themes of 'special occasions' and 'adventures' through workshops incorporating drama, storytelling, puppetry and music. The other two projects brought together schoolchildren, university students and older people to produced devised performances focusing on themes of intergenerational relationships and learning. The

evaluation report, by Dr Caoimhe McAvinchey of Goldsmiths, University of London, focuses largely on practice recommendations but also illustrates the value of the programme in developing relationships and camaraderie across generations, providing learning opportunities for both older and younger people, and challenging stereotypes and promoting intergenerational understanding.

- 'Wild Wild Women' (Mayo and McAvinchey 2013) reports on ten years of intergenerational arts projects with women-only in London. The projects were externally evaluated through semi-structured individual and group interviews with participants, partners and artists. Though the projects incorporated a number of different art forms, the report is included in this review as several projects culminated in live performances. Also, and importantly, McAvinchey's report explores the significance of working with a women-only intergenerational group. The projects engaged participants in exploring 'what it is to be a woman in this world now' (115); provided a safe space to bring women of different generations and cultural backgrounds together to explore and discuss issues of feminism and women's history; and had a positive, transformative effect on women's views of themselves and their capabilities.

Hafford-Letchfield et al. (2010) discuss the process and evaluation of a UK intergenerational drama project exploring older people's sexuality. The project 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. A formal evaluation was conducted using focus groups, questionnaires, participant blog entries, and participant feedback left on post-it notes. The documented benefits of this project include what the authors term 'feelgood factors' through intergenerational participation and learning; and the capacity of drama to enhance learning in relation to sensitive subjects, particularly through freeing the imagination and role play. Digital learning materials were produced to be used in social work programmes.

*On Ageing* (Johnson 2011) was a devised theatre production put together by UK theatre companies Fevered Sleep and the Young Vic and performed at the Young Vic in 2010. The production focused on the experience of growing older. Interviews with older people were used as the basis of the production, in which older people's words were spoken by young children, interspersed with the thoughts of the children themselves about getting older. Evaluation of this production was through participant observation, focus groups, depth interviews, an online survey, and analysis of a research and development archive. The results show that the production facilitated reflection on ageing both for participants and audience members. The production also encouraged people to question assumptions about ageing. However, in this case, older and younger participants were somewhat separate in the theatrical process, with the final production performed only by children.

The 'History Alive' intergenerational theatre project in Taiwan (Yang 2013) brought older people together with a university drama group and schoolchildren. The project was evaluated through focus group interviews and analysis of organisational documents. Results suggest that drama can enable older adults to 'play new roles' and share

experiences. The intergenerational component enabled older and younger people to get to know one another and challenged stereotypes held by both groups.

Short overview articles describe the following:

- Kwok (2003) describes the formation of the Hong Kong based 'All Age Drama Group', comprising people aged over 60, youth members, social workers, and volunteer drama workers. A pre-post evaluation revealed benefits in terms of increased self-esteem; inter and intra-generational friendships; and a sense of partnership across generations.
- Petherbridge and Kendall (2012) describe an intergenerational community theatre project by the London Bubble Theatre Company. The project involved devising and performing a theatre production, *Blackbirds*, generated from a large scale oral history project, 'Grandchildren of the Blitz'. Over two hundred people took part in the oral history project which brought together schoolchildren and older people; 25 community actors participated in the performance and a group of 40 people worked together to develop the script. The project was evaluated by researchers from the Centre for Urban Community Research at Goldsmiths, University of London. Benefits included building relationships across generations and tackling issues that keep generations apart; providing an opportunity to exchange skills and stories; enhanced sense of well-being and purpose; and providing a 'space for participation, engagement and active citizenship' (306).
- 'Bridging the Gap' was an intergenerational theatre project connecting LGBTQ people in New York City (Houseal, Ray and Teitelbaum 2013). Facilitated by three MA students in Applied Theatre from the City University of New York (CUNY) School of Professional Studies, the project culminated in the performance of a devised theatre production, *Step Right Up*. The project enabled participants to identify and challenge age related stereotypes and both start and share dialogue across generations through drama.

### **Pre-existing senior and intergenerational theatre groups**

*15 articles and books were focused on pre-existing theatre groups. Most of these (13) were short descriptive overviews, 1 is a book about a particular theatre company and 1 is a research paper.*

The book, *Roots and Branches* (Strimling 2004), is both a practical guide to making intergenerational theatre and the story of a particular theatre and its members. It describes the value of intergenerational theatre as a means of fostering community and bridging the differences between old and young people. 'Roots and Branches' is one of the key senior theatre companies in the USA and was originally founded by Strimling in 1990 to bring together a group of older actors (the 'roots') and student actors from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts (the 'branches'). The company is based in New York and continues to produce original plays inspired by improvisations and storytelling in intergenerational workshops.



The research paper by Pyman and Rugg (2006), evaluates the production of an old time music hall performance by an existing community theatre group. The evaluation was conducted through eight semi-structured interviews with older people aged over 60, including performers and production crew. The perceived benefits of participation included developing social connections, knowledge, skills and attitudes, and personal enrichment.

Short overview articles describe the following projects:

- Provus and Verson (1986) describe 'Acting Up', a group of older people who perform skits about ageing and provide workshops in Skokie Park, Illinois. They assert that the programme enables participants to find an emotional outlet and express their feelings.
- Perlstein (1986; 1988; 1991; 1997; 1998-1999) has written several accounts of the work of 'Elders Share the Arts' (ESTA) in New York, a living history programme that brings older adults together with young people and schoolchildren through interactive storytelling activities. Perlstein is a key figure in the senior theatre movement in the USA, and the ESTA programme has been running since 1979. The benefits of the programme include 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. Gerstle (1992) also describes life review theatre workshops conducted by ESTA in New York. One participant describes the value of her participation as a performer as follows: 'I felt I could do anything. I felt light and alive and ageless' (363). Gerstle asserts that participation provides a tool for older people to find meaning and identity, which promotes sense of well-being. It also provides 'a forum (to) harness creative energies in a supportive environment.' (364)
- Pflanzler (1992), co-founder of New York's Jewish Association for Services for the Aged (JASA) Theatre Ensemble, describes the group's processes and experiences. Themes for JASA performances included: experiences of anti-Semitism; childhood memories; older people's experiences with doctors and medical treatment; the 'ordinary' lives of older people; and images and stereotypes of older and younger people (an intergenerational collaboration with NYU's Tisch School of the Arts). For JASA members, the value of participation was a sense of empowerment and the opportunity to challenge and disrupt age related stereotypes.
- 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 (Hennig 2008; Kandell 2006; Newhouse 2007; Schiffman 2000; Toder 2013). The benefits of participation, articulated by performers, include 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'.

## Reflective studies and overviews

*7 publications provide reflective overviews of senior theatre groups and productions.*

A postgraduate thesis by Coffman (1979) explores the physical, verbal and emotional aspects of drama projects with older people, including accounts of drama sessions in Yellowstone County, Montana. The author asserts that drama can enable disengaged older people to act out imagined or lost roles and achieve self-actualisation. Drama can also be used as creative therapy.

Basting (1995) analysed the growth of the senior theatre movement in the USA, concluding that it was moving towards greater professionalisation and politicisation of ageing. In this respect, the cultural 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. In her later book, *Stages of Age*, Basting (1998: 2) describes eight performances in the USA by older people 'that construct their own unique meanings of old age'. This is one of the only publications in this review that specifically explores the cultural and aesthetic value of older people's theatre making. Basting's analysis focuses 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' and explores and critiques the positioning of age as a 'category of difference'.

The 'Older Women's Network' (with headquarters in Italy) produced an edited collection about older women's drama groups around the world (Marziali and Topalian 1997). A common thread in the collection is the potential of theatre to transform participants' and audience members' views of themselves and others; and the role of drama as a conduit for sharing and reflecting on experiences, empowering and giving a sense of value to participants.

Vorenberg (1999) discusses the senior theatre movement in the USA and around the globe. She asserts that there are benefits at an individual and community level, and that younger people are enabled to connect with older people in an emotional way.

A PhD thesis by Koehler (2002) provides a critical review of three musically oriented senior theatre performances, two in the USA and one in Canada, exploring their production of images of later life. The performances exhibited different kinds of cultural value: a musical revue provided idealised, nostalgic images of older people; a street theatre production created a sense of community and a 'call to action', claiming the citizenship of older people; and a musical theatre production was effective in sharing stories and reminiscence.

Barnes Lipscomb (2012) explores potential intersections between theatre and age studies, and contends that theatre is a promising site for bringing together critical, performative and narrative approaches to the understanding of age. As part of her

analysis, she uses two senior theatre case studies: *ElderSpeak*, a play by Jeanette Stevens of the senior theatre company 'Silver Stage Players', which explores older people's experiences of ageist attitudes, drawing from the stories of members of a local senior centre; and *The Blue Review*, a selection of musical numbers and 'sketches' with a blue theme, by the 'Sarasota Silver Stars'. Barnes Lipscomb highlights the potential of older people's theatre to challenge ageist stereotypes, make a call for social change, and empower other older people (as audiences) to 'identify and challenge ageism in their everyday lives' (130). She calls for more academic analysis of senior theatre: 'a woefully under-researched and under-theorised' branch of the arts (131).

## Reminiscence

*5 documents were selected, 4 of which were substantial articles, books or evaluations.*

Halperin (2001) explores a project in the USA which utilised drama as an example of 'purposeful activity' to cultivate community. A life review and performance group was established for bilingual elders within a community-based organisation, enabling the group to explore their commonalities and differences, develop a sense of shared identity and take risks. The article asserts the value of 'expressive activity' in enabling groups to exercise self-determination.

A decade ago, the UK National Creative Ageing Project (2002-2005) facilitated by 'Age Exchange', involved ten reminiscence arts projects and four creative arts residencies. Though the project involved a number of art forms in the devising stage, theatre and drama were the major form of communication. The evaluation of this project (Arigho 2005) asserts that reminiscence can be linked successfully with the arts within care settings. It also draws attention to the importance of risk taking for older people, when this takes place with safeguarding, monitoring and support.

Pam Schweitzer, former Director of 'Age Exchange', produced a book length guide to reminiscence theatre, drawing on her experiences and exploring the benefits and value to participants. These include 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 a 'community of memory'. Schweitzer (2013) has also more recently written a 30 year retrospective about reminiscence theatre, charting its different uses, audiences and the central importance of communicating older people's life experiences.

A further short descriptive piece by Schweitzer (2004), discusses reminiscence projects with older people from ethnic minorities. Schweitzer suggests that these projects can create a 'community of experience' amongst participants and enable them to share their experiences and cultural heritage with each other and with younger family members. They can also increase the self-worth of participants and the sense of identity of younger family members.

## Theatre and drama in care settings

*16 documents refer to drama projects with older people in care settings. 9 are substantial studies or evaluations and 7 are short descriptive overviews.*

Two evaluations (Lyons and Gage 2014; London Centre of Dementia Care 2009) and two short descriptive articles (Benson 2009; Hopkins 2003) refer to work by the UK theatre group, 'Ladder to the Moon', which delivers theatre interventions in care homes.

- The London Centre for Dementia Care (2009) was commissioned to evaluate a two-week drama residency by 'Ladder to the Moon' at the Rathmore House Care Home. During the residency, 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. Evaluation data was collected through film, photographs, surveys, focus groups, interviews, and structured observation. The key benefit was improvement in the well-being of residents, seen through increased self-esteem; increased emotive responses; an enhanced sense of community between residents and staff; the opportunity for creative expression; and improved communication and social connections. There was also some evidence for long-term benefit: an edited DVD of the residency was played to residents six months later and they responded very positively, becoming more engaged, humming, singing and smiling.
- Lyons and Gage (2014) evaluated a two-month intervention by 'Ladder to the Moon' at an extra care housing development in London in 2009. Staff and residents chose to recreate the musical, 'Sound of Music'. Evaluation methods included analysis of 132 questionnaires in which participants were asked to rate themselves according to various criteria before and after the programme, as well as illustrative quotes from participants and case studies. Benefits of the project included better communication (between staff and between staff, residents and families); improved quality of life, confidence, ability to make choices and community involvement for residents.
- Hopkins (2003) describes 'Ladder to the Moon's' reminiscence work in an older patients' ward in a south London hospital. The benefits were empowering patients to tell their stories; improvement in atmosphere; and a chance to have fun.
- Benson (2009) provides a descriptive overview of 'Ladder to the Moon's' interactive theatre interventions in care homes and day centres. The key benefits of this work are enhanced relationships and strengthened sense of community. However, Benson cautions that use of interactive role play also has the potential to cause confusion for residents with dementia.

Noice and Noice (2006; 2009) report on two drama interventions in continuing care facilities focused on the cognitive effects of theatre instruction for older people. These studies differed in significant ways to the Noices' previous studies with community dwelling older people. 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).

Fritsch et al. (2009) explore the impact of 'TimeSlips', a creative expression intervention programme, on nursing home residents with dementia and their caregivers in the USA. The 'TimeSlips' programme encourages people with dementia to be involved in creative storytelling through photo and word prompts. The benefits of the programme were explored through an observational study, comparing ten nursing homes that took part in 'TimeSlips' with a control group of ten homes that did not participate. Two weeks after the 'TimeSlips' intervention, researchers conducted four days of observation and asked staff to complete a survey. Results showed that residents with dementia in the intervention sites were more engaged and alert, and there were more interactions between residents and staff. Staff in intervention sites had more positive views of residents and devalued them less than in the control sites. The article acknowledges that further research needs to be completed to understand the processes through which 'TimeSlips' improves care environments. 'TimeSlips' founder, Anne Basting (2013), also provides an account of the history and processes of 'TimeSlips', using case studies. She draws attention to the importance of focusing on 'imagination' rather than 'memory' when working with people with dementia, through using improvisation techniques. Basting asserts that the approach of 'TimeSlips' 'can teach us to focus on the person with dementia, to recognize the person's capacity for growth, meaning, engagement, and, perhaps most importantly, their ability to teach us valuable lessons about life.' (5)

Nicholson (2011) provides an overview of theatre practices with older people in care settings in the UK, focusing on participants' views of 'home'. She asserts the value of drama in triggering reminiscence, as well as the challenges and ethical dilemmas of this approach. She also considers the potential role of drama in enabling care home residents to negotiate 'home-making', in conjunction with staff and artist facilitators.

'Hearts and Minds' was a three year project by Age Exchange Theatre Trust, comprising a programme of creative reminiscence workshops with people with dementia and related health issues living in residential care in South London, in the UK. Although the programme used a number of arts techniques, one of the key components was the production of a theatre performance and, for this reason, it was judged to fit within the remit of this review. The programme was formally evaluated by researchers at Royal Holloway, University of London, using interviews, participant observation of project workshops, a literature review, workshops with key stakeholders, ethnographies of place and space mapping (Nicholson et al. 2013). The evaluation is largely focused on recommendations for practice, but it also highlights the cultural value of the programme in promoting person-centred care and encouraging listening to, and understanding the life-histories of, older people in residential care.

'Storybox' is a participatory theatre project by the Library Theatre in Manchester, comprising workshops for people with dementia in residential, clinical and day care settings. This intervention uses a number of arts approaches, incorporating drama and story-telling with singing, poetry and crafts to cater to different interests. However, as drama and story-telling are key components, it was judged to fit within the remit of this

review. The project was evaluated through interviews with people with dementia and their carers, as well as observation and artist diaries (Harries 2013). 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.

Short overviews were found about the following projects:

- DeBrine (1983) describes the participation of clients at a residential home in New York in a senior adult theatre, the 'Lilac Variety Players'. The programme fulfilled participants' need for an activity and helped improve their self-esteem and confidence.
- Killick (2003) describes the 'Elderflower' programme in Scotland, through which specially trained actors help dementia patients in hospital wards to express themselves.
- Killick (2010) also reports on drama workshops run by the author and the Scottish Dementia Working Group. 'Funshops' were run in five centres, involving 44 people with dementia and 18 staff from Alzheimer's Scotland. The key value of the Funshops is the opportunity they provide for people to relax into a carefree state of mind and to laugh with each other.
- Walker (2011) discusses an audio play, *Night and Day*, produced by 'Forum Interactive' and commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. 'Forum Interactive' is an organisation that uses drama and storytelling to influence attitudes and behaviour in work settings. The play was developed and used in care homes across the UK to develop person-centred care practice. In two care homes, the play was used as the basis for a two-hour workshop for staff, residents and families to enable them to share experiences, discuss issues and improve practice around night time care for people with dementia and older people in general. The key value of this intervention was the encouragement of empathy by actively engaging workshop participants in the experience and viewpoint of others.
- Worley and Henderson (1995) report on a drama group exploring the issue of dying, which took place in a continuing care retirement community in Oregon, USA. A devised performance was developed in collaboration with a local university and performed to residents. The first performance was evaluated through an evaluation questionnaire for audience members. The value of this intervention was the opportunity to openly discuss issues of loss and death, making audience members feel less alone in their fears and concerns.

## Volunteers

Just one publication (Burden 2000) was found which focused on older people linked with theatre as volunteers. This reports on an action research project in Brisbane, Australia, which was set in a community theatre run by older female volunteers. It involved a series of researcher-led planning workshops to assist the women in organising and managing the processes of their group. The article is primarily focused on developing a theoretical perspective on volunteering rather than on the specificities of the theatre setting or the value of participating in theatre in this way.

## Discussion

### Strength of the evidence

The searches for this review generated a relatively large number of results, but this was because the remit for inclusion was very broad. As well as research studies and formal evaluations, we also included descriptive and anecdotal overviews about particular projects. This was in order to encompass examples of grey literature and practitioner perspectives, including magazine and newspaper articles, and short journal pieces. A number of included documents provided 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 the analysis, a more rigorous selection process would have produced very few results and would not have been appropriate for this under-developed field.

The results show a sharp increase in this literature from 2000, with a third of all the included documents written since 2010. Numbers of documents per decade are as follows:

<b>Decade</b>	<b>No of studies</b>
1970-1979	1
1980-1989	8
1990-1999	12
2000-2009	29
2010-2014	25

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 and specifically explored the value of drama in bringing women together, increasing their self-esteem and sense of value, encouraging positive self-identity, and exploring and performing the social, economic and political dimensions of women's experiences (Kamler 2001; Marziali and Topalian 1997; Mayo and McAvinchey 2013), but none compared the experiences of older men and women taking part in drama. Consequently, we are unable to adequately assess the gendered dimensions of older people's experiences in this area.

A number of documents refer to drama projects that intentionally brought people together from different racial and cultural backgrounds (Halperin 2001; Magic Me 2005; McAvinchey and Gilfoy 2009; Mayo and McAvinchey 2013; Palmar and Nascimento 2002; Schweitzer 2004; 2007; 2013). These projects explore the value of drama in providing a space for intercultural dialogue. However, they do not provide comparative analyses of the experiences of people from different racial and cultural backgrounds. Also, the vast majority of included literature is focused on studies, projects and groups based in the UK and North America with just three studies from Australia, one from Hong Kong, one from Taiwan, one from Sweden and one book by the 'Older Women's Network' (OWN), which

provides seven national case studies. This lack of diversity limits our understanding of what role race and cultural background may play, if any, on older people's involvement in theatre and drama.

There is also little evidence comparing the experiences of older drama participants of different ages or generations. An 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 and Staines 2004), and older-old participants living in subsidised housing (Noice and Noice 2006; 2009); showing similar cognitive improvements in each case.

On the whole, 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. There are no analyses of age and generation in these contexts. Some of the older people's theatre groups and projects covered in the literature are in themselves intergenerational due to the age span of participants. The current literature does not explore the value of bringing together older people of different ages and generations to compare their experiences.

A number of included documents focus on drama projects for older people who are perceived to be marginalised or excluded. This includes 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.

Only one article focused on the involvement of older people as theatre volunteers (despite the high levels of participation of older people in this role), and in this case analysis was focused on understanding volunteering as a general phenomenon rather than the theatre context.

## **Methodologies**

One of our original aims was to explore the methodologies used to analyse the value of older people's participation in theatre and drama. The included literature comprises a range of research methods, both quantitative and qualitative. However, older people have generally not been asked to reflect on the cultural value of their participation in a broad way. In many cases, they are specifically directed to articulate their experience in terms of its benefit to their health and well-being. Another strong focus is the impact of drama participation on group relationships.

Only one study compared drama participation with another art form (Noice, Noice and Staines 2004) and three used control groups comparing drama participants with non-participants (Clark and Osgood 1985; Fritsch et al 2013; Noice, Noice and Staines 2004;



Osgood 1984). It is therefore difficult to elucidate the specific benefits and value of drama when compared to other activities.

Research has not been conducted on the long-term effects of drama and theatre participation. Though a number of studies focusing on 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. There is also little data on the value of long-term participation in existing older people's theatre and drama groups.

Interestingly, only two studies explicitly take an arts-based approach to the evaluation of participants' experiences (Savin-Baden et al. 2013; Wimpenny and Savin-Baden 2013; Mello and Voigts 2013). This is a methodological area that could be much more developed in relation to older people's drama participation, and may help to capture some of the less tangible elements of their experiences. Our linked, AHRC funded research development award (Bernard and Rezzano, 2014), is utilising performance as a method of evaluating older people's experiences and perceptions of cultural value after taking part in drama workshops and performances, and establishing a theatre company, as part of the 'Ages and Stages' programme. Older participants have been involved in the evaluation as co-researchers, interviewing each other about their experiences, then collaborating with the researchers to produce short performance pieces to 'show' the results.

### **Theoretical/conceptual frames**

As expected, the included literature covers a wide range of disciplinary perspectives and methodological approaches. However, only a small minority of studies explicitly identify a theoretical or conceptual framework guiding their work. The lack of focus on theory limits the development of this research field and its capacity to contribute to wider discourses around ageing, the arts and cultural value.

### **The cultural value of older people's drama and theatre participation**

From the studies we have reviewed, the strongest evidence base for the value of older people's participation in drama and theatre appears to be focused around three areas: benefits to health and well-being; opportunities for learning and creative expression; and improving group relationships. This fits most closely with what Holden (2004; 2006) terms the 'instrumental' element of cultural value: its social and economic benefit. However, it also incorporates elements of intrinsic value: the subjective and transformative effects of drama on people's lives and viewpoints. A fourth area, the aesthetic value and quality of older people's drama, has been touched upon in the literature but is under-researched to date.

## **Health and well-being**

The work of Helga and Tony Noice provides strong evidence for the cognitive value of older people's involvement in drama workshops and training. Evidence over a 20 year period, comparing participants' cognitive skills before and after participation in discrete drama training programmes, consistently shows improvements in cognitive functioning, memory, word generation and comprehension, and problem solving.

A number of studies report improvements in older people's mental health, 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; increased sense of value and purpose. They also frequently associate drama 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. However, more research is needed to understand and capture these qualities, as well as the potential impact they may have on other elements of people's lives.

## **Group relationships**

A significant proportion of the included literature focuses on the role of drama in enhancing or transforming group relationships. This element relates particularly to four types of drama project: 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. The value of these projects is their ability to enable people to exchange stories and experiences, and develop positive views of themselves and others. This increases trust, communication and understanding, and produces a sense of togetherness amongst participants. Dramatic role play and devising are particularly effective in producing a safe space for expressing and challenging age related stereotypes, and finding commonalities and accepting differences. These types of project often involve marginalised older people and therefore also help to combat social exclusion. However, more research is needed to explore the specific processes through which theatre and drama encourage this kind of reflection, empathy and transformation, both for participants and audience members.

Another important aspect of drama participation is the opportunity 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).

## **Learning and creativity**

Participants, researchers and practitioners frequently express the value of drama in providing opportunities for learning and creative expression for older people. Learning partly relates to the Noices' research on 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 is a particularly valuable dimension 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 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**

Very little research focuses on the aesthetic quality of older people's drama: its intrinsic cultural value. Anne Basting's research (1995; 1998) explores this element, particularly in reference to the power and complexity of images of age and ageing produced by older people's performances. However, more analysis is needed in this area. Similarly, the aesthetic value of devised productions based on research with older people could also be explored. Mitchell et al. (2006; 2011) refer to the 'power and influence' of a devised play about dementia and its ability to create moments of recognition and transformation for audience members. Further research could focus on the particular aesthetic qualities of devised theatre that encourage this response.

## Conclusion and Implications

The reviewed evidence highlights the benefits of older people's drama participation particularly in terms of health and well-being, improved group relationships, and opportunities for learning, creativity, being challenged and taking risks. It also illustrates the power of dramatic engagement to encourage empathy, reflection and transformed views of the self and others. This is of value to older participants, to other groups involved in drama projects (e.g. younger people, carers, health and social care professionals, families), and to audiences who may have their own perceptions challenged through older people's performances and devised productions featuring older people's words. The current evidence largely relates to the instrumental elements of cultural value, but also incorporates elements of intrinsic value in terms of drama's effects on people's subjective and affective experiences.

There are, we would suggest, several key areas for further research.

- Older people have not specifically been asked to reflect on the cultural value of their participation. Neither have they actively participated in the research and evaluation process. Research on older people's theatre and drama involvement has been conducted and analysed by academic researchers and practitioners. If older people were involved as active participants in the co-construction of research, their views may help to define cultural value as it relates to drama engagement. From a societal perspective, this would also comprise greater public engagement in the understanding and definition of cultural value (Holden 2006). The current evaluation of the 'Ages and Stages' project suggests ways forward in involving older people and in utilising an arts-based methodology.
- Though a number of quantitative and qualitative methods have been used to explore older people's participation in drama and theatre, only two examples in this review explicitly used arts-based methods. Exploring cultural value through arts-based methods may enable researchers and participants to 'show' rather than just describe older people's experiences. Methods that capture what happens in 'the moment' are also particularly valuable for this research area. Several documents in this review use participant observation: this could be utilised more as it enables researchers to observe and reflect on older people's drama participation as it happens, rather than just relying on post-participation interviews and tests.
- More utilisation and interrogation of theoretical frameworks is needed to guide and develop our understanding of older people's participation in theatre and drama.
- Further research is needed to explore gender, race, social class and age, as dimensions of older people's theatre and drama participation.

- Older people are often very visible in theatres as volunteers and audience members but this is a neglected area of the literature. Further research is needed to explore the value of participating in these ways, both for older people themselves and for theatres.
- More research is needed on the intrinsic dimensions of older people's drama participation. The existing evidence frequently highlights the capacity of drama to bring 'excitement', 'joy' and 'happiness'; to 'free the imagination' and 'broaden horizons'. These affective experiences need further analysis in order to understand the specific qualities of older people's theatre and drama experiences and how this relates to cultural value. Also, there is a gap in research in relation to the aesthetic quality of older people's theatre and drama. More exploration of the aesthetics of older people's theatre and drama would enhance our understanding of the cultural value *provided by* older people, rather than just the value they derive from their participation.
- However, rather than separating intrinsic and instrumental value, research is needed to explore how the intrinsic and affective elements of people's drama experiences may also have instrumental effects on their lives. In particular, research is needed on the effect that dramatic participation may have on other elements of people's lives and relationships, and the longitudinal value of involvement in drama.
- More support is needed to enable systematic evaluations of drama projects and interventions and existing older people's drama and theatre groups. Support is also needed to develop ongoing relationships between academic researchers and practitioners, providing longitudinal data about older people's theatre and drama participation.

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## Appendix – Methodology

### Search process

- **Step One – Ages and Stages literature**

We collated references from 'Ages and Stages' publications and references provided by our Advisory Group.

- **Step Two – Initial database search**

The databases below were searched using the term "cultural value" in combination with old\*; age\*; eld\*, eld\* "later life", theatre, drama, acting, senior theatre\*, reminiscence theatre\*. No results were found.

- **Step Three – Revised database search**

We revised the search, using the databases and search terms below:

1. **Web of Science** (Social Sciences Citation Index and the Arts and Humanities Citation Index) – searched under 'title' and 'topic'
  - a. Old\* and drama – 99 results; 3 selected
  - b. Old\* and theatre – 198 results; 4 selected
  - c. Old\* and acting – 263 results; none selected
  - d. Age\* and drama – 372 results; 1 selected (used gerontology and theater keywords)
  - e. Age\* and theatre – 540 results; 2 selected (used gerontology and theater keywords)
  - f. Age\* and acting – 430 results; none selected (used gerontology and theater keywords)
  - g. Eld\* and theatre – 18 results (topic); none selected
  - h. Eld\* and drama – 38 results; 1 selected
  - i. Eld\* and acting – 61 results (gerontology and theater); none selected
  - j. "Later life" and theatre – 7 results; 2 selected
  - k. "Later life" and drama – 37 results; 1 selected
  - l. "Later life" and acting – 76 results; none selected
  - m. Dementia and theatre – 16 results; 1 selected
  - n. Dementia and drama (gerontology) – 33 results;
  - o. Dementia and acting – 142 (gerontology and theater); none selected
  - p. Senior\* theatre – 2 results; none selected
  - q. Senior\* theater – 1 result; 1 selected
  - r. Senior\* and theatre; 34 results (gerontology and theater); 1 selected
  - s. Senior\* and drama – 23 results (gerontology and theater); none selected
  - t. Seniors and acting – results (gerontology and theater); 30 results; none selected
  - u. Reminiscence theatre – 4 results; 1 selected
  - v. Devised theatre – 7 results; 1 selected
  - w. Applied theatre – 62 results; 1 selected
  - x. Community theatre – 53 results; none selected
  - y. Participatory theatre – 16 results; none selected
  - z. Forum theatre – 34 results; none selected
  - aa. Intergenerational and theatre – 17 results; 2 selected

- bb. Intergenerational and drama – 15 results; 2 selected
- cc. Intergenerational and acting – 36 results (gerontology and theater);
- dd. Volunteer\* and theatre – 30 results; 1 selected
- ee. Audience and theatre (gerontology keyword); 2 results; 2 selected

## 2. AgeLine

- a. Old\* and drama – 164 results; 15 selected
- b. Old\* and theatre – 261 results; 34 selected
- c. Old\* and acting – 430 results; 5 selected
- d. Age\* and drama – 166 results; 15 selected
- e. Age\* and theatre – 276 results; 27 selected
- f. Age\* and acting – 441 results; 8 selected
- g. Eld\* and theatre – 59 results; 13
- h. Eld\* and drama – 56 results; 9 selected
- i. Eld\* and acting – 135 results; 3 selected
- j. "Later life" and theatre – 7 results; 1 selected
- k. "Later life" and drama – 4 results; 1 selected
- l. "Later life" and acting – 6 results; 0 selected
- m. Dementia and theatre – 9 results; 0 selected
- n. Dementia and drama – 16 results; 1 selected
- o. Dementia and acting – 46 results; 0 selected
- p. Senior\* theatre – 25 results; 8 selected
- q. Senior\* theater – 25 results; 8 selected
- r. Senior\* and theatre - 63 results; 17 selected
- s. Senior\* and theater - 63 results; 17 selected
- t. Senior\* and drama – 36 results; 9 selected
- u. Senior\* and acting – 42 results; 3 selected
- v. Reminiscence theatre – 7 results; 1 selected
- w. Devised theatre – 1 result; 1 selected
- x. Applied theatre – 2 results; 2 selected
- y. Community theatre – 18 results; 11 selected
- z. Participatory theatre – 0 results; 0 selected
- aa. Forum theatre – 0 results; 0 selected
- bb. Intergenerational and theatre – 44 results; 14 selected
- cc. Intergenerational and drama – 21 results; 4 selected
- dd. Intergenerational and acting – 27 results; 4 selected
- ee. Volunteer\* and theatre – 18 results; 2 selected
- ff. Audience and theatre – 32 results; 11 selected

## 3. ProQuest - ASSIA (Applied Social Sciences index and Abstracts), IBSS (International Bibliography of the Social Sciences), Social Services Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts. (searches generated many results - selected by relevant subjects/classifications)

- a. Old\* and drama – 218 results; 7 selected
- b. Old\* and theatre – 228 results; 8 selected
- c. Old\* and acting – 83 results; 3 selected
- d. Age\* and drama – 181 results; 5 selected
- e. Age\* and theatre – 276 results; 7 selected
- f. Age\* and acting – 92 results; 1 selected
- g. Eld\* and theatre – 53 results; 10 selected

- h. Eld\* and drama – 59 results; 7 selected
- i. Eld\* and acting – 132 results; 2 selected
- j. "Later life" and theatre – 4 results; 1 selected
- k. "Later life" and drama – 0 results
- l. "Later life" and acting – 8 results; 0 selected
- m. Dementia and theatre – 5 results; 1 selected
- n. Dementia and drama – 14 results; 3 selected
- o. Dementia and acting – 15 results; 0 selected
- p. Senior\* theatre – 25 results; 2 selected
- q. Senior\* theater – 25 results; 2 selected
- r. Senior\* and theatre – 25 results; 2 selected
- s. Senior\* and theater – 25 results; 2 selected
- t. Senior\* and drama – 22 results; 2 selected
- u. Senior\* and acting – 97 results; 2 selected
- v. Reminiscence theatre – 6 results; 1 selected
- w. Devised theatre – 0 results
- x. Applied theatre – 7 results; 0 selected
- y. Community theatre – 30 results; 1 selected
- z. Participatory theatre – 32 results; 0 selected
- aa. Forum theatre – 69 results; 0 selected
- bb. Intergenerational and theatre – 54 results; 7 selected
- cc. Intergenerational and drama – 66 results; 7 selected
- dd. Intergenerational and acting – 38 results; 0 selected
- ee. Volunteer\* and theatre – 20 results; 0 selected
- ff. Audience and theatre and old\* – 28 results; 3 selected
- gg. Audience and theatre and age\* – 86 results; 3 selected

**4. Social Care Online:** <http://www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/>

- a. Old\* and drama – 31 results; 8 selected
- b. Old\* and theatre – 12 results; 6 selected
- c. Age\* and drama – 30 results; 3
- d. Age\* and theatre – 17 results; 4 selected
- e. Eld\* and theatre – 3 results; 2 selected
- f. Eld\* and drama – 9 results; 3 selected
- g. "Later life" and theatre – 0 results
- h. "Later life" and drama – 1 results; 0 selected
- i. "Later life" and acting – 16 results; 0 selected
- j. Dementia and theatre – 2 results; 2 selected
- k. Dementia and drama – 23 results; 5 selected
- l. Senior\* theatre – 0 results
- m. Senior\* theater – 0 results
- n. Senior\* and theatre – 0 results
- o. Senior\* and theater – 0 results
- p. Senior\* and drama – 4 results; 0 selected
- q. Reminiscence theatre – 3 results; 2 selected
- r. Devised theatre – 0 results
- s. Applied theatre – 9 results; 1 selected
- t. Community theatre – 29 results; 5 selected
- u. Participatory theatre – 7 results; 1 selected
- v. Forum theatre – 8 results; 0 selected
- w. Intergenerational and theatre – 1 results; 1 selected



- x. Intergenerational and drama – 1 result; 1 selected
- y. Volunteer\* and theatre – 1 result; 0 selected
- z. Audience and theatre – 15 results; 1 selected

## 5. OpenGrey – no results

- **Step Four – Cross-reference database results and delete duplications**

- **Step Five – Cross-reference with critical reviews**

The results of the database search above were cross-referenced with theatre/drama studies referenced in three existing reviews ((Castora-Binkley et al 2010; Mental Health Foundation 2011; Noice, Noice and Kramer 2013).

- **Step Six – E-mail request**

An e-mail request was sent via the following organisations:

- 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.

### Example (sent to the British Society of Gerontology)

Dear BSG members,

I am a Research Associate at Keele University and am contacting you in relation to a critical review I am writing on 'ageing, drama and creativity'. The review is funded by the AHRC as part of their Cultural Value programme and is led by Prof Mim Bernard.

We are looking for literature focused on older people's involvement in theatre and drama, as active participants, theatre volunteers or audience members. As well as academic references, we are also searching for grey literature (e.g. conference presentations, unpublished theses and reports, newspaper and magazine articles). We would also like to compile a list of organisations and websites related to theatre/drama work with older adults.

I would be very grateful if you could forward any references, project details or online resources you are aware of. Please do contact me if you would like any further information about this project.

Thank you in advance.

Kind regards,  
Michelle Rickett

- **Step 7 – Cross-reference e-mail request results**

We cross-referenced all literature generated from the e-mail requests with the results of the database searches.

## **Selection and analysis**

Literature was selected according to the following criteria:

### ***Inclusion criteria:***

- We included published and unpublished research studies; evaluation reports; descriptive overviews in journals, newspapers and magazines; existing reviews.
- We included all literature that discussed the **value** or **benefits** of older people's theatre and drama participation.

### ***Exclusion criteria:***

- Drama therapy
- Practical guides and handbooks
- Literature not in English
- Literature about arts/creative interventions with drama as just one component (e.g. arts workshops which include drama exercises alongside other arts forms)

Included documents were categorised in terms of **document type** and **theme**.

Document types:

- Research articles and books (n=36)
- Evaluation reports (n=11)
- Descriptive overviews (n=27)
- Existing reviews (n=3)

Thematic categories:

- Critical reviews (n=3)
- Review of UK participatory arts projects (n=1)
- Devised productions (n=9)
- Drama programmes and workshops (n=12)
- Intergenerational (n=9)
- Pre-existing theatre groups (n=15)
- Reflective studies and overviews (n=7)
- Reminiscence (n=5)
- Theatre and drama in care settings (n=15)
- Volunteers (n=1)

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We have benefitted greatly from the support of an experienced and enthusiastic Advisory Group which includes a number of overseas members. Details of the Group (present and past) can be found on the 'Ages and Stages' website: [www.keele.ac.uk/agesandstages/](http://www.keele.ac.uk/agesandstages/)

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