

Mind the Gap: An exploration of generation-in-the-mind

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Abstract

The area of generational differences is complex and opaque, and yet it appears to influence organisational relationships and processes, perhaps because of this opacity. This research, using theoretical concepts such as *organisation in the mind*, *habitus* and *master signifier*, aims to help us understand how the construct of generation becomes alive in the minds of individuals, through both emotional experiences and societal influences, which in turn solidifies generalisations in people's minds about generation. This research explores the perceptions of generational difference, how it evolves over time in the mind of participants, how it influences individuals' perceptions of self and others, and thus relationships and processes in a work setting. This research used the biographical-narrative interpretive method to uncover the psychosocial aspects of the formation of generation in the mind, through the lived life and told story of participants. This research used a combination of biographical-narrative interpretive method analysis and grounded theory to interpret the narratives of seven participants on an upward leadership trajectory. The findings in this research suggest that, on the one hand generational differences are universal and persistent, and are used to explain particular patterns of behaviours and give context. On the other hand, they seem ambiguous and thus are used as a container for anxieties related to age and difference. The various phantasies and projections that people have seem to have the potential to impact identity deeply, and membership towards these groups (generations). In conclusion, while generational differences seem easily recognisable, it seems equally nebulous, both something and nothing. It is because of this that generation and/or generational differences becomes a hook, a whole set of assumptions and generalisations that are both meaningless, and yet at the same time, have potency. Ultimately, this research looked at how generation in the mind is both formed and influences individuals at work, and how it has the capacity to be both everything and nothing.

Key Words: Generational differences, generation, age, psychosocial, system psychodynamics, and psychoanalysis, organisation in the mind, habitus, master signifier.

Acknowledgements

“The world exists how you perceive it. It’s not what you see, but how you see it. It’s not what you hear, but how you hear it. It’s not what you feel, but how you feel it” – Rumi

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Chapter 1 – The study: Motivation and rationale

This chapter is about the rationale behind my choice of subject area and why I felt compelled to conduct systems psychoanalytic research on generations and/or generational differences.

1.1 Me-search

My research interest was derived from many years of being the 'youngest': the youngest in the family, the youngest to graduate, the youngest in the boardroom and the youngest in my class on this doctorate course as I wrote my research proposal. By default of being the youngest, there is and has always been someone to hold the role of the oldest and it has always seemed to me that we are so different, belonging to different eras, with different norms. Coming from a traditional household in colonial South Africa, mixed in among the patriarchy and stark gender inequality, was the vivid delineation of those older and younger. As the youngest of four children, a standard sentence would begin with a "When I was your age ..." and every time I would hear that, it would get under my skin. Invariably, I would long to be older, thinking that that would mean it gets better, or easier. I never understood why, despite not consciously wanting to feel that way, or trying to rationalise and intellectualise the experience, I always felt an instinctive reaction, triggered, by this type of interaction.

My experience in the workplace has been no different. I have often heard: "If I had this opportunity when I was your age ..." or "You're quite young to be in this position", only to wish I was older, belonging to another generation in the hope to avoid the judgement, advice and projections that came with these observations. It always seemed to me that there was the possibility of a reciprocal longing, the rumination, perhaps the phantasies desired by the respective generations in a way that suggests

we want what we do not have, either youth or wisdom. It too seemed difficult to know how much of what I experience is about generation or age, or both, because these are potentially very different things, but equally are intertwined. While age might be about being young or old, perceived generational differences may highlight the more intangible, internalised differences that are inherently attributed to young and old, i.e. different generations and it is this that came to interest me.

As I write this, I am conscious of the generational membership I have and acknowledge, what that means for me, how much of that I accept and how much of that I reject, what I feel shameful of and what I feel proud of, and fundamentally that which makes up my identity. But what does that look like? My generation is 'Generation Y' (Gen Y), 'Millennials', the 'Nintendo Generation', the 'Internet Generation', or 'Generation 2001'. More specifically, born in 1988, I am what is considered an 'aging' millennial: disconnected from younger millennials, because I remember life before technology influenced us to our core, a digitally primitive generation. I witnessed the birth of the internet and a dial-up connection, I was part of the first generation to have a PC in my home. My school days were when the Walkman progressed to CD players, cordless phones were introduced, and caller ID became a thing. My generation entered the workforce in the biggest economic crash since the great depression – the great recession – that crippled household wealth, and exacerbated economic inequalities. Other defining factors of my generation include things like parental emphasis on child rearing, violence at school, diversity becoming more than just a buzz word, busy planned lives, extended family relationships, the rise of mental health and environmental impact awareness. But I also feel deeply influenced by, and find identity in, that which is 'not' of my generation: the apartheid era in South Africa, the

start and popularity of music television, the rise in the number of working women, the influence of the AIDS pandemic and HIV, the Beatles and Chubby Checker's The Twist. While I believe in generational differences and the influences that different eras, and the associated norms, have on individuals, I do not believe in catch-all labels that define people in sweeping statements, or the snapshot in time 'micro-generations' that attempt to define people further. I believe these differentiations and labels are attempts to simplify that which cannot be simplified. I believe that generational differences are complex and so deeply intertwined with one's sense of identity, and potentially influenced by a multitude of aspects, including those of previous generations, that it cannot easily be untangled, but perhaps we can make a start.

1.2 The organisational context

Shifting from my own motivation to the wider field, which will be explored more in-depth in the background and literature review, is this concept that generation seems to have always been a somewhat hidden, but potent contributor, to existing theories that are the foundation of system psychodynamic studies. Many researchers seem to have been following generation in and of itself, perhaps unknowingly, for many years. From Bion to Klein, across the Tavistock and elsewhere, many adjacent academic fields relevant to this paper seem to be looking at phenomena that encompass the generational aspects. When scholars have looked at family relations, family systems, how roles are taken up, leadership and power dynamics, to name a few, they are simultaneously looking at generation and generational difference, by default. However, perhaps the focus has been so specific in these adjacent subject areas that generation has not been the focus, nor has it been questioned. Perhaps by the very nature of these complexities we have been blinded when studying generation. Within

the frame of literature relevant to psychodynamic and psychoanalytic studies, there may be a strong sense of generation and history (people analysing one another, including one's own children), which makes it more complex to explore, challenge or see, particularly in a system psychodynamic way. Perhaps the influence of generation has gotten into the literature itself, and the reason no fundamentally explicit pieces of research exist around generations, is because it has been too complex, too difficult to explore, particularly from a systems psychodynamic perspective and in an organisational setting.

Chapter 2: Background and literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three main parts: 1) the literature review methodology, which includes the strategy to accessing what I felt was most relevant for the study; 2) a brief history and introduction to the area of generational difference; and 3) more specifically, the literature in relation to the adjacent fields that influence generational differences such as psychoanalysis, psychodynamics (the group), systems psychodynamics, a family therapy lens, Organisation in the Mind and the sociological perspective. The image below is a representation of the interrelatedness present among these key adjacent fields.

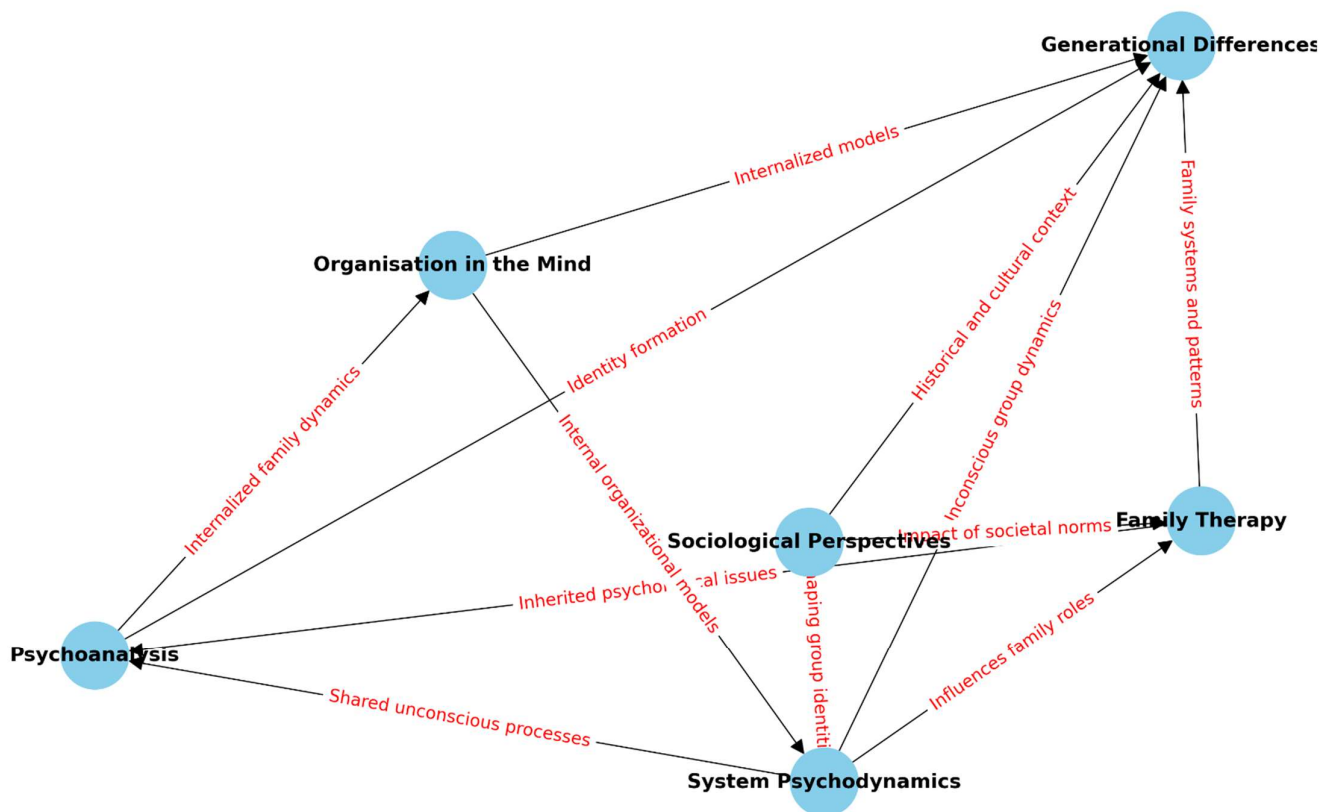


Figure 1 The interrelationship among adjacent fields influencing generational differences and therefore generation in the mind.

2.2 Literature search methodology

The aim for the literature review was to identify and collect, then critically reflect on what ideas existed around generational differences and how they may show up unconsciously in individuals or groups.

2.2.1 The use of the term “unconscious”

For the purpose of this research, it is relevant to note the use of the term ‘unconscious’ and a brief definition. In this research I am using unconscious in terms of that which is below the surface of one’s awareness, more specifically Freud’s theory (1915), where the unconscious refers to the mental processes of which individuals are unaware, the ideas and drives that are forced out of consciousness by a process of repression. The thoughts and emotions that do not cease to exist, but are driven by wishful impulses, and despite being unaware of them, they continue to influence our actions and behaviours. Alongside Bollas’ (1987) idea of an ‘unthought known’ which plays a pivotal role in the use of the unconscious in this research, where individuals’ experiences are in some way known to them, yet they are unable to think about them.

2.2.2 The approach: A knowledge deficit perspective

My aim was to examine how generational differences had been addressed, to what extent, and potentially where there may be gaps, particularly from a scholarly or academic approach, as opposed to that which readily appears in pop psychology publications. I drew inspiration and guidance from Giltrow et al. (2014) by approaching the review from a ‘knowledge deficit’ perspective, in that I attempted to focus on what

is unknown, rather than that which is known. I approached this review not only to report on what is known about the topic, but purposefully to identify what remains unknown.

2.2.3 The search source

The main source of the search was electronic, namely search engines such as Google Scholar, with the extension of a broader search in Google for clarification and cross referencing, and the Tavistock library. Google Scholar provides a way to search for scholarly literature broadly, across many disciplines and sources simultaneously. Using Google Scholar afforded me concurrent searches through articles, theses, books and abstracts, from academic publishers, professional societies, online repositories, universities and other web sites. The Tavistock library would often need to be accessed given the restrictions in some academic journals, and working with librarians to gain access to papers outside of the remit of the academic institution.

2.2.4 Criteria for searching

The inclusion criteria consisted of keywords linked to the research question, namely generational differences, generation in mind, different generations, perceptions of generation. I focussed specifically on English-language literature and did some adjacent searches of literature concerned with dynamics I believed may influence the review, but presented under different modalities, such as familial relationships, sibling dynamics, organisational processes and relations such as succession planning. The latter included psychoanalytic perspectives on family and leadership, since my research questions were concerned with that which unfolds in organisational and leadership processes. In the searches I included the use of synonyms, antonyms, alternative phrasing and spelling, as well as plural versions of singular words, e.g.,

difference and differences. Additionally, BOOLEAN operators such as AND/OR/NOT were used to ensure the searches were exhausted, for example generational differences and age differences.

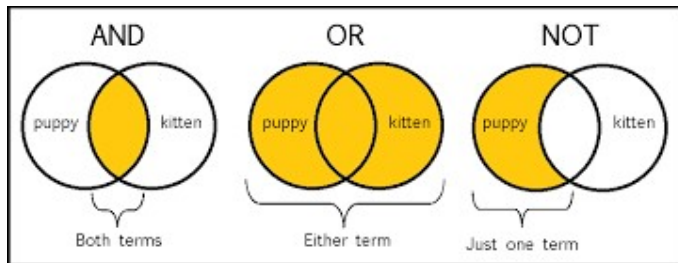


Figure 2 – BOOLEAN search operators

While undertaking searches I ensured that my cookies were never cleared, such that if items were previously searched, I could see that, and I bookmarked all that which I would return to, alongside saving key pieces of literature in a desktop folder. Overall, I was both disappointed and hopeful to see there did not seem to be much research, particularly from a psychodynamic or psychoanalytical perspective, even less so from a relatively young person's perspective. When undertaking the research, I learnt quickly that there is a vast amount of research on generational differences, but lacked qualitative depth. Lastly, most of the literature I was able to access is from the western world, as is my experience and that of my participants, which I highlight as a limitation to this study.

2.3 Literature in relation to generational differences

This section aims to look at generations from a historical aspect as well as all of that which has been popularised from an organisational perspective.

2.3.1 A Historical perspective

The study of generational differences has its roots in sociology and psychology, with early research focusing on how historical and social events shape the attitudes, behaviours, and values of different age groups. The concept of generational differences began to gain traction in the early 20th century. One of the earliest and most influential works was by Karl Mannheim, a German sociologist, who in 1928 wrote an essay titled "The Problem of Generations." Mannheim's work laid the foundation for understanding how shared experiences, such as wars, economic shifts, or technological advancements, can create a sense of common identity among people of a similar age group, leading to distinct generational characteristics.

However, the modern concept of specific named generations (such as Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z) became more widely studied and popularized in the latter half of the 20th century. Researchers began systematically exploring these differences in the 1970s and 1980s, with more extensive studies emerging in the 1990s and beyond, as the idea of generational cohorts became more relevant in fields such as marketing, workforce management, and social science research. While the academic investigation into generational differences started in the early 20th century, it wasn't until the late 20th century that the study of named generational cohorts became a prominent area of research. It was because of this that the majority of popularised research I found was anchored in more quantitative methods as opposed to qualitative methods, and very little from an interpretivism paradigm as we will see later.

2.3.2 Definition of generations

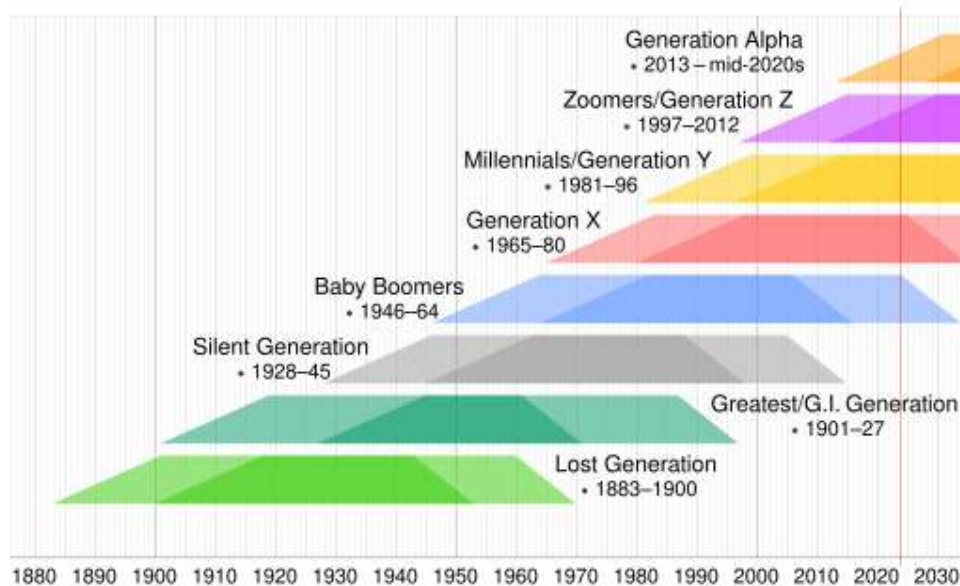


Figure 3 Timeline of generations in the Western world (Plasschaert, 2021).

“Generations are cohorts of individuals who have grown up in the same historical and social context, whose shared formative experiences instil in them beliefs, values, and general dispositions that differ from those of others born and raised in different contexts and time periods” (Woodward et al., 2015, 9).

2.3.3 The divide in the literature from an empirical perspective

There is a divide between those that believe generational differences exist and those that do not. While this is not the main focus of this research, it is helpful to understand some of the literature, as it may affect perceptions that are built. Numerous empirical studies, such as that by Chen and King (2020), McGuire et al. (2007), Williams et al. (1997), Martin (2005), Krahn and Galambos (2014), Cugin (2012) and Smola and Sutton (2002) have supported the stereotypes and other influences that amplify intergenerational differences, claiming they exist both in impartial and conceptual terms. However, equally as many studies refute these differences: Costanza et al.

(2012), Myers and Sadaghiani (2010), DeMeuse and Mlodzik (2010), Parry and Urwin (2011), Costanza and Finkelstein (2015) and McCann and Giles (2006) all challenge the concept of generational difference by noting the absence of rigorous research on core workplace factors such as performance, communication and relationships, and caution against trusting weak findings as a basis for organisational decisions.

Similar sentiments are echoed by Lyons and Kuron (2014), Parry and Urwin (2011) and Twenge (2010), where, despite finding that some workplace factors varied among different generations, they argue it is mostly descriptive, not exploratory. They posit that appreciating diversity and individuality does not benefit from labelling and over-generalisation, and suggest that we do not rely on simplistic descriptions of intergenerational or intra-generational differences and move to a deeper debate of what generations are, and the potential effects on organisational life. The relevance here is imperative, in that this research looked at how individuals experience their perception of difference in generation, as opposed to attempting to fit multiple people's biographies and experiences into predetermined, all-encompassing demographics.

2.3.4 A constructionist view

Where a more qualitative and somewhat constructionist view was held, it seemed to be more about busting myths around generational differences or proving or disproving their existence. As it stands, there are some qualitative research endeavours, particularly one by Raymer Reed et al., (2017), where the results illustrate how the seemingly benign conversation about generational differences escalates into a serious issue: reverse age discrimination. They surveyed 282 employees across generations with a generational stereotypes index and completed a qualitative analysis that

showed that older employees (over 60%) describe young colleagues negatively, and young employees (30%) experience reverse age discrimination. This suggested to me that while some research is being done, there is a depth missing, the 'so what' of these conversations and escalations. The unanswered questions were: why did those sentiments exist; how did the individual emotional experiences and the surrounding social environments impact that perception? With this in mind, it seemed to me that generations appear to be misunderstood and the study of generational differences seemed to be disdained and/or anchored in hypothetical assumptions. These assumptions, at best, seemed to be questioned: that there was not enough empirical evidence that generations exist (Rudolph et al., 2021), let alone how they functioned. Whether or not generational differences are hard, concrete and quantifiable differences, seems to have been debated in both business journals and popular psychology, and the very nature of being born into different eras may justify that there are in differences, but this research was specifically interested in the impact of those differences.

2.3.5 The exploratory perspective

A study by Lester et al. (2012), using generational cohort theory to look at work-related concepts, and the value placed on them by different generations, both actual and perceptual differences, showed that the nature of these actual differences may lead to generational misconceptions, suggesting that perception has an important impact and should be further discovered. In a key study by Bengtson and Kuypers (1971, p. 249) they argued that "the perception that one generation has of another in interactions are related less to the state of the *perceived*, than that to the state of the *perceiver*" suggesting that an individual's biography, relationship and position in society and

individual development can, and does, affect their perception and thus expectations of other generations. They go on to suggest that these cross-generational perceptions are often based on two processes – either the fear or the loss or the developmental stake¹.

A study by Slotterback (1996, p. 552) reflects on a tendency for young adults to view other generations in a different fashion from the way they view their own, which briefly starts to look at the assumptions individuals make, and thus how their perceptions are influenced. Lastly, from a generational diversity perspective, a theoretically grounded approach by Standifer and Lester (2020, p. 48) using the social identity approach (SIA), suggested that perceived differences exceeded actual ones, and revealed generational identities and the presence of prototypical distancing between cohort in groups and out of groups. Similar research by Lester et al. (2012), also suggested that the actual differences in generations may lead to generational misconceptions (assumptions). However, these studies were once again on workplace characteristics, conscious factors, and not explicitly the unconscious aspects this current research was interested in. These referenced studies seem to touch on some of what I hoped that my study would highlight. Nonetheless, the depth of research from a biographical stance still seems to be somewhat missing.

2.3.6 Acknowledging a solid foundation in the literature

At first it seemed there was not much in this literature, but on deeper analysis there are some noteworthy pieces that lay a solid foundation for deeper, more qualitative,

¹ The original "developmental stake" hypothesis (Bengtson & Kuypers, 1971) states that young adult children and their parents vary in their perception of generational relations based on their location within the family lineage and their developmental stage.

system psychodynamic research, since the perception of generation seems to have multiple layers. There seems to be more to this field than descriptive work and more to be explored, in terms of both what and how people identify with, and what perceptions influence these multiple constructs. From the review it seems that generational identity is not uniform, and people identify with the concept of generation to varying degrees and for a variety of reasons, but how these forms seems to be relatively undiscovered as of yet. In looking for research that speaks to what gives rise to the construction of generational differences in someone's psychic space, and what effect that has on them and their environments (and vice-versa), there seems to be a noticeable gap.

2.3.7 Summarizing the gap in the literature and building a case for further research

Much of what I reviewed seemed to be situated from a quantitative perspective, particularly those from Twenge (2010), Macky et al. (2008), Smola and Sutton (2002) and Costanza et al. (2012) which emphasise the difference in worker values and other workplace constructs indicative of generational differences. While the research that references the potential differences in work-related variables, such as leadership, work ethic, work-life balance, career patterns and personality suggest that there are different generations, much of this research has been criticised for being fractured, contradictory and fraught with methodological inconsistencies that make generalisations difficult (Lyons & Kuron, 2014), suggesting that a qualitative approach with more context would be beneficial. The multiple calls for qualitative research are indicative of the complexity of internalised construction of generation, which quantitative data has not been able to tap into. Equally, the extent of the broad research that has been done is helpful for this categorification, but once again,

presented a gap in relation to the deep research about how this unfolds. More specifically, for this research, the focus was on what is in the unconscious, rather than that which is in the conscious.

In many ways much of the research that has been popularised tends to be centred around technological advancement, as opposed to specific distinctions between generations from a psychosocial perspective. At a surface level, shifts in technology and modernisation have arguably been responsible for significant movement in these paradigm shifts that different generations have experienced over the years, and thus bear a weighty influence. However, I was interested in something more.

2.3.8 Addressing the gap

There were four areas of focus in relation to generational differences that I felt presented a 'knowledge deficit', and thus not a significant enough amount of research that could answer my research questions. These four focus areas were: 1) research from a system psychodynamic approach; 2) deep qualitative research, as opposed to broad research; 3) research that could help me understand not just *if* people had come across these differences in generations, but *how* they had ascribed meaning to them and impacts thereof; and 4) research from a psychosocial perspective that considered both the individual psychological factors, as well as the surrounding environment, and how that influenced individuals to think and behave.

2.3.9 Setting the scene for the research approach to adjacent fields

The area of generational differences as a whole, is complex and opaque: the intricate juncture of age and time itself makes generations awkward to study. This includes how

the perception of generation forms in one's mind, what influences this formation and thus the impact these perceptions have on organisational processes and relationships. Fundamentally, to understand how perceptions are used to navigate interactions with others, we need them to define us (Miller, 1999). This area of research seemed to be largely undiscovered from of a deep systems psychodynamic approach, particularly for making sense of complex organisational life and the intricacies of how those relationships can affect decision making. From childhood we are exposed to our earliest manifestations of difference through parent and siblings' relations and rivalries: the Oedipus complex. Freud (1899) speaks to a desire of the *opposite* sex parent and a contemporaneous sense of rivalry with the *same* sex parent. We have learnt that complex human behaviours defend against a number of anxieties attributed to change and differences, but possible defences associated to perceived generational differences seem to be relatively uncharted territory.

2.4 Contributions from psychoanalysis: the individual

The influence on generational differences from a psychoanalytic lens involved briefly exploring how intergenerational transmission of behaviours, traumas, and unconscious dynamics shape the development and psychological functioning of individuals across different generations. Psychoanalytic theory, particularly the works of Freud (1913), Klein (1932) and Bowlby (1969), provide insights into how family dynamics—rooted in early childhood experiences—affect the psychological development of individuals and how these dynamics evolve over time. Given the breadth and depth of psychoanalysis as a field, this section does not intend to go into extensive detail but rather give a brief indication of some of the key influences in the development of generational differences as the core research focus. Psychoanalytic

theory as it relates to family dynamics and role assignment is arguably the most influential when considering the influence of generational differences, as a result, family dynamics are covered here from an individual perspective, and then later from a family therapy lens as well.

2.4.1 Family dynamics, role assignment and generations

Psychoanalytic theory as it related to family dynamics and role assignment delves into how family roles and scripts are unconsciously passed down through generations. Each generation may adopt roles that reflect unresolved conflicts or unmet needs from previous generations. Byng-Hall (1995) discussed how family scripts, influenced by psychoanalytic concepts, are transmitted across generations, impacting individual identity and relational dynamics. I later found these scripts to be significant in my study given the link between identity and family dynamics, and the foundational aspects that are situated here in terms of how people view generations, their own and others.

Psychoanalytic theory also addresses how family roles and dynamics are preserved across generations. Bowen's family systems theory, influenced by psychoanalytic thinking, highlights the concept of emotional fusion and differentiation of self. Bowen (1978) theorizes that unresolved emotional attachments within families lead to a lack of differentiation, where individuals become emotionally entangled with their family members. This lack of emotional differentiation can result in the repetition of family roles and dynamics across generations, creating patterns where certain family members unconsciously adopt roles such as the "caretaker," or the "overachiever." The relevance of the fusion or the differentiation is paramount in how the differences among generations get emotionally embedded in the younger generations and then

how these patterns and dynamics are fundamentally challenged when people enter a wider societal context, specifically organisations.

Generational differences tend to develop when one generation attempts to break free from these prescribed roles, often leading to familial conflict or distancing. For example, one generation may seek more autonomy and independence, while another may adhere to traditional family structures and expectations. These conflicts can reflect deeper unconscious dynamics related to unresolved family conflicts and the desire for emotional differentiation, which in turn can be situated in generation. Particularly projective identification and splitting, when dynamics such as these are challenged. It is when these are kind of dynamics are challenged, in the presence of the upset of traditional structures, that generational difference becomes relevant in later life, highlighting generational differences as a social defence.

What is appropriate to note that while Bowen's theories are both significant and relevant, particular in a family therapy setting, the theory and these studies are dated. Not only were these studies and theories developed circa 45 years ago, but what they seem to not have taken into consideration is the wider social context and the application to organisational life. Even if transferable to organisational life, which I believe they are, these theories are built on a traditional way of working, hierarchical boundaries and set structures of authority that are no longer as prevalent today. They do not necessarily address the cosmopolitan complexities of organisational life today and thus have left questions unanswered which this research aims to do.

2.4.2 Psychological processes and the impact on generational difference

The transmission of family norms, behaviours, and unresolved conflicts to the next generation reflects how psychoanalytic theory conceptualizes the generational transmission of family dynamics. Freud's idea of transference (the process by which individuals transfer feelings and conflicts from early relationships onto new relationships) also highlights how unresolved family issues can persist across generations (and therefore into organisations). Transference, both conscious and unconscious, often manifests in family settings, reinforcing patterns of behaviour that repeat over generations (Freud, 1913).

In addition to Freud, Klein's work on object relations theory contributes to understanding family dynamics by focusing on how children internalise the relationships they form with their caregivers (Klein, 1932). This concept of internalisation is key for this study. Klein argues that early attachment to caregivers forms a template for future relationships and that unresolved conflicts within the family can lead to internal psychological splits between the good and bad objects. These internalised dynamics can perpetuate across generations as family members re-enact unresolved conflicts and anxieties. Klein's concept of splitting is key in the foundational aspects of how generation in the mind begins, given the influence of idealisation or vilification of various generations can (and likely does) happen so early on in one's life. Not only does the internalisation of these dynamics have the propensity to perpetuate across different generations, but then is likely to be carried into the wider social contexts such as the organisations, until there is the challenge to that thinking with a myriad of different internalisations that come together in organisational life.

Building on psychoanalytic foundations, Bowlby's attachment theory provides another critical lens for examining family dynamics across generations. Bowlby (1969), posited that early relationships between a child and their caregiver form the basis for the individual's sense of security or insecurity. Secure attachments foster healthy emotional regulation and relationship-building, while insecure attachments lead to difficulties in interpersonal relationships. Bowlby's work is relevant because of how relationship building and regulation are taken into the workplace. It is not uncommon for there to be assumptions about what different generations attachment style was and thus what might be transferred from generation to generation, once again all meeting in the melting pot of organisational life.

Generational differences in attachment styles can arise when unresolved trauma or attachment disruptions in one generation are unconsciously transmitted to the next. The idea of transgenerational transmission of attachment patterns is explored in Main & Solomon (1990), where parents with unresolved attachment issues are more likely to pass on insecure attachment styles to their children. These insecure attachment patterns can manifest differently across generations, leading to significant differences in how individuals form and maintain relationships within the family and beyond, in this case organisationally and across generations. This has the propensity to influence organisational process and relationships as these disruptions get located in such processes.

2.4.3 Intergenerational trauma and generations

The transmission of trauma across generations is a key theme in psychoanalytic literature, particularly through the work of Abraham & Torok, (1994). Their concept of

the transgenerational phantom refers to the unconscious transmission of unresolved trauma from one generation to the next, often without direct communication. For example, children may unconsciously absorb the unspoken traumas of their parents or grandparents, even if these traumas were never explicitly discussed. As per Bar-On (1995) intergenerational trauma is well-documented in psychoanalytic literature and shows how trauma can be unconsciously transmitted through family dynamics, affecting subsequent generations' psychological well-being and potentially the perception of generation. These unacknowledged traumas can shape family dynamics in profound ways, leading to intergenerational cycles of dysfunction, anxiety, or depression. More notably for this study in relation to generational trauma is when it is passed on to the next generation, it potentially has the impact of influencing what that generation would have otherwise adopted as norms and artefacts of living contemporaneously with others of a similar age, without the trauma transmission. Because the socio-cultural context seemed to be such a relevant factor in how people identify with certain aspect that characterise what they feel is their generation, that which forms their identity, certainly from a more organisational management context, adopted norms in the familial sense are important. This points to what I later experienced in my participants narratives of being so bound by aspects that were characteristic of how they grew up whilst mostly influenced by their families, versus those characteristic that became more relevant as they became more influence by societal artefacts.

The multigenerational transmission process occurs when family dynamics are transferred from parents to children through conscious processes, like teaching and learning of information, as well as the unconscious family projection process, by which

parents project their intense emotions onto their children. These processes become primary determinants of the children's levels of differentiation (Kim-Appel and Appel 2015), which are often similar to that of their parents. Given how relevant identity is in the formation of generation in the mind, coupled with the significance of formative years in psychological development, the influence of these transmission in how people are able to develop their sense of identity becomes relevant for how they identify with a certain generation if any, and to what extent they possibly able to tolerate difference. It later became clear that my participants may have been experiencing a similar transmission when identifying more with generations above them, more inclined to represent their parents' generation, than that if their own (that they were born into) or of a younger generation.

2.4.4 Identity, socio-cultural influence and generation

In an article Volkan (2001) examined how societal trauma and cultural shifts affect generational identity and unconscious group processes. He suggested that generational identity is shaped by the socio-cultural environment, including changes in societal values, cultural shifts, parenting styles, and major historical events. This piece of literature is significant for this study as it highlights not only how the socio-cultural influence has a key impact on generational identity (and therefore generational differences), but also shows the relevance of something such as a parenting style that has the capacity to shape generational identity. Where the likes of Bowen, Bar-on, Abraham and Torok were advocating for sameness as a result of what is passed on from generation to generation, Volkan looks at how generational identify can be shaped by factors outside of that family unit, given that we experience many groups and their unconscious processes, particularly as we get older.

From the perspective of unconscious processes in groups², Kets de Vries & Miller (1984) explored how unconscious generational conflicts manifest in organisational settings, reflecting deeper anxieties and power dynamics, where one generation projects unwanted traits or anxieties onto another, affecting group dynamics. While psychological processes such as splitting and projection were first developed in the context of individual and familial relationships, Kets de Vries indicated how they are equally applicable to groups and organisations, which is significant for this study. More specific to this study, it later became even more relevant when participants narratives indicated where one group (often the older generation) is idealised for its experience and stability, while the other (often the younger generation) is devalued for perceived lack of experience or different values. The polarized environment where intergenerational tensions are amplified, and collaboration is undermined, is substantial when considering the role generational differences play in organisational processes and relationships.

I later came to learn that the unconscious processes involved in generational conflicts often reflect deeper power dynamics. Older generations may unconsciously resist relinquishing authority or control, leading to tensions with younger generations who are seeking more responsibility or influence. These struggles are often not explicitly recognised but manifest in resistance to change, micromanagement, or subtle power plays that threaten group dynamics. Kets de Vries' work on a range of different organisational process highlight these phenomena, highlight the significance in this research.

² More to be discussed under psychodynamics

When considering the psychoanalytic approach in group processes, one must also consider concepts of authority and institutions. Levinson's (1978) research examined how generational experiences shape responses to authority and institutional roles. Different generations exhibit varied unconscious responses to authority and institutional structures, often shaped by their formative experiences with parental figures and societal norms, thus highlighting the psychoanalytic underpinnings of these differences. Levinson's work, albeit somewhat dated, is another key piece of literature for this study because they highlight the importance of authority, specifically the changes in responses to authority. This literature is very relevant given how different generations perceive authority figures as generally 'the older generation' but how that is now challenged in today's working culture, where before a post-modern world of work, this was possibly not the case.

Lastly, the psychoanalytic perspective also examines how generational cohorts experience different life stages, focusing on existential themes like autonomy, dependency, and legacy. Each generation's response to these themes is influenced by its unique socio-cultural context. Erikson's (1950) theory of psychosocial development outlines how societal contexts influence generational differences in developmental stages. More recently from a psychic developmental perspective psychoanalytic research explores how rapid technological and social changes impact different generations' psychic development, particularly in how these changes affect identity formation and relational capacities. Turkle (2011) addresses the psychological impact of technology on younger generations, exploring the unconscious effects on social and relational dynamics.

2.4.5 Summary on psychoanalytic literature

In summary while there is a plethora of relevant psychoanalytic literature, particularly how it pertains to family dynamics, my two key criticisms would be that firstly the studies seemed to be dated, not overly old, but dated in the sense that they couldn't possibly account for a post-modern working environment, or even a modern family system and the intricacies or nuances that may make those theories more fragile if applied today. From the differentiation in parenting styles, to the economic and socio-cultural shifts that other academics have suggested have a weighted impact on what is transmitted between generations and in families. Secondly the development of those theories into wider societal contexts seems to have stopped at the family unit. While that's applicable as they are family theories, many researchers have looked at how key family theories have manifested similarly in organisational settings, and that link seemed to be missing for me when considering what is present regarding generational differences in organisational settings. It is both the modernity and relevance of these theories that this study hopes to address.

2.4.6 Moving from the individual to the group

Psychoanalytic perspectives (such as the Kleinian/Bionian and Lacanian literature) have made significant contributions to the study of affect in organisations (Dashtipour & Vidaillet, 2017). Freud (1921) postulated that our instincts and intuitions are in constant conflict, which characterises a prejudice, demonstrating "individual psychology ... is at the same time social psychology" (Freud, 1921, 12), indicating there is something to be said about how our internalised concepts of generation may be shaping societal aspects or vice versa. Psychoanalysis specifically confronts what is vested in the unconscious, an issue waiting to be revealed, exploring the

psychoanalytic ideas around ubiquitous sociological issues (generation), and the tensions that arise within that may be helpful better to understand organisational dynamics.

2.5 Literature in relation to psychodynamics: the group

Bion (1961) refers to “groupishness” as the root of our troubles and delights. He highlights in his work that an individual is, and always will be, part of a group, even if the sense of belonging in reality is an attempt not to belong. What do groups do to construct generational differences? How do they collude with what is collectively constructed? The perception of generation in group processes may set people up to carry certain dynamics: how generation is perceived may influence how groups use certain members to carry particular roles. Members identified as older or younger may be asked to hold different roles in the unconscious, and in doing so, potentially restrict some of the valencies. The group may amplify these perceptions and identify and/or use perception of generation to influence members and how members feel influenced to take up a certain role. This potentially suggests that generation as an internalised construct affects not only our inner world, but indeed our interaction with the outer world, and may well be more fluid than the crystallised descriptors we have today.

2.5.1 Sameness and separateness of generation

When considering individuality, sameness and the paradoxes inherent in our psychosocial beings, Miller’s papers (1993, 1999, p. 99) are discerning in that he suggests that firstly, we have the “... coexistence of the drive to be separate and autonomous and the need to be attached and to belong”. Secondly, the “... experience of sameness is always, implicitly or explicitly, an expression of a difference ... inclusion

and exclusion are two sides of the same coin” (Miller, 1999, p. 100). Understanding the differences that are inherent to one’s generation, alongside that with which they identify (despite its sameness or difference, since these may not always have been in harmony), makes it difficult to categorise an individual, if at all, without fully understanding what really exists in their psychic space. What Miller highlights for me here is that there is a conflict between wanting to belong to a generation but also to be different from a generation, wanting to see oneself in a generation as a sense of belonging but also have the characteristics that can differentiate. It later became apparent that this can bring about conflict between the foundations and understanding that one has in their formative years, largely influenced by family and then what they grow to know and understand later, through socio-cultural influences as adults. As per Miller (1999, p. 100), “... the ambivalent feelings of loving and hating are hard to hold on to, and the early proclivity to split the world into good and bad continues. To keep mother good, the bad must be projected elsewhere”. To keep a generation good, the bad must be projected elsewhere.

2.5.2 Considering the group (generation) in the system

Social defences, in Menzies Lyth's sense, are aspects of organizations that: (1) exist independently of their members, such as structures and policies; and (2) come to serve the purpose of reinforcing peoples' defences against the primitive anxieties stimulated in the workplace (Krantz, 2010). This presents as opposite to what Freud had postulated above and what sociology may be suggesting. This concept highlights that generation, a hidden source of resistance to change, could provide a valuable perspective on the challenges of continuous change and adaptation in organisations today.

It is the purpose of social systems to defend against anxiety (Jaques, 1955, as developed by Menzies, 1960) and the structure, both formal and informal, to sustain these defences we all have and need. Miller (1999, p. 101) gives the example of post-war years in Britain, "... children transitioning from school to employment found themselves in a situation that was experienced as psychologically similar" in multiple ways. Shifts in paradigms tend to be synonymous with generation, and the potential for differences to exist from one to the other is pervasive. In the same way that hierarchy is a control for anxiety in organisations, perhaps generational differences provide containment and security against the anxieties that change within society bring about, a defence we need, but have not yet explored. Despite that, from 1980 onward, OPUS (an organisation for promoting understanding of society), used a group relations framework to discover underlying processes in large systems and at the societal level (Khaleelee & Miller, 1985; Miller, 1986, as in Miller, 1999). Alongside a noticeable theme of 'the changing world of work' at that time, there seems limited literature that can speak to the psychosocial effects of perceived generational differences. It could be suggested that from Menzies Lyth and onward, while there is a thorough understanding of group dynamics and how social defences are set up, what seemed apparent is the lack of seeing how generation could be used by the group, by the system, equally as a defence. It seemed that later I would learn that there, within my participants, seemed to be an undercurrent of group life, where generation is also used to outsource states and minds or become a kind of defence in the system, a splitting.

2.6 Literature in relation to systems psychodynamics

Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2020, p. 411) state that “Systems psychodynamic scholarship focuses on the interaction between collective structures, norms, and practices in social systems and the cognitions, motivations, and emotions of members of those systems. It is most useful to investigate the unconscious forces that underpin the persistence of dysfunctional organisational features and the appeal of irrational leaders. It is also well equipped to challenge arrangements that stifle individual and organisational development”.

From a systems psychodynamic approach there seemed to be limited literature that speaks to the emotional underpinning of powerful relations, such as generation in the mind, playing out in organisations. The most noteworthy piece is the doctoral research (Kent, 2010) which explores the defensive and hostile emotions that are activated by “perceptions of difference between the generations, and suggests this may be due to unconscious and primitive anxieties around identity and belonging, fear and envy of 'the other', attitudes to authority, the taboo of incest and the fear of death and dying” (Kent, 2012, p. 105). This is a key paper for this research, because it begins to note that which is in the unconscious is what may affect how perceptions are formed and is thus a call to understand more about how that is formed and what the organisational effects may be.

Given that systems psychodynamics focus on the emotional and relational magnitudes of organisational experience (French & Vince, 1999) that are largely unconscious, it made sense to me that understanding how perceived generational differences are internalised, could support further understanding of organisational complexities,

despite remaining somewhat unexplored. Multiple influences in this field have made attempted excursions into perceived generational differences such as work on envy and leadership.

2.6.1 The processes that highlight generation in systems

Perini (2014) speaks to the emotions that are overlooked in business cultures, specifically envy, as the most neglected. Kets De Vries (2003) talks about management succession and how younger individuals, who are superficially groomed for leading roles, end up with negative experiences because they have aroused their bosses' envy, or how leaders suffer from edifice complex – a fear that their legacy will be destroyed, which may result in them holding onto power for longer, removing trust and opportunity from their successors or younger generations that are deemed to have different values. (Sonnenfeld, 1986, p. 328) notes the "... retiring leader may become angry at the selfish younger generation, the ungrateful society and the aging process itself ..." and this envy spoils by withholding necessary co-operation or by active sabotage, (Halton, 2019).

Much of this seemed to be one sided, a splitting in the literature, appearing to be caught on the Kleinian (1957) "envious attack", focusing on the harmful effects of the influences of generation, there did not seem to be much that highlighted the supportive side. Whilst it seemed that there exists illuminating content in terms of conceptual ideas, there still seemed to be a gap of the rich biographical nature that could provide rigorous depth of research, from a psychosocial perspective, within an organisational setting, particularly a systems psychodynamic approach. This holds not only from what is individually internalised, but therefore what is injected into the system.

2.7 Literature in relation to the system: A family therapy lens

Family dynamics and the study thereof have provided us with another lens with which to look at how perceived generational differences could be manifesting itself within the organisational context. McDougall (1992) describes a “theatre of the mind” where the script is written in childhood and re-enacted subconsciously in adulthood. These processes and phenomena are largely unconscious, albeit influential. Families are the first institution to which we belong, and our parents and siblings are our first ‘team’. The research that exists to suggest that the familial relations re-emerge in organisational life may not be new, but the consideration of how perceived generational differences may add another layer of complexity to organisational relationships and processes, particularly where authority and power are concerned, seems an unknown.

2.7.1 Role assignment, patterns and attachment

Family dynamics and role assignment, particularly in the context of how power and authority are inherited and managed across generations, was paramount in this literature review. A key paper by Brunner (2018) highlights the psycho-social elements of how power is both transmitted and perceived through generational hierarchies within organisations, a concept deeply connected to family dynamics in terms of maintaining control and managing anxieties across generations. This is linked to psychoanalytic concepts like splitting, transference, and the intergenerational transmission of roles and expectations. Brunner’s work suggests that the psycho-social processes observed in organisational hierarchies often mirror family dynamics, where power structures and roles are passed down generationally. These insights

align with theories from family therapy³, such as Bowen's family systems theory, where patterns and roles within family units extend into professional contexts, influencing how generational groups interact and manage authority.

Braun (2011) suggests that we bring to our organisations our attachment patterns and they become part of what happens unconsciously between people, which in turn affects our capacity for trust, and shapes our responses to others and our environment. She suggests that in the same way children need to feel secure enough in a family to develop, people need to feel secure enough in organisations to work effectively. Understanding how generation in the mind, that which lives in the unconscious manifests itself, could be helpful in attempting to make sense of complex organisational life, in particular leadership and organisational development.

2.7.2 Social notions in family dynamics.

There are concepts in the family dynamics field that lend themselves to how the perception of older or younger generations may be perceived because childhood, in and of itself, is a social notion which is partly responsible for the formation of generational order. Alanen (2001, p. 20) explains this as "... a complex set of social processes through which people become (are constructed as) 'children' while other people become (are constructed as) 'adults'". Within the organisation, we see, particularly in transference and countertransference, various working relationships trigger re-enactments of familial relationships. This research could be useful given that these parent-and-sibling relationships, and their construction, are potentially influenced by generational position. It seems that how power is wielded and repelled

³ More to be discussed under family therapy

therein, and consequentially influences organisational processes and relationships, remains unexplored.

2.7.3 Sibling and parental relationships as it relates to generation

While there has been sufficient work on sibling relationships (Baker, 2014) and parent-child relationships (Gao & Cummings, 2019; Winnicott, 1986), nothing I have found speaks to generation specifically from a systems perspective. Birth order yes, but not era, historical timing or those living contemporaneously⁴ and the associated perceptions. Early family life affects how people respond and react within the workplace, giving insight to how we make sense of our environment and relationships. Some research exists that references how the generational processes shape the nature of child-parent relations (Mayall, 2002) and that the parental position cannot exist without the other (child) position (Alanen, 2001), suggesting that that which we know about familial relationships being replicated in organisations, may shed light on how generational differences influence perceptions, and therefore the relevant processes and relationships.

2.8 Literature in relation to organisation in the mind: the influence of generation in the mind

What transpired towards the end of this study was the relevance of David Armstrong's organisation in the mind (OIM)⁵ (Armstrong, 2005), and how a generation in the mind influences people in relation to generation, as generation in one's mind seemed like a significant feature of how generation operates. As such, OIM was a useful conceptual tool within this study given that I saw how generation in the mind had agency in

⁴ Existing, living, originating or occurring during the same period of time

⁵ In-depth explanations of OIM are expanded upon in the discussion chapter

people's relatedness to generation, their own and others, in the way that OIM does in relation to organisation. The concept of generation in the mind lives in the unconscious, unseen, and therefore may be more potent, and have more agency. OIM as a theoretical perspective offers understanding of individual narratives in an organisational frame (Tucker, 2013). As such, this way of thinking offers a context for exploring generational differences as they form in the mind and illustrates how generation is experienced by the individual, considering the internalised picture they present of generation (their own and others) and the relationship to generation as a whole.

It is important to note the following, particularly as OIM is later used as a key theoretical contribution in the discussion chapter. Armstrong was strongly influenced by psychoanalytic theory, particularly object relations and group relations, equally so is generation in the mind. While his work does not directly draw from family therapy theories as much as psychoanalysis, there are most certainly overlaps, specifically expressed in how both fields view systems of relationships and the internalization of roles and patterns as paramount underpinnings to the respective bodies of work. Armstrong's work, alongside the array of family therapy influences, provided a powerful lens for understanding how unconscious processes shape individuals' perceptions and experiences of their organisations, much like how family therapy explores the internalization of family dynamics. OIM is key in this research because it is able to lift the focus and application from the individual in the family, to the individual in the organisation, which is then extended upon by the work from the Grubb institute.

2.9 Literature in relation to a sociological perspective

In a key INSEAD paper, Woodward et al. (2015) talk about a collective consciousness and reference Mannheim's (1952) 'Problem of generation', where generation has been treated as a sociological phenomenon, but little attention has been paid to the internalised aspects, and therefore the socio-psychological connections. According to Mannheim, people are significantly influenced by the socio-historical environment (in particular, notable events that involve them actively) of their youth; giving rise, on the basis of shared experience, to social cohorts that in their turn influence events that shape future generations, (Pilcher, 1993).

"The Milan group believed mental phenomena reflect social phenomena" (Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p. 240), both demonstrating a synergetic relationship. Parry and Urwin (2011), Dencker et al. (2008), Kelan (2014), Edmunds and Turner (2005), and Schuman and Scott (1989), refer to generational style (an idiosyncratic awareness formed by the experiences of that period), collective memory and shared experiences which can create a bond, thereby differentiating members of one generation from another. On the basis of the above it seems reasonable to see how generation can be alluded to collectively (socio), but the effect of the individuality or individualised construct (psycho) and how the projected societal impact potentially manifests itself, seems to be missing.

2.9.1 The generation gap

In a paper by Neugarten (1970), there is much debate about how the generation gap, while an evident global phenomenon, remains rarely systematically investigated, particularly with regard to positionality, intergenerational relations and the social role

people choose to take up. Giddens (1991) speaks to the difference amid traditional, pre-modern culture (where patterns are predetermined and therefore individual action is moot) and post-traditional, modern culture (where people are less concerned with the standards set by earlier generations and thus have more choice), which is mirrored in the world of work. Perhaps the perception of generation, and the ability to take up one's agency in generational identity, has been a recent liberation, alongside other intersectionality-related deliverances in society.

A limitation in current research seems to be that many of the characteristics perceived are viewed one-dimensionally, as opposed to multidimensionally, once again a potential splitting and perhaps a parallel process. For example, it is said to be a well-versed view that Generation X is self-centred, however, "... it is important to recognize that what may be viewed as selfish, can also be viewed as autonomous" (Jurkiewicz, 2000). This seems to be an example of perception, of generation in the mind, and thus a justification for biographical research, to take a deeper look into these perceptions, how they are built up in the mind over time, and how both psycho and social aspects potentially influence this formation.

2.9.2 The interrelatedness of age and generation

At a societal level, it would be amiss to not consider the question about age as opposed to generation, or age as a mediator for generation. While age is biological, what it means to be old or young is a social construct. Rudolph et al. (2020, p.1) ask: "What accounts for the ubiquity of generations despite a lack of evidence for their existence and impact?" They argue that the social constructionism enables significant opportunities for recognising the dogged omnipresence of generations and that,

looking at specific eras and their associated norms, might offer a healthier understanding of how perceptions unfold at work. “The social constructionist perspective calls for a shift in thinking about generations as tangible and demonstrable units of study, to socially constructed entities, the existence of which is in-and-of-itself worthy of study” (Rudolph et al., 2020, p. 8). This paper is pertinent because of that shift in thinking which can be considered through a biographical approach and a psycho-social lens, looking deeply at to what extent, if any, do people accept or reject that social construct in their narrative and how does that shape their identity and perception of generational differences.

2.9.3 The impact of societal paradigm shift

Traced shifts in society and individual relatedness are key concepts when considering the perceived differences between generations. “At the societal level, the move has been from a reliable dependency culture, through 'failed dependency', associated with rage and alienation, and into a culture of non-dependency, with self-interest as the norm” (Miller, 1999, p. 103), i.e., Thatcherism and Generation X. This significant paper highlighted these paradigm shifts collectively, but there still remains an absence of how people make sense of this internally, which may have implications for individuals, organisations and society at large. Early work from Kertzer (1983) suggests that generations are important to further sociological research and thus further exploration in this area could shed light on embryonic anxieties located in the perception of generation.

2.9.4 Bourdieu and the differentiation from Mannheim

Lastly, an article that examines the role of generations in Bourdieu's work shows the differentiation from Mannheim and many other sociologists, suggesting that rather than generation being a potential source of collective identity, the focus was instead on genesis of social groupings, classification struggles and the difficult relationships of representation (Purhonen, 2015). Many suggest that Bourdieu referred to generations as an alternative for social class and as such looked at cultural generations because of the tendency of intellectuals to fall into the trap of scholastic fallacy i.e., when making generational interpretations, intellectuals tend to portray their own internalised (and therefore limited) experiences misleadingly, 'the vision of the world that is favoured and authorized by a particular social condition' (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 50). Finally, Bourdieu also questioned how one would look at generations separately to age, to what extent inter-generations had more probability and thus classification and how some cohorts are more probable generations than others, which questioned the totality of generationalism as it were. Suggesting that where generation could be a alternative to social class, it may give us a new ways to think of social change and progress.

2.10 Literature review conclusion

This research looked at generational differences at a deeper level, as a concept "in the mind", as opposed to a demographic variable in broad research. There seems to be a malleability of how and/or what people perceive generation to be or what they identify with, that current research has been unable to explore adequately. Emotional experience is often driven by conscious, but also unconscious factors, and it is **this** (the experiencing and imagining of generation that forms one's inner world and

influences one's interaction with the outer world), that the current research was interested in. While there is some adjacent research, and that which begins to question the effects of generations within the workplace, the perception of generational differences, and the impact within the organisation, it still seems to lack a degree of depth which I was hoping to find, particularly from a qualitative perspective, but more specifically a systems psychodynamic approach. From what I have come across, there does not seem to be a sufficient understanding of the internal (psychic space) and external (environment or system) effects of generation in the mind, within the complexities of organisational life. Generation in the mind may have notable impacts on identity, authority and processes and relationships within the organisation, which have the capacity to create particular dynamics that either move a system along, or hinder the progress in multiple ways.

Chapter 3: Research methodology and design

3.1 Research methodology

This chapter will look at the research methodology used, the research paradigm, how I identified a research methodology, what the rationale for that methodology was, and finally how it was deployed. This chapter will explain the data collection and analysis, as well as look at how participants were selected and recruited.

3.2 The research paradigm

“You cannot make thinking come on demand; those ‘aha’ moments in understanding what the research text is saying will come through being immersed in, and staying engaged with, the data” (Wright-St Clair, 2014, p 17). This research is anchored in the interpretive phenomenology paradigm, also referred to as hermeneutic or Heideggerian phenomenology (Wright-St Clair, 2014) because it focuses on the lived experience of participants. The research methodologies (BNIM and Grounded theory) are specifically aligned to this paradigm because of this interpretivist approach of the lived life and told story, while staying close to the data. The data (participant's lived experience) is situated within a particular context to bring out the deeper meaning of the data. This deeper understanding is then used inductively to develop broader concepts. The data I collected was analysed to reveal themes and meanings, in order to create more understanding of how individuals had internalised their experiences.

3.3 Research position: How I identified a methodology

As my research question is an exploration in understanding ‘what happens or exists’ in generational differences, its nature is interpretive. For this research it was important

to understand subjective experiences which are historically and contextually bound. As such, this made the biographical narrative interpretative method (BNIM) an ideal method, alongside the simultaneous involvement of grounded theory in gathering and analysing data, clearly geared towards developing theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which was used gradually to distil the data. Before sharing in-depth the rationale, and use, of BNIM as a methodology in this research, let us first look briefly at what BNIM is.

3.4 Biographical narrative interpretative method (BNIM)

BNIM is a methodology for exploring lived-experiences of individuals through the stories they tell: their biographic narrative. Presuming that “narrative expression” is indicative of both conscious and unconscious concerns, as well as cultural, societal and individual assumptions and processes, BNIM can support exploration into the lived experiences. (Wengraf, 2006; Wengraf, 2013). This method is used to capture an uninterrupted story from participants with a framework to support the analysis and interpretation of those stories. The BNIM analysis is formulaic where nine stages analyse the individual narratives, and a tenth stage supports a cross case analysis. With analysis across cases, BNIM and the analytic strategy⁶ it assumes, attempts to analyse three interconnected aspects of participants. These are: the person’s whole life story (the biography), how they tell it (the narrative), whilst appreciating that narratives are subject to social interpretation (interpretive) (Corbally & O’Neill, 2014, p. 3). BNIM uses an initiating question SQUIN (single question aimed at inducing narrative) in sub-session one (SS1), a first interview. This is then closely followed by SS2 which asks narrative questions on mentioned topics in chronological order of how

⁶“The BNIM analytic tool is formulaic and uses a nine stage case process of individual case analysis. A tenth stage facilitates analysis across cases. See Appendix A for reference of the data gathering and data analysis tools”. (Corbally & O’Neill, 2014, p.1).

they were presented, otherwise known as ‘particular incident narrative’ (PINs). SQUIN and PINs are explored in slightly more depth in the data collection section.

3.5 Rationale: Why BNIM

In general, I used BNIM in relation to the questions that I had and the object of study. I was trying to get an in-depth understanding of how generation has functioned through aspiring leadership, through a biographic exploration. My belief is that BNIM gives one a sense, over time, of how someone has lived a life, how that has been impacted by their perception of generation and how they experienced generational differences throughout that career trajectory. More specifically, what I believed BNIM would give this research, was: 1) the ability to look at individuals’ narratives from a psycho and social perspective – both the individual context and the social context. “BNIM facilitates an understanding⁷ of both the ‘inner’ and the ‘outer’ worlds, both the ‘psycho’ and the ‘societal’” (Wengraf, 2006; Wengraf, 2013, p.1), thus making it relevant for psycho-dynamic and socio-dynamic approaches; 2) because I believe that there is a gestalt to individuals’ experiences, where the whole is greater than the sum of parts which BNIM is able to capture; 3) I was interested in the biographical arch of the lived life over time and the relationship with generational differences in both past and present (double) orientations, which equally speaks to the gestalt of the method; 4) I was interested in what was not obvious, to either participants or researcher, about generation and about the possibility of what has not yet been spoken about when considering generational difference. As Wengraf (2001) suggests, BNIM “[c]onveys tacit and unconscious assumptions and norms of the individual or of a cultural group”.

⁷ “Especially those researchers wanting a tool that supports a fully psycho-societal understanding in which neither sociological nor psychological dynamics and structures are neglected or privileged, and in which both are understood not statically but as situated historically” (Wengraf 2006, Wengraf 2013 p. 1).

(2001, p. 115). Lastly; 5) because I believed that I would be working with defended subjects in relation to generational differences. I believe that given the upward trajectory and ambitious nature of my participants, as discussed in recruitment and selection, that I would have participants that were potentially, unconsciously, defending against anxieties which likely had a significant influence on their lives, and thus experiences and relationships. Hollway and Jefferson (2008, p. 299) suggest “It is a fundamental proposition in psychoanalytic theory that anxiety is inherent in the human condition, specifically, that threats to the self-create anxiety. These defences are likely triggered at the unconscious level and so, if experiences with different generations were deemed too anxiety-provoking, they could be recalled differently i.e., a more acceptable version of events or forgotten altogether. It is these defences that influence the meaning that is available to participants (defended subjects), particularly in a work context, and how they are shared with the listener, who in this case is also a defended subject”.

With the above in mind, it seems important to consider the history of the method as that was significant in the rationale for choosing BNIM. The biographical interpretive methods first developed by Rosenthal and Bar-On (1992), post war, as described by Schutze (1992), was used to take account of the lives of holocaust survivors and Nazi soldiers, where it was thought that, given their experiences (highly defended ones given the painful content), they would be too “defended” to respond to direct questioning and thus looked to a research method that could uncover what he referred to as “faded-out memories and delayed recollections of emotionally or morally disturbing war experiences” (Schutze, 1992, p. 187). Whilst I am not suggesting that my participants would be as defended as post-war soldiers and survivors, what I am

suggesting is that the degree of repressed feelings, competition, the ambitious nature of participants and thus the challenges they potentially faced across their careers, were likely to evoke difficulties in relaying their experiences. Finally, it later became apparent to me that perhaps I selected BNIM because of my own biographical experience of generation.

3.6 Considerations of other methods

While other methodologies were considered, I ultimately felt that they would not have afforded me as much access to the biographical aspects that I would require to answer my research questions. More specifically, both FANI and action research were considered; Although FANI would have been a robust alternative, and likely a second choice, I felt the biographical selection BNIM offered would have been more appropriate for the biographical arch over time in relation to generation. While FANI allows for a context to be explored, it did not require a whole biographical narrative like BNIM. “BNIM’s procedure is concerned for identifying past perspectives of the subject (“then-perspectives”) as well as their present perspective (“now-perspective”)” (Wengraf, 2006; Wengraf, 2013, p. 383). FANI, similarly to BNIM, is narrative-orientated and can thus speak to the psychosocial aspects inherent to the matter. However, I felt that the focus on present time states of mind, i.e., with the phrase “can you tell me”, would limit the need this research had to get to the ‘past perspectives’, the key to biographical research. For BNIM, the key phrasing is “Can you remember ...?”, which more willingly provokes the past then-perspective, epitomised in a PIN, which felt more relevant to this research, given that the purpose was to look at how generation has been constructed in the mind over time. In addition, action research was considered, yet not chosen, due to the core criticisms of action research: 1) The

over-involvement by the researchers in the findings; and 2) The potential risks of conflicts of interest.

BNIM of course has its limitations too. Firstly, and most notably, that breadth of research is not a strength of BNIM, but rather depth. I wanted to understand not just *if* people had come across these differences in generations, but *how* they had ascribed meaning to them throughout their careers. So, while BNIM sacrifices breadth for depth, to my mind it was acceptable for this research given the complexity of the question at hand, and that seemingly in review of the literature, qualitative breadth had been lacking. Secondly, by nature it is restrictive in that the process is prescriptive and leaves little room for argumentation and description. Lastly, participants willing to share their stories have very clear reasons for doing so, which have restrictions in their own right.

3.7 The use of BNIM in this research and the hybrid approach

While BNIM appeared to be the methodology best suited to my research question, and thorough one-on-one training with Tom Wengraf proved invaluable in supporting this decision, I did not follow the BNIM process in its entirety, but rather adjusted the method. I used BNIM as a method of data collection (using both a SQUIN and PINs or SS1 and SS2) and data analysis (the two-track approach and the future blind analysis – as discussed in the research design) alongside grounded theory. The reason for these adjustments was that I believed the participants in this study (leaders across organisations) and their narratives would not require the degree of complexity in the full BNIM approach. After the initial interviews it became clear that participants were willingly leaning into the process of sharing their narratives so openly that I feared

overcomplicating the analysis may lose some of the richness of the data. In the seven interviews conducted, I was concerned not only about the amount of time I had available, but equally the size of this research project and how much data could truly be used. Similarly, this is the reason for not embarking on a SS3, additional data gathering via more descriptive questions. I believed that I would be in danger of losing the essence of the unconscious biographical data that was afforded to me in SS1 and SS2, particularly that which appeared less obvious to participants.

3.8 Research design: Data collection and analysis

This section looks to explore the data collection methods and processes, including how I went about selecting and recruiting participants.

3.8.1 Data collection – Biographical interviewing

BNIM gives clarity about a specific structure for the interview, thus data collection began by using an initiating question SQUIN (single question aimed at inducing narrative) in sub-session one (SS1).

As you know, I'm researching how people of different ages in organisations relate to each other. So, can you please tell me the story of your leadership journey, and your relationships with people of different ages, from when you first started thinking in your work about age differences, up until now? All those events and experiences that were important for you personally, I'll listen. I won't interrupt. I'll just take some notes in case I have any questions for you after you finished. Please take your time and please begin wherever you like.

I purposefully used the word 'age' and not the word 'generation', not only on guidance from Tom Wengraf that the word 'generation' was part of my theory language, and

potentially not part of participants vocabulary, but also because it would be data in itself to see if participants invited the word in themselves. Essentially, this pointing again to that which is unconscious and can be accessed via the BNIM methodology.

Interviews were divided into two sessions for each of the seven participants. SS1 (the SQUIN) was followed by SS2, which asked narrative questions on mentioned topics in chronological order of how they were presented: PINs, introduced within SS1, or brought up subsequently (SS2). Points of prominence were pursued as per BNIM guidelines, those being: 1) Always begin with the opening line or first comment of the participant's interview; 2) Select any event and/or data and/or aspect that feel emotionally charged; 3) Any comment directly related to what I am researching (generational differences); 4) Any comment that seemed totally irrelevant; and 5) Any final or closing comments from participants. It should be noted that these sub-sessions could provide data to formulate final questions for SS3⁸ which I chose not to use for reasons mentioned earlier. Timely self-debriefing (memos) notes were taken and these, along with the transcripts, were used to inform the two-track approach⁹.

3.8.2 Focus groups

BNIM uses focus groups to maintain a degree of objectivity, which was particularly attractive to me given the degree of subjectivity I felt existed in my 'me-search' and thus, the conscious and unconscious assumptions I held while analysing the data, could be challenged. The focus groups consisted of two groups of four participants

⁸ While SS1 & 2 (as per BNIM) are strict, SS3 does not follow typical BNIM methodology and questions are anchored in argumentation and description. SS3 is optional in BNIM methodology, it was not used for this study.

⁹ The lived life (the biographical data chronology that informs the biographical data analysis) and the told story (test structure sequentialisation that informs the thematic field analysis) "An interest in the biographical data of the lived life and some research of the historical context(s) of that life can often suggest the nature of a possible difference between the 'real author' and the 'implied author, hence the value of a two-track approach to understand (defended) tellings" (Wengraf 2001, p. 4).

grouped in similar ages to those of my participants – one group older than 40 and one group younger than 40.

The focus groups were asked to look at an extract of the transcript (part of the told story) and the chronological events (the lived life) of two of the participants (Eddy and Lara). Firstly, they had to look at the extract presented to them chunk by chunk and consider “future blind” what was happening, and going to be happening next. Secondly, the focus groups were presented with the chronologies of these above-mentioned participants, which was also explored future blind in chunks or sections. Participants were once again asked to think about what is happening and what was going to happen next. Progressively at each step, informed by the following chunk and future events, experiential hypotheses and alternative hypotheses were formed. It is this subjectivity that is situated in the focus groups’ hypotheses that is used as data.

BNIM Focus Group 2 – September 2nd 2022

Participant 1 – Text 1 (Lara)

Line 1: They were called we were called professional support lawyers.

Lydia

I hadn't worked with these types of lawyers before. They were very intense.

Kristen

We provided professional support for our clients if they needed it.

Humza

Because we knew how to support corporate lawyers with what they needed

Line 2: Some some people in that role are still called that. And knowledge lawyers is a more usual term.

Humza

I prefer to go by professional support lawyer though

Kristen

I think knowledge lawyers is a better term because it reflects what we do

Lydia

I think my understanding of the field is better represented by knowledge

Line 3: So gradually, that network built up and shortly before my second son was born, I was made to partner and you well, you.

Lydia

you know how much work goes into being partner. And parenting!

Humza

suddenly being partner takes up so much time and balancing family with that type of role becomes difficult

Kristen

you need to balance work with family

Figure 4: Focus group FBA (future blind analysis) example

3.8.3 Data analysis

Grounded theory was used alongside BNIM data collection and analysis¹⁰. Grounded theory "... sets out to discover or construct theory from data, systematically obtained and analysed using comparative analysis" (Chun Tie et al., 2019, p. 1). A cross case analysis approach was taken, as well as focus groups (panels) as per BNIM stages 8, 9 and 10¹¹, as well as a macro- and micro-panel analysis (future blind interpretation or future blind analysis).

¹⁰ Refer to Appendix A figure 10

¹¹ Refer to Appendix A figure 10

3.8.4 *BNIM analysis*

A full exact transcription of the interview was created and systematically processed in two different ways (the twin track approach), such that it could then be interpreted along two separate paths, the lived life and the told story. The outcomes were then later brought together. Interpretation of raw data (field notes written immediately after each interview as well as transcripts) were part of the process of interpretive work. Pen pictures were created and in-case analyses were done on each transcript, while a cross-case analysis was done thereafter, essentially following steps 8 (comparison of lived life with told story), 9 (case account creation) and 10 (cross case theorisation) of the BNIM data methodology.

In addition, the twin track approach allowed for the development of a biographical data chronology (BDC), essentially extracting the biographical data (lived life) which was interpreted alongside the sequence of the telling of the told story (TSS). Selected participants' extracts were later presented chunk by chunk to a research panel (future blind analysis). Future blind analysis (FBA) was deemed helpful for this specific research, because it enabled the ability to get a sense of how participants experienced their experiences with different generations and the ability to speak to that which was more situated in the unconscious about generation, i.e. the future blind self, acting out towards desired futures. The research panel took a small sample of the transcripts of two key narratives (Lara and Eddy) and used them to unravel narratives and verify or falsify the hypothesis. After many hypotheses and counter-hypotheses were gathered and recorded, the next life-event chunk was presented. Constructions of case history, identification of case structure and comparison of cases eventually related back to the

aim of the study or research question. Data taken from the research panels was triangulated with the cross-case analysis themes and findings.

3.8.5 Grounded theory

Glaser and Holton have defined grounded theory (GT) as "... a set of integrated conceptual hypotheses systematically generated to produce an inductive theory about a substantive area" (Glaser & Holton, 2004, p. 43). Strauss and Corbin define GT as a "... theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 12). Essentially, GT was used as a methodology that enabled the disentangling of the interactions, and experiences of participants and in their lived lives and told stories, explanations as such, grounded in participants own narratives. I chose GT because it "... represents both a method of inquiry and a resultant product of that inquiry" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 1). While grounded theory is a very open-ended methodology, the analysis strategies aided an organised and analytical discovery process, which was as follows:

- 1) Transcripts were recorded (data collection);
- 2) Line by line analysis was conducted using word document comments;
- 3) Line by line analysis as an iterative process generated pen pictures and in case analysis (these included SS1 and SS2, as well as my own memo notes). These pen pictures looked specifically at the lived life (chronology), the told story (early years, late years, transitional points) and my thoughts on what kind of tale this was;
- 4) Transcripts were then broken into extracts or open coding. "Something kinaesthetic occurs when we are coding; we are mentally and physically active in the process" (Charmaz, 2012, p. 5). More specifically I aimed to compare

- similar extracts or quotes that looked at different participants' experiences with different generations with the idea of creating themes and the cluster of themes;
- 5) I then grouped quotes into broad themes (later on to be further distilled into findings);
 - 6) I then grouped codes into more central themes (axial coding) which looked for sets of quotes that represented the key themes (later to be distilled into findings; these findings are tightly connected to the data). This is evident in the cross-case analysis;
 - 7) The FBA with focus groups was conducted concurrently with the cross-case analysis. "The hallmark of GT is concurrent data generation/collection and analysis" (Chun Tie et al., 2019, p. 4) which is why focus groups (data collection method) were running concurrently with in-case and cross-case analyses. I purposefully did not want to be swayed by what the focus groups generated, but rather challenged, hence it was imperative that my early analysis was done first;
 - 8) I then cross referenced my pen pictures and in-case analyses as well as my research panel data (FBA) into the key themes further to analyse quotes to compare with codes and explore additional (particularly arbitrary data in BNIM) to see if there was anything amiss;
 - 9) These back-and-forth steps in generating codes, grouping data and developing themes were repeated until such time that I believe I had saturated the data available, central themes were possible; and
 - 10) Central themes were grouped and confirmed into findings and from there the GIM theory was grounded via the discussion chapter.

3.9 Selection and recruitment

The below section looks at how I went about selecting and recruiting participants for this in-depth study.

3.9.1 Selection: Sampling techniques

I made use of a few different types of sampling techniques when selecting participants, primarily because the BNIM methodology, being a methodological approach aligned to depth of research, suggests that sample size be kept smaller to enhance the richness of the data. With that in mind, I used the following sampling techniques.

- 1) Purposeful sampling: for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas, et al., 2015), namely, generational differences in organisational setting, and to represent some explicit or predefined traits, i.e., being on an upward leadership trajectory and specific age criteria for this study.
- 2) BNIM methodology suggests that the less known participants are to the researcher, the less inhibited the narrative is likely to be. With this in mind, I used elements of snowball sampling, given its popularity in qualitative research where the characteristics of networking and referral are used. I started with a small number of initial contacts (seeds), who fitted the research criteria, and from there a few more participants were invited to become participants within the research (Parker et al., 2019).
- 3) Lastly, I made use of opportunist sampling (also known as convenience or emergent sampling), a technique that uses an open period of recruitment that continues until a set number of subjects are enrolled and selection is based on a first-come, first-served basis (Luborsky & Rubinstein, 1995).

This method is specifically used in studies drawing on predefined populations, as seen in the recruitment process and selection criteria of this study. I used this method specifically because the commitment to being a participant in a BNIM study is not only a significant time commitment, but it is also, given its free association technique, a method that has the potential to trigger repressed experiences and associated emotions. For both of these reasons, it is not uncommon for participants to either withdraw from the study prior to completion of sub-sessions one and two, but perhaps to withdraw altogether and request that their data not be further used in the research.

3.9.2 Recruitment

While I tried to have, within this purposeful sampling, a group as heterogenous as possible, given the time commitment for BNIM, this was challenging. I recruited participants by leaning on my professional network, across industries, asking for recommendations of: 1) who would be interested in being part of this study on generational differences; and 2) who would be able to commit a minimum of three hours to the process. I used degrees of separation in my professional network, as opposed to colleagues directly, because BNIM is relatively prescriptive that the less of a pre-existing relationship exists, the better for the raw narrative to unfold.

The following criteria were applied to select the participants for this study.

- Fall into one of the following age ranges: 30–40, 40–50 and 50–60 – there were two ‘spaces’ per age range

- Represent a range of differing sectors or industries, albeit I have 50% representation for the military. Given my most recent consultancy work, members of the military seemed easily accessible, but equally I experienced the participants from the military as incredibly willing to share their time and their story. This in itself is data.
- Have or have had experience in a variety of leadership roles in an upward trajectory.

Chapter 4: Pen Pictures

Below is a snapshot of each participant (pen picture) a more detailed pen picture can be found in the appendices.

4.1 Participant 1: Callum

Callum's perception of generation (and identity) is impacted by the role he takes up and his own perception of his credibility and experience. As much as Callum constantly identifies that he is the youngest or most junior, he doesn't seem to identify with that/his generation particularly when in a leadership position. He describes himself as possibly different to the rest and his story is one of isolation in his experience. His experience speaks to both his substantive roles as needing to keep up or catch up and later refers to being seen as a threat by peers, particularly those older than him but in similar leadership roles. Callum seems to identify mostly with generations before him that have a wealth of knowledge that he can gain from and the lived experiences he shares which coincide with those older than him. Callum doesn't actually mention generation and sticks to the age descriptor and while he says age isn't a thing, it's unconsciously bigger that he perceives and there is a pride he feels for having that badge of honour as the youngest in his positions of authority. He was singled out from the beginning of his career and that's what he most strongly identifies with.

Callum speaks to the confidence associated to experiences and therefore credibility which can make age or generation null and void. You get the sense that when you are not sure of yourself and you have a low level of self-efficacy, then your age is a very real visible artefact to you until you allow another label to speak for you such as experience or life stage where there is a space of neutrality (neither being too young nor too old) and then as you age the pendulum swings. What stands out to me most

about Callum's story is that generational differences are palpable in organisations where authority is considered – it feels more magnified because of the challenge to traditional structures. There is a very strong theme (his perception of what others perceive) that authority should only be awarded to those that have earned it by age not experience and thus there is a nexus among leadership, power and authority it's impact on how or to what extent generation is seen or perceived in organisations. He shares how it's just a natural instinct or an emotional response. This leads me to think that depending on one's formative years, their experience with authority and power is very dependent on how they react to generations displaying the same agency. Lastly Callum talks about an invisible line that is very real line for him and others where behaviour and attitudes change once a realisation has been made around the intersectionality of skill, competence, experience and age; where ultimately the age for either the perceiver or receiver no longer matters. For him on his journey his age and his generation in the mind focuses on the difference that it has created for him and how he has been a stand out/isolated case as a result.

4.2 Participant 2: Lara

Lara's tale is one that is dominated more by gender than by age however the two are inextricably linked and for me that in and of itself speaks to the difference between now and then, this generation and that generation; an artefact of the history of that time. I wonder about Lara's perception about generation when gender was such a strong complexity in her life. There is something oedipal in her story about the senior men in her organisation and the women partners that came before her and how she felt that they were brutal, not malicious, but expected young women to earn their places. There are a few places where different generations really stand out in her story and with this in mind the core themes are more about credibility and experience,

authority and power and how people chose to take up their agency. Lara's view of her own generation or the generation that she identifies with is one that was on the cusp of change an innovation, where boundaries were being pushed and new ways of working were being considered where it was incredibly difficult for women in that environment but she doesn't view it as any easier for those that come after her. She speaks to an underlying respect for those that are in authority and positions of power in a way that made it automated – the seniority meant you were credible and experienced which was what was respected, and if you were younger and had that to you then people were surprised, much like how she was raised and how that links to her family dynamic, the family she was born into as well as the one she has created. Lara's narrative speaks to the structures and the dynamics that she internalised from her family and replicates in the organisation, from how she views her leaders to how she views those that work for her, often characterised by age as a defining factor.

What stood out most to me in this interview was how Lara's perception of her own generation, other generations she identified with and those that she did not, were all predicated on a very rigid social structure – again likely that which she had inherited from her familial dynamics. The hierarchical structure you are part of from birth, through child development, into school and university, the one that is apparent in your familial dynamics and all through potential social interactions are all classified hierarchical and her work experience is an extension of that. As a result, my view is that her perception of generation is very rigid in a hierarchical structure by whichever defining mechanism makes sense. Interestingly you can see moments in her experiences where junior people prove themselves to be very competent or where senior people let her down, in terms of the status she had automatically given them and how that challenges everything she's ever known or been taught. You can see

when this thought process occurs, it very much becomes about gender for her – a more tangible difference. A few points in her narrative where she felt awkward around managing older people are examples of not knowing how to function outside the traditional structures applicable to this and the intolerable dynamics that different generations bring to the workplace for many people. Generation in the mind for Lara seems to be an extension of all social structures that categorise by age and what is more important or prevalent in her story is the credibility and experience before the age.

4.3 Participant 3: Eddy

Eddy's story is one that seems to look back with respect and forward with disappointment. He shows an annoyance with the generation after him and much glamour and respect for the generation before him. He seems to identify more so with the generation before him especially from the 'physicality of the job' perspective, and a politically correct respect for the generation after him that is more familiar with technology. My phantasy was that I don't believe Eddy values this at all. Eddy's tale is one of different mindset and he sees these mindsets differ across generations mainly in leadership and training roles he takes up as opposed to on a peer to peer/lateral relations level. Eddy's sense of generation seems to be attached to authority, achievement and experience. While Eddy did not mention a lot about his family life prior to his career, he does mention that he was the last child and that he felt that he needed to prove himself and the way he knew how to do that was to join the military and see if he could achieve something that way, as opposed to competing with an academic sister or a practical hands-on bother. He also explains that he joined

the marines to be more elitist as opposed to just the army. Both these PINs in his narrative indicated to me there was possibly a strong narrative in his family about age and respect and how the two were often coupled together, equally for status and respect. If you were older or deemed to be engaged in a more elite career or role, that is what could earn you respect, since he was the youngest and could not change that, he leaned towards competence and credibility for recognition. He often speaks about the veterans that he predicated his style and learnings on. When Eddy mentions taking lads through training and that they had duvets as opposed to brick beds – that is indicative of that time not that generation as there is no defined generation in that training group but interestingly that difference is located in generation. There are some soldiers that are near enough his age (within 5 years) who join SF with zero operational experience yet this is attributed to generation/age as opposed to the paradigm shift that has changed the ways of working and macro shifts that impact political, economic and societal changes. Eddy's sense of identity lies in that of hard-core experience and the physicality of war of those that came before him and of his own generation that he was lucky enough to be the last that experienced this level of combat. Eddy's perception of younger/future generations is based on lack – what they won't have and what they won't see and therefore a blocker in how he relates to them and builds relationships (a possible projection). Eddy's story is one that speak of respect towards authority that's naturally found in a ranked organisation like the military and a patriarchal familial institution – from him taking instruction well to expecting his subordinates to do so – his view of authority in a very hierarchical organisation is one he finds comfort and familiarity in and when predecessors challenge that, that manifests as lack of respect toward them.

It feels as if for Eddy there is a denial located in generation in that those younger than him cannot truly offer anything that he could learn from. Generation for Eddy is not the factor but positionality in relation to his generation/place/order is what constructs his perception around generations.

4.4 Participant 4: Cole

Cole's story, much like others, felt cathartic for her. To her own admittance it felt like a coaching session as she walked through her leadership journey step by step. Her journey was full of unique experiences that highlighted how much generation was located in her relationships and experiences, which she felt made her stand out from the rest of even what she may identify as her generation. She has an array of experience that put her in a position of more authority, expertise, experience and it almost translates as her identifying as older but seen as younger when that has constantly been in question by herself and others. Her own perception felt instrumental in how others viewed her – a form of projective identification. She takes up a somewhat nurturing and condescending type of role with the younger generations – in an attempt to clutch as deserving authority. In her view of older generations, she looks up to them in a sense of approval seeking and needing to be shown the ropes but equally eager to demonstrate her ability without the support. The support from older generations is a comfort blanket. In her examples of this you can often see her desire to be told “good girl” and to be given good feedback about her being “good enough” in the role. Interesting the seemingly open and somewhat playful relationship she seems to have with her dad is what enables her to be able to “deal with old grumpy men” more so than some of her colleagues showing that potentially familial dynamics are still very relevant for her in the workplace. The transmission of the emotional patterns, beliefs, and behaviours that were possible projected on her from older generations feels like

something that is carried into organisation life, particularly how she identifies with people that are like her father and her sister.

She only once mentions that age doesn't equal seniority (that this is potentially organisational culture driven which she has sought out in the organisations she works for) and as such seniority and rank, authority, agency and expertise are for her more important than age is but it is seen as a very attractive/impressive feature to have all of these characteristics WHILE being younger. An accolade of sorts to have arrived here prior to a specific age of either the person or generation before – for what is out of the norm. While I am not sure that her idea of generation has manifested in her desire to stand out but her perception of herself where age and generation certainly play a role, that has facilitated some of how she manifests generation for herself. A lot can be said for the organisations that she has chosen to work for and the nature of financial services from a culture, gender and age perspective. My perception is that Cole finds comfort in an older organisational culture, with norms anchored in tradition because she finds a sense of comfort in that as to her own testament, she is a structured person who “is very establishment” which these organisations have and as a result she aligns her identity to older.

4.5 Participant 5: Bernie

My perception of Bernie's story is mostly that while one thing is confidently said, something totally different is inherently felt which made this narrative complex and difficult to tell. A very interesting version of his biographic journey – to a degree it was more an experienced led narrative about his interactions with leadership than it was about his life story. He speaks mostly about what good leadership looks like and

how/where he was able to learn and take from people and what he needed to make him a well-rounded leader he is today. I am not sure if the question was misunderstood or if it was more tolerable to talk widely about experiences than age – but there is something in that data for me with this participant. He litters age through his narrative where he reflects on the relevance of age and the role it played in his leadership journey. Bernie often suggests directly that age isn't a thing but indirectly much of his narrative is beset with certain ways of representing a view that make one feel otherwise about how he sees certain generations via age. Bernie seemed to have multiple conflicting statements that suggested, on the one hand that age made no difference, but then followed up by immediately comparing younger and older generations and experiences. This indicated that age does matter but to the extent that you allow it to be located in the situation you are experiencing – perhaps as a defence? There was something in his story about separating what happened to/with him from what might go on for others and therefore influencing his perception of generation. There was something equalising in this narrative about going from being in a vertical layer of structure with someone of different ages to then coming alongside them – the story told of almost realising that people aren't always worthy of the pedestal you potentially put them on as leaders/seniors when you come alongside them, a mask is removed when authority equalizes, and that those that remain there in your esteem when you come alongside them. Those are the leaders to look up to and learn from – ultimately the leaders you respect. What was also interesting was how he mentions age downward but never upward – he mitigates for his experience to younger but not older. He often talks about how someone is so young but is absolutely worth their weight in their opinion and the role they take up but he has no examples of someone older but still being able to do the job. It's almost as if that's

expected of the generation above or that it would be too disrespectful to point out an imperfection in the generation above. I am left with the feeling that I triggered something for him being younger than he is and therefore that he needed to send praise towards the direction of my generation.

Where his generation is what I was left asking myself – I had the association in my mind that Bernie was in between and therefore floating in between generations, not older because he doesn't connect or see himself as a leader others look up to but not younger because there have been decades of experience, he has to separate himself from the younger generations. I experienced Bernie as being in purgatory with regards to generational identification and as such it was easier for him to reflect on his experiences with leadership as opposed to age in an effort to reconcile the contradiction he feels in his experiences of age and generation and ultimately self-identity.

4.6 Participant 6: Jerry

Jerry's story references more about culture, diversity, heritage and social status than it does about age – he even refers to the special forces as a “class-less, not rank-less organisation”. His story to me focuses on more of the socio-cultural influence of generational difference. He does however share that he feels age isn't a thing. While age has been a non-entity to Jerry his narrative makes many a reference to generation or age-related sentiments in his upbringing as well as consistently mentioning the physical age and ability that he feels he has been and judges others on, which naturally declines with age. What stands out to me about Jerry's story is that while he suggests that he has never factored age into his decisions or relationships/leadership yet he

describes how difficult the hierarchy in the military is to navigate for a young and while he does say the he thinks this may have changed I wondered about what his relationship to an older generation might be as a result of this experience and therefore where he sees himself – too far removed from that generation and therefore not part of it. I wondered if this was as a result of the multi-socio/cultural experiences in his formative years.

Jerry refers to himself as older a lot of the time (older but not old – on the cusp) – older to join the army, then the marines, then SF and finally he refers to himself as being 20 years older than the RSM on D Day in WW2. I experienced Jerry as struggling to identify where he belongs in terms of generation. Always on the edge but never inside the realms of a generation for the fear of what belonging to an “older” generation might mean. It felt very close to that of becoming irrelevant or redundant if one aligned with the generation that next to leave the workforce. Interesting I felt he was trying to convince himself that he was still worthy of an SF role, that he was still young and capable, the way he repeatedly referenced that he can and still does the physical aspect of the job despite the fact that he is “relatively old now, in comparison to the rest of the workforce”. Jerry is scared to become one of the dinosaurs on camp (either physically or mentally) and that realisation is stark for him. I am not sure where he sits on that fence and I am not sure he knows either. I felt that he aligned himself more with a generation that came before him in terms of being more mature and a natural leader, having learnt to read people a lot sooner than most and having a very well-travelled past (and likely having spent more time with older folks) – this give the impression that he is beyond his years for his age because his development was potentially a lot more rapid from an early age. Not so much that he was robbed of childhood but I think he grew up quicker in a very “posh” environment that meant he

was always acting older and perhaps identifying with those older until it became unattractive to do so. I think this is a fear that has shaped how Jerry perceives ages around him, his own age and therefore his generation and others.

4.7 Participant 7: Kevin

Kevin's story is heavy with anger and resentment to previous generations (particular those he associated with his father and other authority figures) but a yearning for understanding to become aware of this in his own journey and fix that through the next generation. I felt that splitting and projective identification were very relevant in his narrative. Kevin says clearly that he has a lot to work through with his relationship with his father and the childhood trauma he experienced and how he has used that to make sense of organisational experiences – particularly relationship with people of authority. But equally carries so much of that into the organisation, from beliefs to behaviours. He uses the terms “people of authority” and “people of power” interchangeably, albeit it's not the same thing: where power is defined as the ability or potential of an individual to influence others and control their actions, authority is the legitimized power a person is granted. He seems to suggest that both are triggering for him in organisational settings because of his family dynamics and his schooling experience. Where people in power had the capacity to influence Kevin's thoughts, emotions etc – he actually seeks them out in his journey, from popular kids to a group that he just wants to fit into because the influence his thinking etc. whereas with authority he repels the legitimized aspects of someone role in the sense that “just because someone put you there does not mean you know better or I should listen” and this “calling out” of legitimized power was first experienced with his father after repeated disappointments. For the most part

people in authority have been older than Kevin – parents, teachers, managers etc. and so this concept of wrongfully legitimized power is deeply associated with older generations for Kevin. This trajectory continues throughout his life and career where no one in a position of authority is able to channel his ingenuity and as a result it masquerades as disruptiveness when it becomes non-constructive. Interestingly Kevin now finds himself in a position where he can be purposefully disruptive as a force for good in the tech insurance industry and as a result, is not only finding a lot of success, but is also seemingly happier than he has been for a while and is allowing himself space for a lot of introspection.

I experienced Kevin as having justifications for behaviours and many moments “checking” to see if he has done the right thing. I found this interesting because we are the same age – I felt like he was asking for validation from me as a peer but as someone who he saw as having more expertise in an area than himself which really pulled on his sense of pecking order despite generational similarities.

He takes up one of two roles depending on how he situates himself within his generation, firstly as “less than” and therefore seeking approval or as “more than” and therefore trying to coach/teach. It doesn’t seem ok for Kevin to just “be” with his generation – there is always “trying” of some sort which leads me to think it doesn’t feel like a natural identification for him but maybe based more on situational variables – age, school years, music, milestones, technology, socio-economic status etc.

Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present my findings. While there were nine key findings, I will look to discuss the four most prominent; 1) family dynamics, 2) identity, 3) competition and 4) competence and credibility and their relationships to the formation of generation in the mind. Within all themes there is the overarching concept of external factors that influence participants and their perception of generation(s) including their own. This is significant: the interplay between internal and external factors seemed to be prevalent in all the interviews, across all themes and is represented in the graphic below. (Please note more detailed analysis of this in appendices)

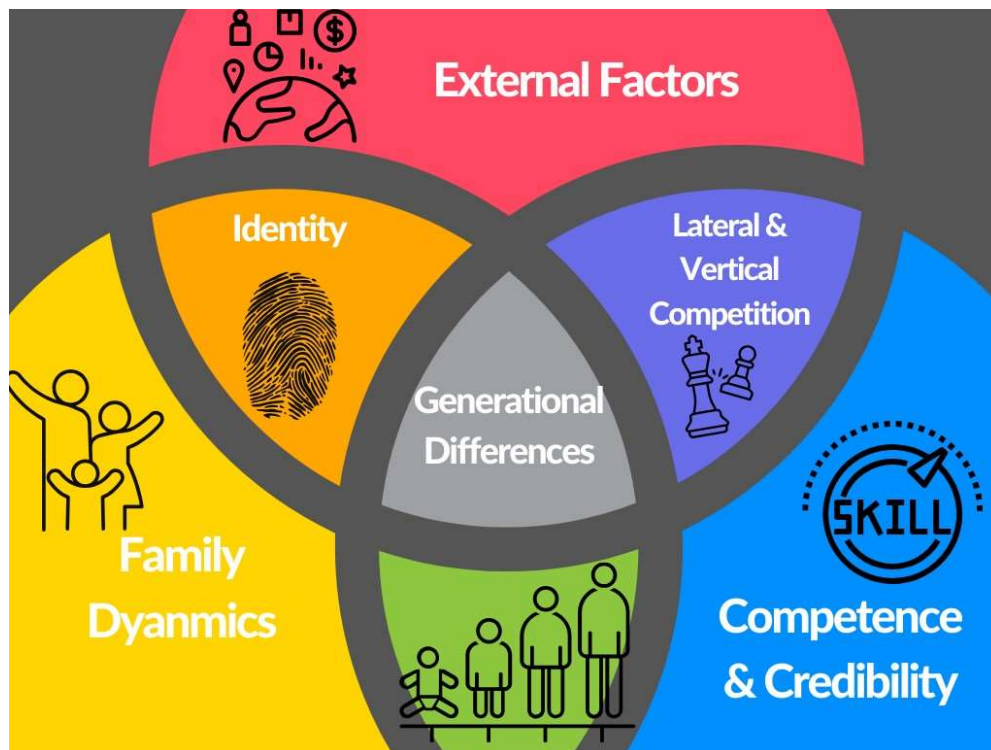


Figure 5 – Interrelationships between key themes

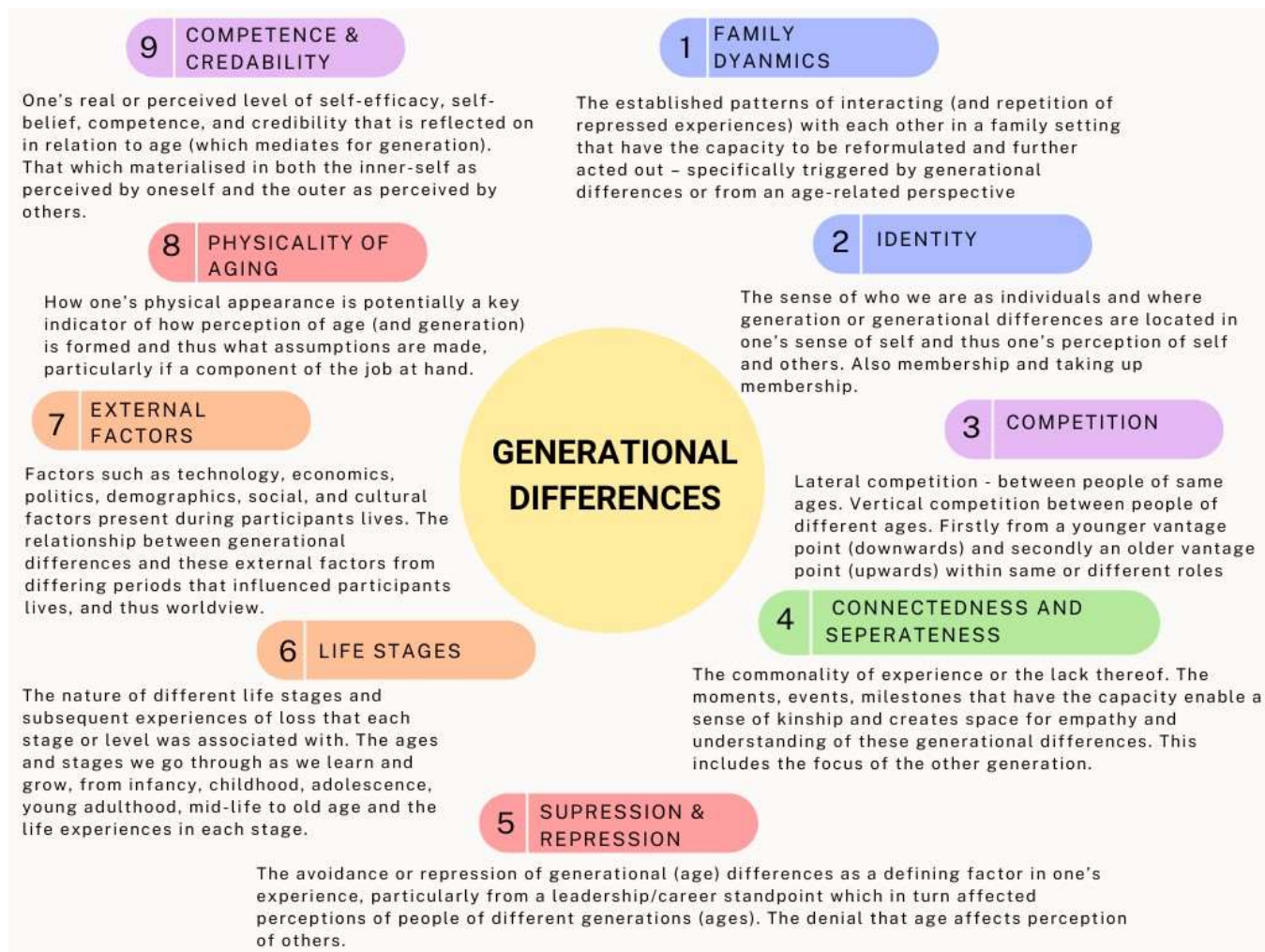


Figure 6 – Map of all nine themes

5.2 Formation of generation in the mind: Family dynamics

This section looks to discuss the formation of generation in the mind as it relates to family dynamics.

5.2.1 Introduction

Family dynamics, familiar patterns of interaction and repetition of repressed experiences, appeared to be re-enacted, or at the very least, serve as a prominent reminder, when engaging in relationships with other generations in organisations.

These re-enactments and reminders seemed to influence perceptions of generation in the workplace. In essence, how participants seemed to have used family positioning and relationships or relatedness, to navigate organisational relationships, Age rather than position, appeared significant in activating that re-enactment. The difference in age seems to galvanise the repetition of family dynamics in organisational relationships, importantly even when devoid of influence, authority, power, leadership, agency. Family relationships appeared to shape the interaction that people have with other generations, and therefore appeared to influence how perception is constructed. From role assignment and boundaries, to adopted narratives and internalization, the influence of family dynamics was undeniably significant in how generation in the mind is formed.

5.2.2 Familial relationships re-enacted via generational differences

It seemed participants extend(ed) familiar patterns, roles, dynamics, etc. from family relationships into the workplace. Some spoke openly of this in their narratives but some aspects they appeared a less aware of - processing feelings associated with family dynamics, toward people perceived to be from another generation. The defended aspects (repetitions of old feelings, attitudes, and behaviours) of repressed

experiences (or transmissions) seemed to have the capacity to influence here-and-now relationships in the workplace, particularly where generational assumptions were at work.

Whilst there is not necessarily anything new about viewing organisational life through the lens of family dynamics, the intricacy and the degree to which it influences, perhaps is. It appeared deeply rooted in participants' perceptions of generation, because of this it influenced them. Family structure, for many the first awareness of an 'other' or a 'different' generation therefore seems to have much agency when, or propensity to be, replicated in the workplace, but even more so when the relationships were different to that blueprint that they had had for a number of years – from sibling to parent.

The relationship and the relatedness to one's own family and the nature of transitions experienced also appeared become part of relatedness to generation and transition and successions in the work place. Similarly, participants' narratives suggested perceptions of generations, as one ages and develops throughout life, changes. The extension of family role into generation, developing within one's own family and succeeding within one's own family network, seemed to be played out or brought in to how one is perceived regarding generation. These ideas of what were narrated or internalized in formative years seemed to influence not only their own identity but how they identified with others as a result of the relevant family role.

Participants appeared aware of how family patterns or shifts in familial relationships (or in general relationships with authority, e.g. teachers or role models) were mirrored in organisations, but not to the degree that it enabled a re-enactment or placed emphasis on some internalization, however subtle. There was a sense that participants brought their own models from family to work with them, but importantly

they also brought their own absent relationships to work with them. This seemed to search for what never was: not only the bringing of certain sets of relationships or relatedness to generation, but also bringing their absence and searching for it in the organisation, finding it in the model of generation. Perhaps that which was easier, which made generation and therefore people relatable as opposed to that which was intrinsically more difficult.

Cole

“It feels familiar when you find someone that I guess is the same generationally as your parents or even your siblings. So I don’t know ... I think perhaps it’s just ... it feels familiar.”

Kevin

“(My employees) only one of them is older. But he’s a he’s like a fantastic, fantastic dad...you know, maybe in another life”

While Cole, in the example below, may suggest that she does well to navigate these relationships with “grumpy older men” akin to her father, that may influence her own behaviour, and the roles that she feels she consciously and unconsciously takes up. Perhaps even the reason that she may feel the other emotions associated to being a child or not being taken seriously in her role, such as in the following example.

Cole

“I find it almost easier as well to sometimes relate to people that are similar age to my parents. I have found at work, we’ve had some really difficult stakeholders who are kind of the same age (as my dad) and really grumpy old man and I’m like ... I’ve got this, guys. I have grown up with this man and I know how to ... how to influence”

“I don’t take it offensively at all, but you know, one of my male colleagues that I met recently came up and he just like, did a little scuffle of the top of my head and like gave me a cuddle and I was like, I feel like a child”

Within family dynamics, the relationships considered here are a comparison of the generation before an individual to that of their parents, from the generation after them to that of their children, and from their peers to their siblings. That extension in the mind that goes on; upwards, downwards and laterally, indicative of generational transmission from family to organisational life. Particularly that which is internalized and how this holds the propensity for projective identification and splitting, the idealizing and the devaluing.

Participants seemed to be using parental relationships to make sense of older generations, for better or worse it seemed to help the taking up of one's own followership, but had the capacity to get in the way.

Kevin

"I want to be noticed and doing good things because it's one of the things that I never had happen. As a kid there was never a father figure around to say, "Great job, son". Fathers should ... you know, spend loads of time with their kids and you should always look up to your dad and when he tells you you've done a good job."

where there was a conflicted relationship with one's parents, this appeared to mirror relationships with older generations within the workplace. In some instances, this seemed beneficial. However, it was problematic, rather loading professional relationship with something personal, impacting interpersonal, professional relationship and organisational processes.

Kevin

"I've always had a problem with people of power or people in power. I first noticed I had a problem with power at schools...It probably starts with a type of childhood I had, I think, being brought up in a single parent home, having a very poor and intermittent relationship with my father".

Participants seemed to go to their own relationships with their children to make sense of younger generations, where they found identification with a child or child-like figures. These relationships too had both positive and negative implications for participants.

Lara

“We would get junior lawyers seconded to us. They were just colleagues. Occasionally I would look at them and think, oh my God, you’re only four years older than my son. But I tried to ignore that. They were colleagues. I suppose that was how it worked. Okay.”

5.2.3 Immediate versus other family relationships

The parents and sibling relationships in participants’ narratives seem to be one standard deviation away from the individual and therefore the closest path of comparison or conflict, and repetition. It seems that when generational differences are replicated within the workplace, that these immediate relationships are most prominent and mostly replicated. Whereas, much like grandparents, people that are more than one standard deviation away from participants, such very senior leader, seemed to be less reflected on from the perspective of having, or noting, a complex relationship.

Participants’ narratives suggested that individuals tend to repeat learnt, observed and experienced patterns of relating more prominently with immediate or primary familial generations.

Lara

“When I was a very junior lawyer, the age of the partner did have an impact on me, when they were older than my father or at least my father’s age. (a senior partner) ... we would all have jumped off the top of the high building if he told us to, we did whatever he wanted us to do, because we all wanted his approval.”

Very rarely was the relationship with grandparents brought into focus as intensely as that of parents and siblings. Grandparental relationships seemed to be akin to relationships with those too far up in the hierarchy or age (and thus life stage). It seemed that their lived experiences were so fundamentally different to their own that there was no crossover in terms of shared understandings, potentially reducing the amount of relatedness within their relationships or showing the respect they would to grandparents to those in very senior (removed) positions from themselves.

Cole

“The leadership teams that you interact with are very young, still in the 30s and 40s. Actually, the only people at Accenture who are older, are so senior at that point that you don’t actually interact with them at all. I didn’t really realise they existed.”

Bernie

“I was the literally the lowest of the low and the only hierarchy that you would engage with would be corporals, sergeants. Anyone above that, your interactions tended to be really formulaic and wouldn’t occur very often. It is really hard to engage with people above a certain rank, because they’re so distant from you in terms of our lived experience in terms of the job.”

The perceptions for family relationships and relatedness seemed to be a key influencer on how participants viewed other generations: actively used to understand, navigate and to some degree appeared superimposed on members of other generations. Concepts such as transference and countertransference allowed some understanding of the participants’ narratives which seem to suggest repeating patterns of family-type dynamics. While, once again, these are not new concepts, the bearing on the perception created in one’s mind about these generational differences, is significant.

5.2.4 From an organisational perspective: leaderships and followership

The impact of the use of family relationships and relatedness on some levels seemed to support the taking up of a followership role. Generation seemed to support; 1) The dynamics within the organisation in relation to the nature of the industry. 2) The extension of family-type dynamics appearing as a prêt-à-porter fit for some organisations, where one seemed to expect traditional structures of leadership and therefore a containing factor. However, in many situations it seemed it could hinder organisational processes and relationships if the internalization of family dynamics resulted in social defenses and participants were unable to move past seeing a person as either 'good' or 'bad' given their experience with others of a similar generation or a particular family narrative.

Participants' narratives suggested that different generations present in the workforce had the propensity to trigger oedipal dynamics, particularly when succession or progression was concerned. Participants seemed to suggest that the very nature of organisations, their structures, and ultimately the people they hire, is such that it promotes an antagonistic environment, where irrespective of lateral or vertical relations, employees are competing for scarce resources, which could result in even more emphasis placed on generational differences as the differentiator.

This is an example of this dynamic being used in a nexus of the industry his father was in, in combination with the influential older males he refers to as having had an issue with. This seems to be unhelpful.

Kevin

"The role before that was a guy who literally just reminded me of my dad, he was just a sleaze bag like, so, the resentment was from day one. My father, was and still is an absolute

sleazebag. I don't even like him speaking to the kids... he's one of the most horrible people and to have to work for someone that reminded you of ... it was really draining, it reminds me of all the traits I hate in my father. I think that the thing is with the older generation, I'm stereotyping here ... I think it's just that that association with the time."

5.2.5 Authority in the mind as it relates to generation and generational differences

Interestingly, when the participants were bringing nuances of family dynamics into their narratives, it was often represented as or by power, influence, authority, and agency this seemed to then allow them to take up. Families are the first institutions individuals belong to, and the boundaries presented by authority and family order seemed to replicate themselves in the participants' experiences. In participants' narratives, the majority of these relationships were people with a combination of authority and older age and/or generation, but age seemed to take precedence, irrespective of authority. Authority seemed to act as a mediator for age and/or generation and age difference and/or generation seemed to be at the core of what triggered the repetition or reenactment. In varying degrees of pervasiveness across participants' narratives, the concept of age or generational difference appeared to be more significant than authority alone in leadership roles.

The research here suggests that the actual age of an individual, irrespective of position of influence or authority, seemed to be more of a trigger for these dynamics in organisations. Age itself and perception of generation appeared to trigger dynamics and perceptions linked to authority and difference, more so given that the difference in age or generation seemed to be a stronger stimulus than that of authority alone. Traditional organisational hierarchy, boundaries and structures often predict that age and position of influence go hand in hand, but in this complex world of work today, this 'traditional' combination is challenged.

Callum

“I went to Afghanistan the first time and did another tour, I still felt like people are looking down on us because, I was a lot younger, but I felt like very experienced. I remember thinking I was younger, but didn't really feel any sort of age discrepancy until I started getting more of a leadership role... the more senior guys who you're in parallel with, would start to question why you're at that age, a lot younger to them, but in a sort of a position of authority.”

This example alludes to authority, but more significantly parental figures that are inherently associated with power and authority (and the internalized experiences thereof). Interestingly, in this example the participant uses the word obviously, almost as if to suggest that it is a well-known fact that when you are young age matters.

Lara

“So, obviously, when I was a very junior lawyer, the age of the partner did have an impact on me, when they were older than my father or at least my father's age... there was a rule that we call everybody by their Christian names and it took me a long time to call the senior partner by his Christian name, because it just seems so weird.”

In this example it seemed a consistent feeling attributable to any authority that was established in the family model, was reinforced by teachers and perpetually carried into the workplace for any level of authority.

Kevin

“...This led to teachers and authority figures telling me off a lot more than most, which compounded a perpetual cycle of resenting it, so deep rooted in me was this kind of like distasteful nature that I had towards authority figures and I've just carried that through my entire life.”

In addition to the replication of relationships was the concept of approval seeking and acceptance, which too is linked to family dynamics. As per the above quotes from Lara, there was a strong sense of the need for approval or acceptance from

participants, especially in an upward direction, potentially replicating parental relationships where positions of authority were concerned. Once again, while authority plays a key role, it's the combination of both age (i.e. perceptions of generation) and authority that triggered these patterns to re-emerge, as opposed to just authority alone. Interestingly, when authority is removed, but the age difference remains, it seems that the approval seeking or fear-based behaviour remains, despite authority being absent. This seemed to played out among people within the same role yet different generations, where the authority was not necessarily negated by the role – i.e. transference onto leadership. Ultimately, it seemed that different generations triggered the replication of family dynamics, and not authority alone, as is well known in systems psychodynamics and understanding organisations.

Bernie

“... so, if I look back and think about that entire time from leadership's point of view, is fucked up ... you had an old guy which was just a complete knob, his opening lines to us was ... “I'd rather see one of you cunts die, than see a thorn in my Billy's dog's foot”. You know, you're meant to be an inspiration, but you don't value us, but he was a sergeant I had to appease, because he had the power to make your life utter misery. But I had zero respect for him.”

5.2.6 Summary

Considering the participants' narratives, not only does it support the aforementioned core finding that family patterns are repeated and reformed in the workplace, and age and/or generation is used as a unique identifier or trigger in how that plays out, but equally this evidence suggests that generational differences seem to be embedded in the relationships at work that carry influence, power and authority, even more so when familiar. This seems to be particularly true when different generations are present both

in and outside of traditional organisational or hierarchical structures and the natural and/or previously existing discourse of both age and/or generation (older) and authority is no longer a given. The emotional consequences that seems to be located in the perceptions of different generations, as a result of the re-enactment of familial relationships, seems to trigger unexplored and unconscious repressed feelings that participants seemed to relive when facing these generational differences. There were examples of where participants would project certain relationships, emotions, or expectations onto either other colleagues in reference to their generation, or even how they presented themselves and the roles they took up when triggered by those of different generations within the workplace. More specifically, some participants extended a current or previous relationship with a family member, in a significant and particular way, whereas others acted in a more general sense of seniority being extended or perceived as older family members. Participants seemed to use these familial dynamics to: 1) make sense of relationships, and 2) at times to project what was being anticipated in complex organisational life, onto different generations by using pre-existing family relationships as a blueprint.

5.3 Formation of generation in the mind: Identity

This section looks to discuss the formation of generation in the mind as it relates to identity.

5.3.1 Introduction

This finding speaks to the sense of who we are as individuals and where generation or generational differences are located in one's sense of self, and one's perception of self and others. People may have potentially used classification of generation, better to determine what generation they did or did not identify with, in an attempt to create some degree of social order or understanding, not only of themselves, but of others. This, in some ways, speaks to how individuals attempt to gather context on self and others, better to understand what various generations identify with, and the intersection thereof, the sameness and difference: can one take up multiple senses of identity across generations or is it generationally bound? This finding is an attempt to understand more about the identification and memberships with certain groups with which participants had perceived a sense of oneness, which seemed to shape perceptions of their own and other generations.

5.3.2 Symbolic representation of generations

In this research, generation and identity seemed to be linked where participants aligned themselves (and others) to key identifiers that felt indicative of a specific generation. Qualities or relics that people held in their minds that they have acquired about themselves and others, seemed to affect identity and membership of generation. The sentiment of 'your generation' and 'my generation' was often used in narratives and these distinctions were often tied to artefacts to attempt to differentiate. These artefacts seemed to be anything from physical objects, to symbols of moments in time,

particular words or experiences to temperaments demonstrated or events that become part of one's narrative. These artefacts seemed to be key in shaping one's identity. As per the quote from Eddy, there seems to be markers indicative of an older generation he deeply respects. Those tours or experiences are what he uses to distinguish 'them from us'.

Eddy

"All the instructors were really old, one particular corporal was a Falklands vet..., they'd all done the Gulf in the 90s, numerous tours in Northern Ireland back then. And they were just so, so experienced. You realise everything that they were teaching you, is stuff that kept them alive, so you have massive respect for them."

5.3.3 Social identity and self-categorisation

Self-categorisation and social-identity theories explain that people classify themselves to impose order on the social environment and to make sense of who they are (Tajfel & Turner, 1985), and it seemed this was imperative for participants as they waded through the generational distinction in their narratives. Participants' awareness of their membership to a generational group seemed paramount in the perceptions they held about their own and other generations, and where they chose to (or not) take up their membership. For the most part, this seemed somewhat binary in approach in that it seemed easier (more often done) to identify with positive aspects of the generation to which an individual belonged, and easier to vilify the negative aspects of other generations. In other words: a splitting of sorts.

While membership to generation was not as explicit as 'I belong to Gen XYZ', it was more in the nuances of participants' associations (artefacts) with various generations and the separation of 'yours versus mine'. As per the example from Lara, it is worth

noting that membership to a group was not only solely in generation, but in other factors that make up one's identity (social) such as gender, and thus the belonging to multiple groups, was noted. The belonging to these multiple groups is in and of itself a key marker of generational differences, given the earlier points about artefacts and experiences that are indicative of one's generation, how aspects such as gender, race, etc. were experiences, is equally a representation of generation.

Lara

"The male-female dichotomy I was far more conscious of that than I was of seniority... the male-female dynamic was infinitely more significant, which probably says something about seniority thing. So, in a way my perspective was more about the position of women in the law, than about age... I loved thinking about the strategy but I also needed to be at home to see my children...the eternal dilemma for the working woman. And I don't know that it's got any easier for your generation, frankly."

What was interesting was that it seemed as if aspects loaded on social identity (race, gender, ethnicity, etc.) were easier to speak to than generational identity. More research is needed to look at the intersectionality of different identifying factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, etc., and the effect that it has on generation or generational differences.

5.3.4 Membership and dis-membership

Identity seemed to be at the core of the psychosocial influences that affect one's membership or dis-membership of groups. In participants' narratives I got the sense that belonging to a certain group motivated people to reflect a sense of identity under certain circumstances, most notably for this research, in certain roles and organisations. In the quote from Eddy, we can see that he is differentiating himself

from the next generation, because he believes they have it easier and that is not something he wants to be associated with: not him, nor his generation.

Eddy

"I think it's just that generation where they're really technology advanced. I think, that my generation... It was a harder, steeper learning curve and a harder way to learn. It was always a sink or swim. There was no cotton wool stuff or cuddling you. If you didn't get it, you're going to either get shot or you're just going to get beasted."

5.3.5 Making sense of self: classification generation

The link between generation and identity that participants seemed to indicate was immersing oneself in social categorisation and associating the individuals (or themselves) in that category with certain characteristics. A nod to generation and generational differences, because of the social norms and constructs developed collectively (particularly with regard to a certain era and/or time) that participants referred to, e.g. 'the Playstation Generation' or 'the Falklands'. This is once again that classification of people in an attempt to impose order, to make sense of other and thus yourself, and potentially to defend against the anxieties of oneness or sameness in one's processing for where those similarities of the more 'unpleasant' traits exist.

Ultimately in this sense-making process, participants shared that it was more about 'non-generational factors' (that appeared to be unconsciously and profoundly linked to generation and time, despite participants not necessarily being overtly aware of that), such as the multicultural environment or the gender with which they identified, that created differences and similarities, and less so how generation in itself was a defining factor. Generation seemed to be more of a silent, yet potent factor, in distinguishing one's membership and sense of self. What remains interesting is that the factors

participants were suggesting were more influential than generation itself, also were marked by time or era shifts in what was accepted or frowned upon at that specific time, therefore being indicative of generation, regardless of which way it was referenced. It seemed that by speaking to a different identifying factor such as gender (and suggesting that “it was very different for women back then”), was equally, if not more, referring to what a generation or era had defined and thus became a way marker and therefore an identifier. The impression was that when sophisticated thinking failed, generation (or age) was too complex of a concept with which to grapple, and as such it was easier to focus more on the social, than the generational, identity pieces.

5.3.6 Summary

The inextricable, yet unconscious, link felt between identity and generation is relevant in this research, given the increasing age diversity in organisations. From a psychosocial perspective identity seemed to be core in its subtle and unconscious prominence where participants seemed to try make sense of what social constructs may have been placed upon them, as well as what other social aspects influence their strong sense of identity: where does generation fit in, how does it shape, how is it thought about and can it be thought about? To the extent that there was reflexivity in participants and more sophisticated thinking, generation seemed to play a key role in underlying ways that the majority of participants had not yet explored in totality, perhaps in an attempt to ignore the construct, given its complexity. Once participants felt able to identify other factors making up their individuality, generation or age was often worn down or dismissed by more determining factors like gender or power.

The multidimensional factors that influenced how participants perceived the world, i.e., the intersectionality of culture and age, gender and age, race and age and socio-economic status and age, seemed to provide a lens through which people could make sense of self.

Finally, identity seemed to be an intricate and multifaceted concept, and when married with generational differences or the introduction of the combination – generational identity – the subject becomes ambiguous. The underlying concept that generational identity can, and sometimes does, account for a lot of the perceptions that people hold of their own and other's identity, is an important finding in this research. It lays the foundation for the conceptual theory about generation in the mind and how perceptions are formed. Generation appears fluid when people attempt to use it as a marker for identity, perhaps more as an unconscious silent marker, never really taking shape the way other clearer features of one's identity do, yet when articulated, it seems to hold so much of one's identity, particularly if eloquently coupled with artefacts.

5.4 Formation of generation in the mind: Lateral and vertical competition

This section looks to discuss the formation of generation in the mind, as it relates to competition.

5.4.1 Introduction

Competition, and its relationship to generation in this research, was largely formed around comparison. Participants' narratives emphasised the instinctive drive to observe others' skills, achievements and successes relative to age/generation and the associated norms which seemed to become a justification for the conscious or (mostly)

unconscious behaviour towards others. Competition, as it appears in these findings, is representative of both individual (for example, performance) and collective (cultural or industry or paradigm shifts) influences that seemed to have an effect on the binary of right or wrong, good or bad, better or worse, as it relates to generation and career/position/role, which appeared in the comparison at the generational level. It is worth noting the selection requirements for this study: individuals that are or were on an upward leadership trajectory. Therefore, competition may have been characteristic for this group specifically.

Competition appeared to be relevant at the peer level (lateral), in a vertical sense with people of different (upward and downward) ages, as well as systemically. Whilst competition seemed tangible for all participants, the defining factor was the directionality and frequency of experience. For some it was between generations, and for other it existed within the same generation (i.e. the same peer group), largely triggered by comparison, vis-à-vis performance: progression or reversion.

The table below is an illustration to show where competition was felt on the axes: lateral, vertical (upwards), vertical (downwards) and systemic at an institutional level.

Participant	Lateral	Vertical (upwards)	Vertical (downwards)	Systemic
Participant 1 - Callum	X	X		X
Participant 2 – Lara	X	X	X	X
Participant 3 – Eddy			X	
Participant 4 – Cole	X	X		X
Participant 5 – Bernie	X			X

Participant 6 – Jerry	X		X	X
Participant 7 - Kevin	X	X		X

Table 1: Axes of competition

These findings seemed to be affected by an intricate combination of both age or generation¹² and job level¹³. Jobs levels that appeared higher up hierarchically, inherently bearing more agency, authority, power, influence and/or leadership properties, seemed to trigger more of the unconscious perceptions in participants in relation to competition.

5.4.2 Lateral competition

Lateral competition existed for participants of the same age or generation, and either in the same role or different roles in relation to role hierarchy. More specifically either: 1) where individuals were the same age or generation and in the same or a similar role or job level; and 2) where the age or generation was the same, but the role level was different.

5.4.2.1 Lateral competition: Same or similar job levels

Participants suggested that in such a situation there was more competition, because comparison seemed easier and there was a ‘race’ to achieve.

The sense from participants was that when all was equal, competition could move from as healthy competition or friendly rivalry to a more contentious type, and that that

¹² At multiple points within this study age mediates for generation.

¹³ Job level or role level appeared to play a mediating, and complex, factor in these findings, adding further nuances when reflecting on the relatedness of differentiation and comparison as per competition.

sameness was sometimes more difficult than working within the variance that generational differences bring to competition.

Cole

“So, I think there was much more competition when you’re working in groups at the same age. You’re all equally ambitious and equally hungry to do well. So when you’re the same age, you can assume for the most part, you have very similar life ambitions, at similar life stages etc which is bonding, but also very easy for comparison ... I think there are some tensions sometimes there when you’re all competing, but also friends. (Leading peer/senior people) ... was very uncomfortable, because I think that was a kind of peer leadership. They weren’t technically my peers, but I’m pretty sure they saw themselves as more experienced... and I did too.”

Lara

“Below partner level it could get quite competitive with people wanting to show their best face to the partners and not wanting to be eclipsed by anybody else.”

It seemed that an intragenerational level of competition was more widely acceptable to most, as this is what the majority of social structures are predicated on from infancy to university and it is what most people are familiar with.

Bernie

“Prior to (a career) it is all school base, so you’re peer related anyway. And there’s a hierarchy I guess within your school, which naturally follows, ... joined when I was 20, and then you join with a quite an eclectic mix of people from 16-year-olds to 30-year-olds, as a peer group.”

Lara

“So, your PQE is what sort of establishes your place in the firm. So, a first-year trainee, a second-year trainee, a newly qualified or one-year PQE a two-year PQE, so you know exactly where you are in the strata of the firm. And so, it’s a little bit like being in school. You know, there are people who are two or three years senior to you and people who are junior to you.

These findings potentially suggest that job or role level has a mediating effect on competition and can trigger competitive tendencies when the differences are more apparent. Equally, it suggests that institutions can play a role in how competition is engendered. As one is growing up, going through school and university, there is a degree of controlled competition, as the comparison seems to be consistent within a certain age bracket, often grouping a generation together. However, once one enters the world of work, the boundaries of that structure and the inherent control of former institutions fall away, and the previous groupings of like ages no longer exist. Competition is no longer structured or traditional, where one is constantly competing with people of the same or similar ages.

The layer of the complexity of a different generation into the mix of competition and rivalry, had not been a necessity until organisational life, where the containing structure is removed. In one's former institutions, boundaries surrounding generation seemed tactile, potentially helpful and containing, whereas when in latter institutions such as organisations, much of those boundaries fall away, if not immediately in some instances, almost certainly as people progress in their careers. It is here where competition becomes more palpable, and the tendencies to defend against anxieties triggered by non-traditional structures arise.

5.4.2.2 Lateral competition – different job levels

In the second instance, within lateral relations, where roles or job levels were not the same, participants suggested that competition was rife given the degree of threat the positionality of the job level, in comparison to age or generation, had presented. The differentiating factor was that one might have a better, bigger, more important role which seemed to trigger the notion of comparison and competition.

Participants gave the view that this intersection of role difference within the same generation felt more covetous, because it so readily pointed out the lack that may be felt in such comparisons, which has the potential to result in defensiveness and affect relationships and perceptions.

Callum

"... perhaps the way I came across to that person made them immediately defensive, like I was coming for their job, something like that ...It's more of an invisible barrier, but it's there and then they change. Like they're fine with you when you're not in that position, as soon as you get that position alongside them they look at you bit sideways...if you're subordinate to them, that's fine but when you peer level, they be looking, then they sort of see you as a threat."

Cole

"There can be a bit of a blurred line sometimes between friendship and bonding over similar life experiences and stages and ambitions, but then also needing that line in terms of you are still someone's manager, makes it slightly difficult to deliver harder messages at times."

Participants shared that peers were disapproving of them having achieved a position of power or authority 'before their time', and that there was judgement passed on how they had got to that position at the age they did. It seems that this perception of doubt from peers had the capacity to make one doubt their capability or legitimacy to take up these roles. This, in turn, could impact their interpersonal relationships, in that people addressed them differently because they were perceived differently: as a threat or as not good enough to be in a certain role.

It seems that certain dynamics shifted in relationships and were possibly even powerful enough to impact their own perceptions of their ability to fulfil the role at their age. Some participants suggested that this impact on relationships even went as far

as avoiding opportunities to work together or even being able to lead effectively, devoid of friendship and management blurred lines.

Cole

“I perceive that sometimes when I speak, perhaps people wouldn’t take me as seriously. I think that is probably me, you know my own insecurities, but I do feel like age played a role in that and how I am perceived by this stage of kind of leadership development, if that makes sense.”

5.4.3 Vertical competition

Vertical competition presented as the most complex in relation to generational differences. Vertical competition came into play where participants were of different generations or ages, and roles were either the same or different. In vertical competition the complexity seemed to increase more scenarios that presented different versions of how competition manifested. This section aims to look at upwards (where younger people reflected on the differences present with older generations), and downwards (where older people reflected on the differences present with younger generations). It seemed largely dependent on the direction or positionality from which power and authority was situated and to what degree that differed from traditional norms.

5.4.3.1 Vertical competition - Upwards

It appeared that upward competition seemed acceptable (younger people looking up at older people in more influential/senior positions) as a natural hierarchy of progression and seemed to feel familiar as a representation of family hierarchy and other interactions with authority such as school. It is evident from the quotes that the comparison of experiences, and/or the navigation of these already well-established relationships, are indicative of family dynamics as the natural hierarchy or that to which one is used.

Lara

“I was a very junior lawyer, the age of the partner did have an impact on me, you know, when they were older than my father or at least my father’s age, and it took me a long time to call the senior partner by his Christian name, because it just seems so weird.

“Occasionally I would look at them and think, oh my God, you’re only four years older than my son. But I tried to ignore that. They were colleagues, I suppose that was how it worked.”

Similarly, in that upward competition, it seemed there was the sense that others needed to face the same challenges as the previous generation in order to progress – this showed up as competition but also with a maternal or nurturing side – wanting someone to succeed, but not have it easier than before. A sense of needing to earn the right to take up a role.

Lara

“The most successful female partners were all quite senior by that stage. And they were quite brutal. They had no sympathy for people who were finding it difficult. Their attitude was: if you can’t stand the heat, get out the kitchen. They didn’t, they didn’t crush women in sort of pulling up the ladder after them. They just expected women to go through the same difficult circumstances as they had had to.”

5.4.3.2 Vertical competition – downwards

From a downward competition perspective, where older people looked up that same vertical line and it was an individual younger than them, in a more senior or influential position, it appeared that this felt unacceptable, a disruption of the traditional organisational structures. There seemed to be an additional complexity where leadership/authority was present. It seemed that the tendency to lean into a deeper

comparison, (and competition), was amplified where perceived unequal amounts of power and authority were present outside of a traditional structure. This seemed to then be further amplified by differences in generations, alongside the already existent intensification that power and authority had created. In a layered style, where both informal influence and formal legitimacy of control, mutually seemed to beget an even deeper sense of unfair or wrongdoing between generations, particularly if it were a case of similar roles and different ages (in the direction of those younger) or in vertical roles with same ages (in the direction) of those more senior. Participants alluded to the sense that this had potential to cause malicious behaviour such as sabotaging of opportunities “to shine”.

Lara

“So, somebody who isn’t a partner might feel a bit threatened by a junior lawyer. And sometimes that leads to people not sharing work, not giving if there’s somebody good coming up behind them, they may not give them work, because they don’t want them to shine.”

It seemed that despite the weight that credibility and experience carry in shaping a narrative around generational perceptions (see Credibility and Competence finding), it did not seem powerful enough to negate the feeling of comparison and competition. It seems that when the perception is that one could do a better job/is more skillful, it is then even more difficult to look past the nuances of generational differences, particularly when leadership is called into question. So much so, that Lara refers to it as an awkward experience.

Lara

“It was a slightly awkward leadership experience, because the woman who was in charge of learning and development who’d been quite happy reported to this very senior partner, found it

much more difficult to report to me, because she regarded herself ... and I think she was cleverer and more experienced than me.”

Some participants even eluded to the gaslighting type of behaviour as in the example below, as if to induce more emphasis on the mismatch between task size and/or responsibility, and the age appropriate to do so.

Cole

“Today, I was on a call with someone who is probably in his late 50s and we are now at the same level. But he was making comments like ‘oh, oh wow, such big pieces of work for such a young lady’. I was just like, ‘Yeah, thank you. I know I look young’.

As with leadership (power or authority), while there is much to unravel with what the system, either shifts or shunts, there is something that participants alluded to that is magnified when transitioning from an individual contributor role to a leadership role. What was unclear about the transitional nature of leadership roles and the newly inherited sense of responsibility that ensued, was whether that judgement spoken of below was a tangible aspect for all to see, or if that was something that was intrapsychically experienced and externalised. Either way it has the potential disrupt how they take up their roles, develop interpersonal relationships and possibly even organisational processes.

Callum

“I remember thinking I was younger but I didn’t really feel any sort of age discrepancy until I started getting more of a leadership role ... Then the more senior guys would start to question that you a lot younger to them, but in a position of authority. They didn’t ever say anything, but you could definitely feel that ‘Why is he doing that job, he’s too young’. I think it was more a natural instinct...an emotional response versus their actual thoughts... It’s not like an organisational thing or a cultural thing. I think it’s more like individual people. Certain people

seem like they may be hostile towards some young people coming through... Because you just different to the rest, maybe”.

Callum suggests that it was more of an emotional response and that perhaps they do not mean to act that way, tapping into the more unconscious aspects of an individual where the raw data of the emotion they are currently feeling is perhaps manifesting in the competitive or judgmental behaviour. This could possibly be pointing towards more of the unconscious envious behaviours that could be taking place.

Sometimes the fear of the unknown or defenses against change seemed to be voiced via indictments of various younger generations being moddy-coddled, the impression here was a denigration of the generation that was to follow, in that they wouldn't or couldn't be faced with the same level of challenges and hardships, given that their lives were made fundamentally easier by various progressions in the status quo, technology, ways of working and social constructionism.

Eddy

“They're almost a PlayStation generation. Camping was a novelty. They'd never made their own beds, people were so clueless and not realising what they join. Ultimately, you can have as much technology as you want, but at some point, you're still going to have to have someone pull that trigger. Because that's your whole job.”

With regard to both lateral and vertical competition, there seemed to be a point at which competition had no agency, a sweet spot of sorts that some participants spoke to, that almost seemed to nullify competition – where a gap was wide enough to remove intergenerational competition, but not so wide that it triggered competition as it related to vertical relations.

Cole

“My new boss is probably about four or five years older than me, and she's just fab, a really good role model, she is more experienced and slightly more senior, but not so far away and ahead in her career that I can't work out how to get there... kind of a relatable age gap.”

Bernie

“Trying to have a mentor who is too far removed from you is quite hard, because they'd never fully open up and you'd never be able to have the interaction certainly within the military.”

Lastly, the sibling dynamics that seemed to suggest a transfer of competition from sibling dynamics could possibly manifest itself in lateral competition (and even vertical competition, should the gaps be so significant), especially when differences were made apparent.

Cole

“It feels familiar when you find someone that I guess is the same generationally as your parents or even your siblings. So, I don't know, I think perhaps it's just ... it feels familiar.”

Kevin

“My sisters (younger) one of my employees, and she tells me what to do all the time. So, the family dynamic is quite interesting.”

Ultimately, in both lateral and vertical competition, it seemed that progression was a key trigger for those who felt threatened, especially if it was dissimilar than their own progression. Mostly participants shared experiences whereby it seemed difficult for people older to accept younger people in more senior roles, or having someone the same age as them in a more senior position.

5.4.4 Competition engendered by the system

In the workforce at present, we have a truly multigenerational workforce that has more diversity now than ever before, and thus concepts such as comparison, differentiation

and competition seem to have a reasonable influence over how people maneuver in organisations, make this finding very relevant for this research. Participants shared how the organisations they were in, or even the educational pathways to get to certain professions, were structured such that comparison was key. Pre-working life institutions have a degree of controlled competition which, for the most part, meant that comparison and competition was generally situated within a certain age bracket. These boundaries and structures prior to working life become irrelevant and seemed were more influential at particular periods in one's life course. At this transitional point of entering work life, it seemed that more persuasive life stages/milestones such as long-term relationships and children, had an impact of perception of generation and generational differences. Generation seemed to somehow be linked to professional and personal milestones for participants, and equally used as a gauge of comparison of achievement. Generation seemed to always be operational, but at different points.

Cole

"I think when I was at Accenture and starting off, I didn't really understand some of the more senior people at a different stage in life, because they had different priorities and to me at the time, was thinking all I want to do is excel in my career and work hard and I don't understand why people don't care about this and I never want to be like...now a bit older and starting to reassess my priorities ... I think there is a bit of a miniature life crisis that we probably all experience. And I'm sure your perspective changes."

When considering competition and generational differences within organisational dynamics and what the system can possibly evoke – there appeared to be a link between what the environment activated in participants, as well as what appeared to be encouraged and therefore institutionalised by the various organisations of which participants were part. It seemed that most companies create a dynamic in which employees compete against each other and this, coupled with the perceptions of

generational differences, seemed to have created organisational environments that are rife with competitive expectations.

Bernie

“(The military) environment shapes it (competition) too, everything set that you’re always graded on the course, you’re always assessed. So, institutionally it causes you to be ... no it absolutely lines you up to be super-competitive anyway. Fact.”

Participants suggested that organisations (the system) are endemic with unhelpful processes that trigger obstructive competition and comparison, as well as defences against pre-existing relationships with authority and generations. These processes have the potential to either re-establish familiar patterns in relation to things like authority, or trigger repressed feelings.

Cole

“So, the motto at Accenture was work hard, play hard, and our slogan at the time was ‘high performance delivered well’. They branded everyone there, and I think it’s still very true, ‘insecure overachievers’, which was definitely the culture and how I still feel.”

Bernie

“(In the military) ... it paid to be a winner in training. It paid to be quicker than everyone else, it paid to be fitter than everyone else, because it meant you probably didn’t have to do it again. If you fucked up, it pays to be a winner, first one back doesn’t have to go again ... So there was 100% an onus on being competitive.”

5.4.5 Summary

The concept of comparison, differentiation and competition in relation to generational differences was significant in this research, because of the bearing on perception creation: That which one builds in formative years, and how that is either solidified or

challenged in organisational life. Fundamentally, this finding highlights how generation becomes a vehicle for differentiation, evaluation, comparison and meaning and the possibility of secondary anxieties linked to competition: rivalry, envy and a lack of progress. Competition and comparisons influence underlying behaviours, which in turn affect how generations feel about each other. This may then solicit what competition has the potential to be helpful or unhelpful when navigating complex organisational relationships, structures and processes. More specifically, many of the participants were dynamically comparing or finding points of comparison with 'other' generations, as if they represent a point of difference to gauge self and one's own generation against.

In summary, this finding speaks to the individual and collective, lateral and vertical competition that participants shared in their lived lives and told stories, that seemed to manifest both consciously and somewhat unconsciously in their narratives. Competition seemed to be relevant to how generation in the mind is formed, from the outset of one's journey at a family dynamic level, plus that which is carried through schooling and education and finally into organisations, specifically that which is triggered in people when age, youth, experience, authority and power are all called into question and when the degree of comparison is as extensive as it is in the boundaryless structure of society and organisations today.

5.5 Formation of generation in the mind: Competence and credibility

This section looks to discuss the formation of generation in the mind as it relates to competence and credibility.

5.5.1 Introduction

This finding is about both individual and others', either real or perceived, levels of self-efficacy, self-belief, competence, and/or credibility (collectively referred to as 'competence' from hereon) that has the potential to affect the perceptions individuals in relation to generation¹⁴. When researching generation in the mind, both the power, and the perception of one's competence was tangible in participants' narratives. Either in the way that an individual's competence seemed to nullify the predetermined perceptions their generation is labelled with, or in the way that it seemed able to set up assumptions of age-related competencies, i.e. the young being associated with incompetence and older with competence. This chapter speaks to the conflict that exists with the traditional structures in organisations that magnify the perceptions individuals have regarding generational differences. Specifically, the relationship between age and authority or responsibility, where the perception is that certain ages are bequeathed with certain levels of authority or responsibility, and that this is a linear progression with age.

The traditional social structure is challenged when younger people are custodians of more authority than those older than them, and when they take up their agency, it seems that the disruption to traditional structures were sometimes located in different generations. The focus is two-fold: 1) self-perception and thus other assumptions

¹⁴ For the purposes of this finding (and other instances across this research), age mediates for generation and materialises in both the psychic (inner) and social (outer) narratives and influences.

based on that outward portrayal of self-perception; and 2) the actual demonstrated competence that then has the power of creating a perception about an individual's capability by others. These two concepts, almost akin to a latent and active competence, seem then comparative with age, and either sits well within socially predefined positions, or challenges them. It appears that it is in this challenge to what society has predefined that sophisticated thinking fails and defences against these anxieties become present, which seems to result in generation being used as an oversimplification.

5.5.2 The power of self-perception in relation to generation

Self-perception was demonstrated in two ways: 1) self-perception as developed by self on the basis of individual internalised experiences and self-beliefs; and 2) self-perception on the basis of projections of others' perceptions (projective identification).

5.5.2.1 The self-perception as developed by individuals

This self-perception, likely influenced by individualised emotional experiences with other generations in formative years, seemed to influence how individuals felt about their own age (generation), which was directly linked to competence. In this instance, it seemed that participants felt that they were not necessarily capable of taking on certain levels of authority or agency because of their age, likely because of a formative narrative they had about their own generation in relation to competence.

In this example, Cole shares how she felt like an imposter taking on a leadership position, because she was not as credible as those that were older than her. She shares how she needed to over index on preparation to avoid judgement because her age was a precursor to whether she was competent or not. Her self-perception (often characterised by self-doubt or imposter syndrome) seemed transparent and that it

could leak and be perceived by others, particularly triggered by those older than her. Ultimately it seems that the self-perception one develops (per own experiences and internalised structures), influences how generational difference are navigated, and possibly used as a social defence.

Cole

“I’d been brought in into more senior level and I felt like quite an imposter, because I didn’t know how I got this job anyway. And these people are all much older and more experienced and have more wisdom than I have ... I think I’ve always made sure that I know what I’m talking about, that I am at least prepared before meetings because I felt like I always had to have to do that. So that my age and/or my perceived age wouldn’t impact, you know, people’s perceptions of me.”

5.5.2.2 Self-perception as influenced by others

When looking at self-perception as influenced by other perceptions, the accepted perceptions (projective identification) it seemed to be more directed at the valencies that individuals have or where a feeling was seemingly imposed onto participants.

It appeared to be that participants had accepted the projections people had given them about their age-related competence, i.e. ‘you are too young for this level of authority’, becomes internalised as ‘I am too young to do this job’, and thus internalised self-perceptions become part of an individual’s narrative. In the example Callum shares that being junior was something he felt was imposed upon him, constantly reminded of it, and as a result, always under scrutiny for the work he was doing which made him feel like he was always needed to play catch up.

Callum

“You feel like you’re behind, it feels like you’re just constantly under scrutiny... it’s a lot of self-imposed pressure, but a lot of it’s actually people that are looking at you with more scrutiny. And so, someone else becomes the shield. I felt like I was always catching up It’s mainly certain individuals that see us as a threat somewhere or maybe not up to standard, because you’re too junior or too young...they impose that.”

In this quote Callum then shares that it was not that people ever said anything about his age, that in return made him question his own credibility, but it was that he could feel people thinking that which could suggest that that projective identification was already in his mind in terms of his own perception. He shares later in his narrative that he does feel that, as he got older and into more senior positions, that it felt that it got easier.

Callum

“Then maybe the more senior guys who you’re sort of in parallel with, would start to question why you’re at that age, a lot younger, but in a sort of a position of authority. They didn’t ever say anything, but you could definitely feel that certain people thinking ‘Why is he doing that job ... is too, too young’.”

Self-perception and the exuding of that confidence seemed to have a profound effect on both the individual’s ability to dismiss age and thus generation, and equally for others to do so as well.

Cole

“A lot of people do say to me: ‘You are really credible’, which is good. I felt like I always had to have to do that. So that my age and/or my perceived age wouldn’t impact, you know, people’s perceptions of me.”

Where participants developed and owned this perception of their competence (particularly early on in their careers) and exuded it to the extent that others became conscious of it, it had the power to eradicate this tension that sat between generation and competence. This seemed to 1) increased confidence for individuals which suggested that generational differences and age disparities (in relation to competence) are largely based on perception, and not a precursor for success in more senior positions, but also 2) in how others then begin to accept that confidence and no longer pay as much attention to the age or generation gap as vividly as before.

5.5.3 The power of competence in relation to generation

The power of competence (recognised by self and and others) seemed to negate any generational differences used in organisational relationships. Established competence seemed to allow a person to look past their own age or lack of experience and develop confidence in themselves (positively affecting the way others perceived them), but also have people perceived them differently altogether.

Callum

“At that sort of point I felt like age ... I started forgetting about age and seniority and stuff like that and more on skill and competency. You start doing really well and so start looking at age and stuff completely different, I think.”

This research suggests that once a level of competence is established, age potentially no longer plays as much of a role as it did. As a result, generation in the mind suffers less of a negative criticism for the younger people, potentially opening up the space for commonality as opposed to difference, where it may have only been shut down before. Participants’ suggested that once competence is established, the possible envious attack across generations seemed less apparent. Naturally that envious

attack is potentially still applicable if the respect for the competence is replaced with competition (as discussed in the Competition finding).

It seemed that competence (both self-professed or recognised by others) had the ability to lessen that tension that existed for those younger-than-expected leaders, who were in senior roles or in a position of authority. Recognising one's effectiveness and competence meant that age could lose its potency.

Lara

"Probably only by looking back that I realised that actually, it was the standing of the person within the partnership, which was much more around their effectiveness as a lawyer and the kind of work that they did, than around how old they were ... It was much more about experience than age, age was irrelevant. Really. It was about when you knew what you were doing or not."

Bernie

"I guess I've never gone: 'Oh, he's older than me. He must know better. He's younger than me. He must know less. I find it more that I admire certain individuals which have come on at a very early age - huge amounts of experience. Super young, super talented, and you realised, actually, age isn't the problem here, it's about their experiences and what they can bring to the party."

5.5.4 Authority, agency and power

Participants' narratives suggested that there are certain aspects of authority and power that are associated with leadership or senior positions, and those positions are usually directly associated with older people. Participants shared that there was something in the taking up of more senior leadership roles that somehow made both the self-perception, and the perception of others, different to when no authority or power was in question. Something that was located in young individuals taking up a role of leadership or seniority, and thus in the formal authority itself (which likely begets

the competition outside of a traditionalist structure), is what tended to make others question one's competency. There seemed to be less questioning of competence when more junior roles, with limited authority and power, were taken up by those young people. It was perhaps the threat located in competition and comparison that made competence and credibility come into question when those of a seemingly younger generation took up leadership roles.

As Callum articulates in this example, there seemed to be an unconscious response to younger people being in a position of authority which led to a question of their competence, an automated response, because it was so fundamentally different to any traditionalist structure they had known. In his second quote it seems that that questioning tended to come from: 1) from individuals who did not know him and did not work with him, therefore never got to know his level of competence or credibility; 2) tended to come at more senior leadership levels; and 3) felt like individuals were threatened by him which is what led them to question his capacity and competence for the role.

Callum

"I didn't really feel any sort of age discrepancy until I started getting more of a leadership role. Then maybe the more senior guys you're in parallel with start to question why you're a lot younger, but in a position of authority. They didn't ever say anything, but you could definitely feel that certain people thinking: 'Why is he doing that job? Is too, too young'.

"The guys who I was actually leading, I never got that that feeling, it was more like people in separate sort of chains of authority, so parallel chains versus like the guys who was actually working with. When they don't really work with you, then they sort of see you as a threat."

Finally, when thinking of authority, as it related to age-related competence, it seemed that there was an aspect of vulnerability in not knowing that it was related to

incompetence and seemed to be present in the relationship between older and younger generations. It seemed unacceptable to not know, as that would translate into being incompetent, therefore affecting credibility. As Lara articulates in her example, there was a fear associated with not knowing and making it seem as if you were not able to do your job, which directly affects others' perceptions of you, most likely related to your age.

Lara

"I was always so terrified some senior lawyer would tell me they wanted me to research something and I wouldn't have understood, but I wouldn't dare to ask."

5.5.5 Summary

Competence, skill and credibility all seem to matter when it comes to how generation in the mind is developed. Whether it is based on self-perception, perception of others, or a combination of both, role-related competence and credibility have the power to dim the potency of generational differences in perception formation. Equally, role-related incompetence, particularly at senior levels, had the capability to amplify the potency of generation being used within the workplace, as a container for unwanted thoughts and desires. In participants' experiences, this seemed to beget the notion of trust (irrespective of age) where, before this established credibility, trust was deemed as needed to be earned given the prior 'misconceptions' of one's capacity, determined by age or generation. There seemed to be less trial for older generations, less of an emphasis on needing to earn one's stripes particularly in a leadership position. This was also mirrored in the focus groups that were run where participants echoed concepts of self-efficacy and competence being important as people progressed

though their careers, particularly at a young age. This may be indicative of traditional industries and could possibly be different in more emergent or innovative industries, such as technology and computer- or internet-based industries.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter looks to build the argument for the formation and impact of generation-in-the-mind (hereinafter 'GIM'). By exploring the shared experiences in participants' narratives and providing a deeper layer of understanding about what may be going on with generation and generational difference, by using theory from the systems psychodynamic, psychoanalytic and sociology fields to support the discovery.

6.2 The core argument

The core argument postulates that GIM is both a conscious and unconscious construct that is formed around one's internal emotional experiences associated with generation (one's own and others'), as well as a construct which is projected into individuals by society and the societal organisation of generation itself. This built perception in the mind, influenced by family dynamics, goes on to support the formulation of a habitus of sorts, a system of internalised structures around generation: a set of norms, values, and behaviours of a particular generation. This habitus is further enabled by, or enables, a master signifier around generation – a generalisation or an overarching label, a point of convergence by which generation is organised, to which one's identity is intimately bound, and which is used to navigate one's own and others' sense of membership of generation.

This core argument then suggests that, given one's perception of what generation is (on the basis of individual experiences and society's projection), the construct of generation becomes a container for the unwanted or repressed feelings associated with age and generation, a somewhat hidden difference. Essentially, the social defence against the anxieties located in organisational processes and non-traditional

leader-follower relationships, as a result of the alternate power structures and the challenges to traditional set structures, that generational differences enable, and the formal authority structures generation seems to disrupt.

6.3 Theoretical contributions

The concepts explored build an overall picture of how this GIM contributes to the ideas we hold about ourselves, about generation, and how that is built up through early experiences, and impacted by family and one's own generation in family, and the internalised aspects of that. These concepts are as follows;

1) The influence of family therapy theories which highlights the influence on the development of "generation in the mind" by shaping how individuals perceive their place within the familial and generational structure. This concept refers to the internal representation or schema of one's generation and those before and after it, impacting self-identity, relationships, and behavioural patterns

2) Organisation in the Mind (OIM) which highlights the application of each individual's internal model or constructs, conscious or unconscious (Armstrong, 2005, 4–5), a mental world we live in and that lives in us around the emotional experience of generation.

3) The 'habitus of generation', which shifts the GIM concept more into the social field. Habitus considers the internalised structures (Bourdieu, 1977) that influence one's perceptions of generation, most notably the traditional set sources of authority, that is, the perceived power dynamic around generation and how it has been used organisationally.

4) The master signifier concept (Lacan, 1978) speaks to the sense of identity and how one's identity can be so intimately bound (Sharp, 2023) to this single source

of identification – in this case generation and/or generational identification. This concept then begets the ‘generalisation of generation’ which evokes the ambiguity of generation confers that, because other differences cannot be acknowledged, generation itself is used as a way of speaking to difference, but not to the extent that it can be defined. The generalisation of generation therefore posits ‘generation’ as being an empty container in which to store the ambivalence of difference and anxieties associated with generation that are lived in complex organisational processes and relationships.

6.4 The influence of family therapy theories on individual experiences

There are three main influences within the family therapy theories that were influential in shaping how an individual builds the perception of generation and generational differences in their mind, and how that becomes a foundation for the way in which they view the world. These three theories are namely 1) Bowen’s family systems theory and intergenerational transmission that specifically talks about intergenerational transmission and the differentiation of self. 2) Structural family therapy and hierarchical generational roles and how that speaks to the boundaries and subsystems that support how one learns to navigates generation and generational difference. 3) Narrative therapy which focuses on the stories families tell about themselves, which shape the identities of each generation and finally 4) Psychoanalytic influence on generational identity and splitting which highlights how families, through splitting and/or projective identification might idealise or devalue certain generations, projecting qualities onto them as a way of managing collective anxieties or unresolved emotional issues.

6.4.1 Bowen's family systems theory and multigenerational transmission

Bowen (1978) introduced concepts such as multigenerational transmission and differentiation of self, which explain how family patterns and emotional processes are passed down and internalised by each generation. These concepts are key in understanding how generation is developed in the mind, particularly as we see how people tend to build internal models in the mind. The emotional patterns, beliefs, and behaviours that are transmitted from one generation to the next and/or that which is unconsciously absorbed and internalised seems to form the map of how generations operate within their family. This shapes their perception of what it means to be part of their generation and the expectations associated with it (Bowen, 1978) and it is this that we see carried that into organisational life.

It was clear how a number of participants had absorbed beliefs about certain generations as a result of what they were taught or very heavily influence by, and the upset to set structures that occur when questions about generation are brought into question. Those that challenge a lot of what people felt already grounded in as a result of formative experiences. The conflict that arises when people come to head with what they have internalised in formative years, versus that which is new, is something that seems to manifest itself in organisational processes and relationships and can and does serve as a social defence, a splitting or projective identification among generations. Participants did not necessarily seem aware of this deeply unconscious process but manifested in their narratives when they spoke of other generations, in comparison to their own especially in competition.

Furthermore Bowen's (1978) differentiation of self suggests that individuals develop a sense of themselves based on their ability to balance autonomy and connection within the family system. Those who struggle with differentiation may remain overly

enmeshed in the emotional legacies of previous generations, internalising rigid generational roles that define their self-concept and relational patterns. While this concept seemed less relevant in terms of how generation in the mind was developed for participants, what was key within this theoretical contribution was that roles that people had internalised, and how that transpired into the organisational setting. The sense of identity that people develop as part of this process of differentiation (or lack thereof) may challenge their view of own generation and others, which seemed to initiate a sense of that which had been internalised about generation and the difficulty to sit with that. The impact on organisational processes and relationships, given how deeply enmeshed these generational roles can be, and how that then influenced how they viewed others, is significant in terms of understanding how generation in the mind affects complex organisational processes. It largely gets located in their processes and has the capacity to hinder them when sophisticated thinking fails and internalised generational differences are used as a social defence.

6.4.2. Structural family therapy and hierarchical generational roles

In structural family therapy, Minuchin (1974) focuses on the organization and hierarchy within families, which heavily influences the development of generational identity. This theory is influential in the development of generation in the mind because of its relevance in an organisational setting. The theory emphasizes the importance of boundaries and subsystems (e.g., parental, sibling, and generational subsystems) and how these structures shape one's internal view of generations. Participants seemed to carry the subsystems they had grown up in into the organisation and depending on the relationship (as we saw in the competition finding) the view of generation was impacted by this.

This theory goes on to highlight how in families where boundaries are entangled, children may develop a blurred sense of their generational role, often taking on responsibilities or behaviours typical of another generation (e.g., parenting younger siblings or managing adult responsibilities). This role confusion creates a skewed internal representation of generational identity, where the child sees themselves as both part of their generation and another (Minuchin, 1974). Conversely, in disengaged families where boundaries are rigid, individuals may develop a distinct sense of separation from other generations, viewing their own generation as isolated or disconnected. This influences how they relate to authority figures, older generations, and younger family members, forming a mindset that either reinforces or rebels against the generational roles modelled for them. This is influential in how the structure, from a hierarchical and role perspective, can influence the internal schemas of perception around generation and how that impacts relationships within organisations. It is here that the initial “in the mind” is constructed and begins to shape world views.

When thinking about the influences around authority what is categorically relevant for how we think about generation in the mind is not just the attitude to authority in organisations (as a result of that mindset), but the generation itself seems to develop a particular script. Where family therapy has the idea that each family has a particular script, a certain culture, a narrative, what I’ve seen across some of my participants is the idea in their mind that they share a common script with their own generation, individuals or collectives, that they view as the same as them, often denoted with a ‘well in my generation...’. There seems to be a common script about future generations or past generations when this collective script, generational script, is formed.

Ultimately it becomes not only about how individuals see authority, but the idea about oneself, the sense of identity, as it relates to authority.

6.4.3 Narrative therapy influences on internalisation and identity

The stories participants told, particularly relevant in a biographical research method as one is able to view the biographical arc of a narrative, were so key in how people illustrated how their identity from a generational perspective was shaped. White & Epston (1990) draw on the stories families tell about themselves, which shape the identities of each generation. These stories, often passed down through generations, influence how individuals see themselves and their generation's place in the family's history. The narratives about resilience, struggle, or success that are tied to specific generations (e.g., "Our family has always been survivors" or "This generation will break the cycle of poverty") have the ability to create a framework for how individuals within a family understand their generational role and responsibilities, leading them to internalize these stories as part of their identity. It is this internalisation of the narratives that is foundational in how people perceive generation, Thiers and others, that plays such a pivotal role in the development of generation in the mind.

What is interesting to note is the conflict that felt present between the family narratives that seem to have one sort of shaping on generation, versus that which was a socio-cultural narrative as formed by a generation and how those shaped aspects of generation and identity (as mentioned above). Conflicts like this seemed to categorically draw out the nebulousness of generation and how and when people attached meaning to it. When it was easy to do so and thus heavily relied on to articulate aspects of oneself, key in their biographical arc, and times where it was conflicted or contradicted but other aspects of identity that sophisticated thinking failed and it became easier to not identify with.

6.4.4 Psychoanalytic influence on generational identity and splitting

A thesis itself could be written about psychoanalytic influences alone, so the intention here is not to extensively reference the theories that play a role, but rather to highlight and extend on the literature review key aspects that bring to life the development of generation in the mind. As it relates to ones' inner perceptions and how people come to have such strong views and belief about generation, their own and others. Psychoanalytic theories, particularly those related to object relations Klein (1946), influence how generations are perceived and internalised. Societies, and families, often split generations into polarized categories, such as "the strong generation" or "the dependent generation," or even the "good/better" generation and the "bad/worse" generation, based on unresolved conflicts or ideals. It's not uncommon to see certain generations either being idealised or devalued or projecting qualities onto them as a way of managing collective anxieties or unresolved emotional issues. For example, older generations may be idealised as wise and capable, while younger generations are seen as irresponsible or rebellious.

These polarisations were evident in participants narratives, even in subtle or passive aggressively polite ways. These polarized views seem to exist irrespective of the individual, but rather a question of in which direction is the polarization strongest. Individuals internalize these polarised views, which shape their generational identity and self-concept, influencing how they interact with other generations and define their role in the family and society. The transference of these polarised views being re-enacted in organisations is an indication that these theories are relevant when considering how individuals came to have these set structures and beliefs. It also seemed to have significant impact on how roles are taken up, relationships are either formed or not, and how organisational processes could possibly be hindered as a

result. Succession planning, promotion, mentorship are a few tangible examples of how these polarized views can unconsciously weave their way into the core decisions being made and thus hindering the process itself.

Family therapy theories significantly shape how generations in the mind are formed and influence perceptions of authority within families. These theories, including systems theory, structural family therapy, and Bowenian family systems, view the family as an interconnected system where each member influences the others. According to these theories, authority structures within families are not merely imposed by one individual (such as a parent) but are co-created through interactions and relational patterns that are often passed down across generations. Family therapy theories play a crucial role in shaping and underpinning the construction of "generation in the mind" by emphasising how family dynamics, patterns, and roles are passed down and internalized across generations which forms the perception of generation.

These patterns form a blueprint or mental model that individuals carry, shaping their sense of identity, values, and understanding of their place within a hierarchy. This internalization process seemed to help participants construct their understanding of generational relationships and roles, sometimes helpfully but other times unhelpfully. There were examples of how lost family relationships were being searched for in organisational settings based on the expectations of individuals, how they thought they should view themselves, within their families but also in broader societal contexts such as organisations.

Family therapy theories, therefore, illustrate that "generation in the mind" is not only about one's current family dynamics but also about the cumulative, historical influences that shape how individuals think, behave, and relate to others across

generations. Ultimately family therapy theories deeply influence the concept of “generation in the mind” by providing frameworks for understanding how generational roles, patterns, and narratives are internalized and passed down within families. In this research these theories illustrate how family dynamics shape the psychological development and self-concept/ identity of individuals across generations and how it is almost impossible for these concepts to not influence how generation in the mind is developed.

6.5 Generation in the mind

The concept of GIM is built on the central elements of the well-established theory of OIM: one’s inner perceptions, as well as the projections of society, of which both have the capacity to produce a subjective system of structures around generation. Before exploring the concept of GIM further, it would be helpful to look briefly at the nuances in definitions between concepts developed by the Grubb Institute and Armstrong, and link those to the concept of GIM.

6.4.1 The Grubb Institute and Armstrong’s OIM

6.4.1.1 the Grubb Institute

The Grubb Institute suggests that which the “individual perceives in his or her head with regard to how activities and relations are organised, structured and connected internally. It is a model internal to oneself, part of one’s inner world, relying upon the inner experiences of one’s interactions, relations and the activities in which one engages. These inner experiences give rise to images, emotions, values and responses in oneself, which may consequently be influencing their own management and leadership, positively or adversely. OIM helps one to look beyond the normative assessments of organisational issues and activity, to become alert to one’s inner experiences and give richer meaning to what is happening to and around oneself. OIM

is about what is happening inside one's own head - their reality - and has to be distinguished from any other reality 'out there'. It is the idea of the organisation which, through experiencing and imagining, forms in one's inner psychic space and which then influences how one interacts with their environment". (Hutton, Bazalgette & Reed, 1997, p. 114).

6.4.1.2 David Armstrong

Armstrong suggests that not only might "internal models, images, or phantasies, located in the individual be a response to something more primary that was a property of the organization as a whole", but also that "each individual's internal model or constructs, conscious or unconscious, might perhaps better be seen as a secondary formation, a particular, more or less idiosyncratic, response to a common, shared organizational dynamic" (Armstrong, 2005, pp. 4–5). This suggests that it is not necessarily the internal models and phantasies (as per Grubb Institute) which give rise to one's perception of the organisation, but rather that it is the organisation itself that projects into individuals. This in turn gives them a sense of the organisation as they experience it, and affects how the individual perceives both themselves and the organisation. Ultimately, the individual is filled up with the identifications in the system and therefore, enacts things on behalf of the organisation.

6.4.2 The link from OIM to GIM

It seems that while participants build up ideas about their positionality over time, society is simultaneously reinforcing that which one has built up through the socio-contextual factors, where the wider social context gets caught up in the formation of generation in the mind. While the GIM (and inherent responses to GIM) are individual on the basis of internalised models predicated on individual lived experiences, what

participants equally seem to be suggesting was a kind of group phenomenon, despite saying that it was not organisational or cultural. Therefore, making it not only individual, but also applicable collectively, and thus culturally contextual. With that in mind, the interplay between Grubb and Armstrong's version of OIM becomes relevant.

6.4.3 The formation of GIM

Essentially this concept of GIM is built, in equal parts, on both The Grubb Institute's and Armstrong's concepts of OIM¹⁵. It is a nexus of the two: a combination of internalised structures, alongside that which is inherently intrinsic to a generation, as one socio-psychic field which is projected into individuals. For the most part it seemed that the initial formation or the emergence of GIM is more aligned to Armstrong's reworked concept. Over time, latent perceptions of generation are uncorked as experiences (internal models and phantasies) and begin to solidify and shape one's perceptions of generation, which is where the GIM construct is more closely aligned to the Grubb Institute's concept.

What feels important as a distinction here is the enormity of GIM: GIM is bigger than just the specificity of the organisation. It is rather that society is acting as the system and it is what society constructs about generation which is what is projected into individuals, over and above that which is placed in individuals from an OIM perspective, drawing on the complexity. The intricacies of GIM are thus more powerful, as the collective is bigger than the specificity of one organisation or OIM. Generation does not have an organisational differentiation, but is globally applicable to society, which adds to the complexities of how it shows up and where it is used (see Figure 3).

¹⁵ See Table 3 in appendices for the table referencing the relationships.

GIM is more about the wider system, the context itself is where the wider social field influences individuals: from the families they are born into, to the structures with which they grow up. While GIM might operate in the same way as OIM, it seems to more imposing, given the wider context in which it operates, and thus the extent to which it collectively impacts. Equally, the GIM impact is likely to influence organisations and so is likely to inadvertently influence OIM.

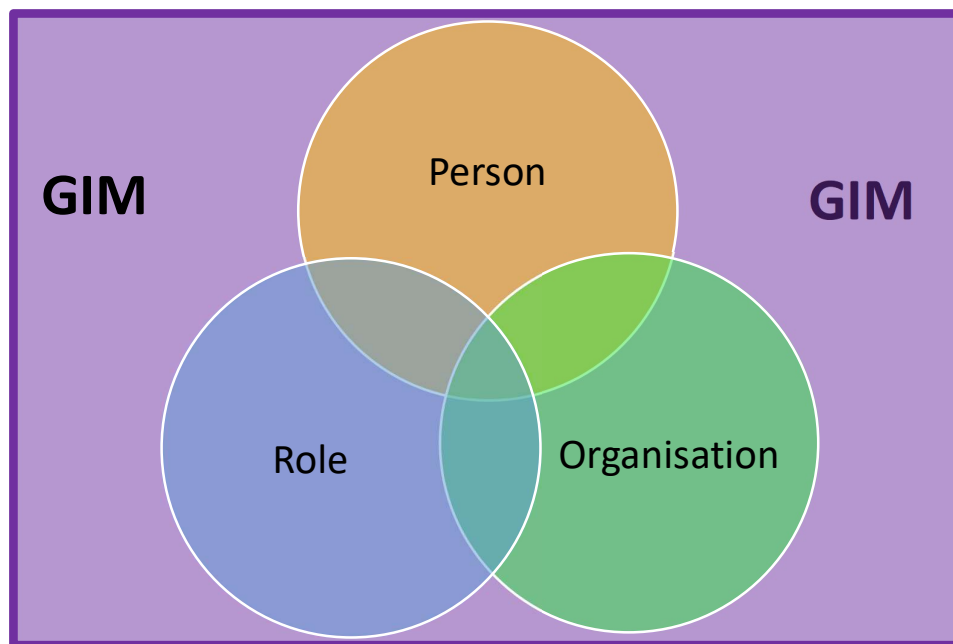


Figure 7 – GIM influence on organisations

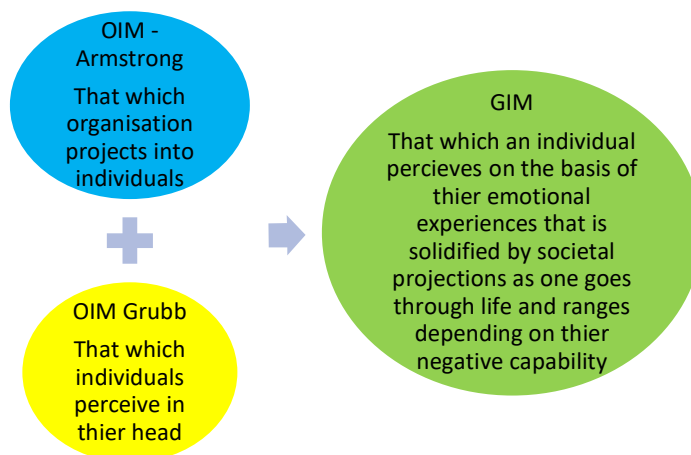


Figure 8 – Impact of OIM on GIM

6.4.4 *The agency of GIM*

GIM has agency in many ways, particularly because we carry these internal models deep within us and is in part developed overtime, but is also contributed to by the different domains and systems we encounter, which adds to the internalised ideas about ourselves. When sophisticated thinking fails and social defences are apparent, GIM gives rise to a them and us, we see this in the findings particularly within the family dynamics section. The fluidity of the construct of GIM often means that at times there is a stronger influence from one's own experiences. Such experiences might be countercultural to an individual's understanding about generation, as taught by wider societal influences, and the ability to sit with that ambivalence was where the challenge to the agency generation has, is questioned. Alternatively, where there seemed to be perpetual cycles of repressed and familiar patterns that reinforce traditional structures and lines of authority, that was where the agency of generation was accepted and even required as a coping mechanism or a degree of containment in a new environment. For most, there was a likelihood of one oscillating between: 1) an acceptance of pre-existing societal underlying assumptions or assigned generational constructs and a potential dismissal of emotional experiences which challenged these assumptions; or 2) the challenging of these pre-existing societal constructs around generation, and being rather guided by the personal experiences they had around different generations.

An individual might have become comfortable with the ambiguity of generation, identified with the same, embraced differences across generation, and not necessarily come to view it as good or bad. This, however, was only really possible unless and until a defence was triggered (for example in the event of a succession planning endeavour or a non-traditional leadership scenario – essentially when generations was

not deemed as relevant enough to challenge tradition). It was not uncommon to see participants speak openly about not seeing age as a factor when working with those younger than them, as they believed they were competent and credible (internalised experiences creating that perception in the mind). However, when finding out that a person was the same age as their son, they found it hard to accept that they were younger and being in a position of authority (societal projections of generation). This seemed to challenge everything they had thus far known to be true about age (generation and leadership), it seems to blur boundaries, and binary thinking is thus likely. Ultimately, something seems to emerge through a series of experiences (internally and societally) and that, in turn, affects how generation is perceived, which influences behaviour.

6.4.5 From the psycho to the social

GIM takes us from the individual to the culture, but then there is something more in the wider field, which is where Bourdieu's (1977) work became relevant. Habitus considers the sociological aspect, the social field, which gives a deeper insight into how GIM is built up, how it contributes and what is acquired within the individual. While the GIM shows the individual and projected experiences, which give some sense of self as a generation and what has influenced them organisationally, what we have with habitus is a wider sociological field and how that contributes and penetrates individuals.

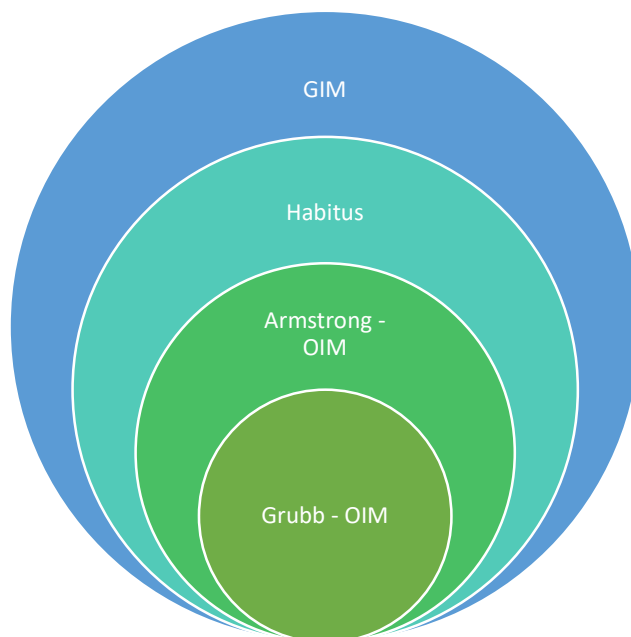


Figure 9 – Habitus in the wider society

6.5 The incorporation of Bourdieu – Habitus

At different points, generation seems to have more agency and more effect, depending on individual circumstances and generally when things are not known and where there is less knowledge available or more uncertainty (and less negative capacity), then this concept becomes more actively used as a way of understanding by relying on that which is in the mind, those previously construed ideas. As well as a container for those inner feelings, thoughts and imaginings, so generation becomes the transitional object. It is here that we see that generation becomes a blunt tool linking the internalised structures (habitus) built over time, which in turn embeds the sense of identity (master signifier) they develop in association.

It became clear from some of the participants that something else was going on. It was not just the GIM that their narratives were speaking to, but there seemed to be something bigger in the wider social field that felt significant. Similar, but different. It

became clearer that they were talking about something alongside GIM, something perceptually, with a slightly different quality. Something formulated more through socialisation and therefore so deeply ingrained in individuals' identities, that it felt natural as opposed to culturally facilitated. It is here that I found Bourdieu's work on habitus (1977). The following section looks to highlight the nature and impact of GIM as it moves from 'in the mind' to the formation of schemas of perception.

6.5.1 Habitus of generation: definition and origin

Habitus refers to "... a subjective but not individual system of internalised structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class" (p. 86). These "internalised structures" and "schemes of perception" structure the subject's (shared) worldview and their "apperception" of the world in which they suppose they exist. (Bourdieu, 1977). Furthermore, the habitus implants a worldview in the members of these groups by placing value upon cultural artefacts, both the relevant and the irrelevant, where some are validated and others not. However, "Habitus is acquired in social and cultural contexts. Therefore, groups of people develop a shared habitus" (Drew, 2022). Thus, despite these being individualised structures, they are collective to the same group, in this case the generation. We act a certain way because of our "lived experience", and not solely by the "force of external social structures" (Atkinson, 2021, p. 196).

6.5.2 The habitus of generation within the formation of GIM

In the formation of GIM, a habitus is developed which creates an internalised structure, giving rise to one's perception of generation – both their own generation and others. Habitus of generation is the shared object or system by which, and into which, generational conditions are established and reproduced. Generation tends typically to

produce (and then later reproduce) the mechanisms of their own production: generation itself and the norms therein, creating a dominance of that way of thinking and behaving, those specific viewpoints of the world, compounded by artefacts.

Generation or generational differences, much like habitus, speculate and confer specific belongings to each era or generation which are likely to be constructed as either good or bad, even to the extent of the physical attractiveness and desires, what was in, then versus now (including artefacts, i.e. the PlayStation generation). Bourdieu advocates that this process typically begins within the family setting, and is later consolidated through other institutions such as education and employment (Gillespie, 2009). The habitus of generation is no different, in that the earliest constructs of GIM seemed to develop in formative years and was reinforced with traditional boundaries within family and schooling, as mentioned, but are then turned upside down in organisational life where the relationships and processes are not traditional, but are, instead complex, and are constantly changing.

6.5.3 The artefacts that compound the habitus of generation

One generation's habits, skills, and dispositions learned through socialisation and entrenched in our unique identifiers, can be fundamentally different to the other, depending on what influences shaped that habitus. What I found most indicative of these differences were the artefacts in participants' narratives. Artefacts are items from a generation that represent that point in time, characteristics of a certain generation, relics that are indicative of a generation. For example, The Falklands, Siri, YouTuber, PlayStation, working from home, the fax machine, Christian names, work-life balance. These objects or way markers are attributed to generation – relics or values from a specific generation. Referencing the PlayStation Generation in an attempt to highlight the indoors and techy nature of this group of people, frightened that they did not have

a childhood as they were ruled by devices and electronics and thus cannot handle the real world. These labels all, however subtly, point to the behaviours indicative of those people in that generation. Such artefacts are a key piece to the 'habitus of generation' puzzle because one's perception of generation (their own and others) is compounded by these artefacts.

These artefacts are like flags that seem to show the habitus of a generation, the kind of qualities or relics that people hold in their minds that they have acquired about themselves in their generation, but also of others. They could be anything from particular words or experiences, attitudes demonstrated or events that become part of one's narrative, one's habitus. These artefacts seemed to have such power that they can be used as a label by others before even meeting or working with an individual from that generation. They hold an agency so strong so that they can dictate or negate the individual emotional experience with individuals. To the extent that it may become impossible to look past the artefact associated to a generation in order to see their competence and experience. It is this implication that has the potential to affect organisational processes and relationships.

Below is a table with some examples of the flags (artefacts) that both give rise to perceptions of generations, and reinforce pre-existing perceptions.

Flag	Generation
The Falklands	Referring to the generation before him
Northern Ireland tours	Referring to the generation before him
Playstation Generation	Referring to the generation below him
Macho. Put emotions aside. Probably should have got a lot more help (psychological) than I did. Zero empathy.	Referring to own generation
Too techie or technology advanced.	Referring to the generation after him

Iraq and Afghanistan tours	Referring to own generation
More touchy feely	Referring to the generation after him
Less walking more vehicle based	Referring to the generation after him
Virtual reality	Referring to the generation after him
Seeing more trauma. Patrolling through villages and seeing little kids with their arms cut off	Referring to own generation
Duvets instead of sheets – they had never camped	Referring to the generation after him
Different mindset	Referring to the generation after him
Sink or swim	Referring to own generation

Table 3 – Table of artefacts

6.5.4 Why does habitus matter?

The habitus of generation significantly impacts organizational dynamics, particularly when it intersects with traditional and emergent generational differences, shaping how individuals from various generations perceive and exert authority, and navigate hierarchical relationships within the workplace. GIM and habitus can and do affect how relationships are navigated in organisational settings, and have a likelihood of getting into organisational processes. Unconventionality¹⁶ upsets what is traditionally known in an earlier habitus, thus making organisational processes and relationships very complex to navigate where generational differences are concerned.

The habitus of generation can and does get used as a container for unwanted thoughts and anxieties against these societal paradigm shifts¹⁷, and located in different generations. This research is offering is something organisationally, albeit it is societal, as generation gets into the organisation. Organisations or institutions tend to either

¹⁶ It is not uncommon to have a 50-year-old man report into a 32-year-old woman in organisations today, whereas some 20 years ago, that was not at all the case – because of gender and age.

¹⁷ Bourdieu talks about society and suggests that power is culturally and symbolically created, and repetitively re-legitimised through the interaction of agency and structure.

reinforce or attempt to restructure the original blueprint of how an individual relates to the world and this either confirms the current world view one has on generation, or that it challenges everything they know, bringing about that level of discomfort.

The habitus of generation is created through a social process and individual internal structures which lead to patterns that are durable and transferrable from one context to another (Bourdieu, 1984). For example, how I relate to older people in the family setting, is how I need to relate to older people at work, irrespective of formal role or authority. What upsets this is human agency – the ability for people to make their own decisions – is where generation potentially loses the amount of agency it has. These patterns can also change relative to contexts and over time when generation loses its agency. In the same way that Bourdieu suggested that habitus ‘is not fixed or permanent, and can be changed under unexpected situations or over a long historical period’ (Navarro, 2006, p. 16), so is GIM and the habitus of generation, an elastic and fluid concept that shifts and changes.

6.5.5 How or when does habitus have agency?

There are three ways in which habitus seems to have agency in organisational settings. Firstly, it may make it difficult for people to change. Participants seemed to get stuck in deeply ingrained perceptions, which crystallises their habitus and makes it difficult to move away from that structure/constructs. This is likely to impose limits on the relationships and processes that require thinking outside of those traditional structures.

Secondly, it allows people to avoid sophisticated differences outside of their generation. Because habitus is “the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think,

feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them” (Wacquant, 2005, cited in Navarro, 2006, p. 16). Generational differences tend to be used a default position for people, to avoid of complexity and reality. This could be problematic in the organisational setting, given the likelihood of unconscious and conscious sabotaging of relationships and processes when individual differences and connections cannot be seen for what they are, and instead are amalgamated under catchall concepts.

Lastly, the habitus of generation appears to have the capacity to set up the split: the comparison between generations. The “We’re tough, they’re weak” and the “We had it harder, these generations have it easier”. The splitting in itself is quite seductive in that it is an oversimplification when individuals lean on the polarised perception of events and people into extremes, but because of that, again, it has substantial agency at certain points, mostly non-traditional structures.

6.6 Generalisation of generation: Generation as a master signifier

6.6.1 What is Generation as a master signifier concept?

Generation as a master signifier is significantly influenced from Lacan’s concepts of master (Lacan, 1978) and empty signifiers (Sharpe, 2023). This section looks to explore how, on the basis of these developed internalised structures (as per the discussion above), do individuals develop these catcall labels or overgeneralisations that become patterned or symbolic in the collective mind of individuals, and in turn represent a generation. This collective mind or collective unconscious referring to the particular period that individuals are born into that then contain these specific signifiers. These signifiers are often shared, but personalised, for example, my idea of millennials is not yours, but we both have one and it is likely that they will largely overlap, particularly because of what society has suggested signifies this generation. Signifiers (the PlayStation Generation and the signifiers therein, such as lazy, virtual

reality, weak, etc.) or over generalisations become more prominent than the individual themselves and the other distinct and separate personal qualities they may have, are lost in the overgeneralisation and simplification.

With the Lacanian influence of master signifiers on GIM, it seems that generation in this light is: 1) used as a defence against difference; and 2) functions or is useful in supporting and idea yourself and your identity in relation to others. Labelling generations seemed to give people a sense of themselves and where they were positioned in society. Equally, generation also seems to be used as a: 3) mechanism of evacuation (and projection) of those aspects of self we are unhappy about, into a whole generation.

In a similar stance, Lacan's theory places importance on the signifiers themselves (for each generation), and that it is only through these signifiers that the production of any understanding or meaning is possible. "Everything radiates out from and is organized around this signifier" (Lacan, 1993, p. 268). Master signifiers are signifiers to which an individual's identity are most closely connected. "They are words which will typically be extended by subjects as naming something. They designate values and ideals that the subject will be unwilling and unable to question without pulling the semantic carpet from beneath their own feet. The importance of these signifiers comes from how a subject's identification with them commits them to certain orderings of all the rest of the signifiers" (Sharp, 2023). Put another way, the importance is not necessarily on the object (the individual themselves), but other signifiers¹⁸ (Generation X, mobiles,

¹⁸ An illustrative example is technology across the generations and where assumptions, vis-à-vis master signifiers, can and are used. If people identify themselves as "Gen X," the meanings of a whole array of other unique identifiers (signifiers) are ordered in significantly different ways than for people who think of themselves as a "Gen Y" or a "Baby Boomer". For example, technology and innovation come to mean different things for each of these groups. For "Gen X" the assumption is they value technology and innovation and the flexibility that comes with it. "Gen Y", on the other hand, are often referred to as 'digital natives' as they were the first generation to be considered tech savvy. "Baby Boomers" are likely to feel exceptionally overwhelmed by

PlayStation, work from home, or Generation Z's social media uses and gratifications) that are used to ascertain its meaning and understanding. The thing signified is not a real or learned connection, but an extrapolation into an idealised image – phantasies of generation. Thus, generation becoming a gross oversimplification of an individual or group and is likewise being used as a container for these hidden differences. A defence against the anxieties brought about by this process of finding sameness and otherness, by difference and similarity

6.6.2 Why does the master signifier matter?

This concept becomes relevant in this research, because generation is used to flatten all other differences¹⁹, it trumps all other signifiers (unique identifiers) that make up an individual, such as race, gender, personality, etc. This results in an oversimplification or a generalisation about the generation, which is key in social defences against anxiety within organisational settings.

6.6.3 When does generation as a master signifier have agency?

Lacan suggests that master signifiers are essentially 'empty signifiers', (Sharp, 2023). It is for this reason that this Lacanian concept marries so well with generation in that the generalisation of generation is not really something on which you can ever put your finger. It is completely empty, yet because it is empty, it is used, because it is easy to manage. This nebulous concept, that it is empty, means you can never quite grasp it,

technology and innovation, given the rapid rate of something new every day, and they are being labelled as 'less intuitive' when it comes to technology.

¹⁹ An illustrative example is Cassandra, who identifies as a black, heterosexual, and female with a strong eye for detail. None of those defining factors matter when we consider this person a 'millennial'. For the purposes of this example, when we give someone the label of a 'millennial', we inherently assume that they are: 1) being intuitive with technology; 2) too young to be in a significant leadership position; and 3) given the constantly shifting tech world they grew up in, we assume they are comfortable with change or are outwardly looking for constant change. When we label Cassandra with 'millennial' we immediately minimise (in Lacan's case re-order) identifiers such as being black and the effects in her life that being black could have brought about. We diminish that she may not enjoy the use of technology on the basis of the country, culture or environment she grew up in etc.

yet when you do, when you try to consider it more intricately, it disappears again or you find a way of refuting it. And yet for that, the reason it functions, is because you can never really prove that, as if that is what gives you the agency or the power in a way. It is there, but it is not. This concept allows a forgivingness present in how these generational labels are thrown around, because of the difficulty that is generation and acknowledging generational differences as unique to what people identify with. Generation, and generational differences are not, and likely will never be, that straightforward.

From this research experience it seems that generation can and does function as a type of contingency defence around difference, one that hovers over all others when they fail, or cannot be perceived, or tolerated enough to speak to. The psychological processes that unfolded via participant narratives suggest that something goes on around generation when other differences cannot be beheld or when things become so wide that it becomes impossible to put one's finger on the difference or the reason for the differences. It is thus used as one way of managing anxiety, fears, threats, envy, and other emotions experienced, into a slightly nebulous environment.

6.6.4 How does the master signifier come to life in generation?

As adapted by IEP, (Sharpe, 2023), 'Generation X or GenX' is likely to be offered if someone said "I am born in 1975". The Lacanian questions here are: What is 'GenX' being used by the subject to designate here? Is 'GenX-ness' something that lives in everyone who is born in that time period, 1965–1980? Or is it a trait that is passed on through the mode of culture, mostly? It holds the possibility to profoundly name some virtues or qualities that all GenX-ers supposedly have. However, even if we assume that all 'GenX-ers' share some basic virtues, which are these? Could this entire

generation draw up a list that all would agree on? It is neither simple nor easy to think of others who share in valuing each individual trait we call 'GenX' (for example: resourceful, independent, liberal)? And, since 'GenX' would seem to have to aim at the grounding quality of character that could potentially marry all of the others, what would that be? And is this 'crucial' quality biological, cultural, hereditary, or is it theoretical? What Lacan's account of "master signifiers" therefore highlights is the gap between two things: 1) our primary certainty about the nature of such an ostensibly obvious thing as 'GenX-ness', which in this case is used as a gross oversimplification of a collection of people, which can and is challenged when sophisticated thinking fails. 2) the difficulty we experience of putting this certainty into words, or naming something that would resemble to the 'essence' of 'GenX-ness', underneath all the different appearances and/or identifiers. Though one can never simply state what 'GenX-ness', etc. is, that is nonetheless what Lacan argues as what is effective in generating our certainty in (and identification with or of) this indefinable 'thing': a belief that other people certainly know (or assume) its nature, or appear to.

6.6.5 Final thoughts on master signifiers

Globally, generation seems to function as this master-signifier when, despite the prevalence of colloquial definitions and quantitative research that exists around generation, it comes to signify multiple things to people who persist to be in some way identified with—or against—what it is thought to signify. Moreover, the master signifier that is 'generation' or 'generational differences', affixes a range of ideologies and worldviews which enable perceptions. It is within these perceptions and ideologies that we find comfort and justification in, by collectively labelling and thus oversimplifying individual distinctions. The generalisation of generation (the master-signifier concept) is used to validate how key psychological processes are performed via the signifier

(the overarching label), enabling the intellectualisation of the psychological processes that occur unconsciously: projections, projective identification, splitting, transference and countertransference. It seems that redirecting of repressed emotions, feelings and phantasies from one's previous relationships with people (namely familial), in generations both before and after them, replicate themselves in the workplace. From previous encounters (likely familial), to co-workers as the here and now person. The degree of displacement experienced within each of the participants' narratives suggests that generation is a strong trigger for these suppressed desires and phantasies, and as such, is likely to activate those unconscious defences²⁰.

6.6 Everything and nothing

Generational differences and the different generations seem to have an ontological status and this research seems to speak to the psychosocial science of empty space. While there seems to be absolutely nothing here, while generation seems to be a completely meaningless, empty concept and idea, yet, at the same time, it is everything. It holds so much of what defines people's membership, identity and relationships throughout their lives. It has profound psychological effects across both work and life domains. What I would argue is this: In essence there is the idealised image of one's own generation and in the shadows a denigrated image of the other – it has been and can be seen both ways – usually via sweeping statements. A generalised statement about generation means both everything and nothing: everyone has a sense of it linking to something. As such, it almost reduces any kind of rigour or

²⁰ I cannot stress enough that this research was in many ways limited. It was deep research and not broad research, with a very specific participant pool. and as per the methodology, a small sample size. With this in mind, I do not want to over generalise these findings. However, the findings are nonetheless interesting and worthy of further exploration.

exploration simply for using the concept, e.g., PlayStation Generation, millennials, or Baby Boomers. It is so nebulous that it is hard to argue against as it were, and this is significant, because it functions in this way: an empty container for anxieties associated to generational differences. It is an empty concept that consumes everything: a catchall. When there are few facts to be made clear, it therefore has incredible power because of its subjectivity and ambivalence, and partly because one cannot really describe it. It seems to be a broad nonentity, a bare and hollow term, yet it carries so much. That negative capability that I struggled with so deeply in pinning down what the argument of this research is, that which I struggled with, is thus: there is nothing here to see, and yet, because of that, everything to see.

6.6.1 My own experience of everything and nothing

In my own process for writing up these findings I felt myself looking for clarity, thinking I had missed something because the arguments could be seen both ways, under fleeting statements and individuality. I could argue one way or the other that generation was both there, but not there, profound, but also insignificant. I found myself thinking that there must be something else that is attributing to this that I have overlooked, that there must be a set of circumstances with a counterfactual that cannot be refuted, there must be a set of circumstances, where what I am saying is absolute. It seems that this concept of a generalised gross oversimplification got into both myself and the research. My own desperate quest to find something that felt very black and white in this nebulous environment is akin to the pursuit for classification of people into generational boxes. This sense of trying to be specific and detailed, and discovering things that are particular versus something that is generalised, fluid, opaque, and nebulous. In looking for a particular aspect, something definitive, what I found was the reverse, that generation functions as this sweeping cloud that absorbs everything into

who knows where. Just simply wanting to pin generation down, and give it context and thus certainty, it seems to lose its power. If one could actually say generation is either this or that, it would cease to function the same way it does, which in essence allows people to manage a whole host of differences (and anxieties) in an unformulated, indistinct way. Generation is not managed cautiously or navigated in a politically correct way such as the other differences inherent to one's unique identity, but instead it is used (and described) rather clumsily, with no delicate white glove features, generation/generational differences allow us to inelegantly boot it around.

At times generation may be indicative of immense differences, and other times it might be symbolic of sameness, it becomes more particular or concrete, idealised in a way. It becomes that master signifier, it becomes located in competition and rivalry and it allows us to structure internally how we relate to the world around us. That is fundamentally the power of generation (and the generalisation of those differences) and the informal power in it, which is what makes it feel like it could never be pinned down, and when it is pinned down, it dissipates, it exists, but then it does not. Is generation this or is it that? Well, it is both. It is everything and nothing.

Chapter 7: Final thoughts: Limitations, recommendations, summary and conclusion

7.1 Limitations

This research, like all research, has limitations which may or may not have rendered different results. These limitations are listed below.

7.1.1 Loaded (unloaded) SQUIN

This limitation is more a consideration for future research. Firstly, the SQUIN for this research was devoid of theory language, meaning that the word 'generation' was purposefully removed from the question and the word 'age' replaced 'generation'. Perhaps if the word generation was assumed to not be theory language and was used in the SQUIN, this research might have rendered different results, results that were perhaps more concise and not as opaque. Having said that, that opacity is attributed to the nebulous concept of generation, so: perhaps, but perhaps not. Conversely, loading the SQUIN with theory language would beget a similar argument. Ultimately, what must be considered is how the results transpired given the choice of a loaded or unloaded SQUIN, and therefore what may benefit future research in terms of use of theory language. Secondly, the SQUIN asked about "how people of different ages in organisations relate to each other". Perhaps it can be said that this question was loaded, assuming that there were differences and thus highlighting that there must be differences and different encounters between different ages and/or generations. Perhaps by using the word 'difference' participants may have been unconsciously reflecting more heavily on that as opposed to on a broader experience with generations. While the research was interested in the difference and thus the question applicable, it must be held

in mind that a broader, freely associative relationship with the construct of 'generation' may have been possible if 'difference' were not loaded in the SQUIN.

7.1.2 The mediation between age and generation

While the research question is orientated around generation, it is clear from participants' narratives that focusing on different ages inherently meant focusing on different generations. When age was referenced, there was a clear link to generation. Although, having said that, this assumption, and the nuances between age and generation, for such deep research must be acknowledged. Perhaps the findings would have been different had participants been referring to generation in its purity, as opposed to this research concluding that age was analogous to generation. According to Mannheim (1952), generation is a social phenomenon and thus differs from the implications of biological aging, including biological decline and a limited lifespan. This suggests that while age mediated for generation, they do represent different constructs. A small caveat here is that as per the systems psychodynamic field, I did and/or do consider death and dying aligned with this concept of limited lifespan.

7.1.3 Deep, not broad, research

As mentioned before throughout this research paper, I am well aware that this was deep and not broad research, with a relatively small, albeit ideal for BNIM, sample population. Perhaps with a larger sample population (and thus the necessity of a different research methodology or data collection method) research into generational difference could be broader and therefore have a different type of validity as a result. The validity of deep research runs the risk of being contended against, in that it does not apply to the masses as the samples are too small and

not all encompassing of a diversity that could be captured, had it been broad research. I address this concern in the recommendations by suggesting that a GRC study might be an interesting way to collect data in both a deep and a broad fashion.

7.1.4 Absence of new age organisations (the technology industry)

The majority of my participants were from traditional organisations that were, in theory, long-standing institutions steeped in rich history. This arguably plays into the dynamics of generational differences and the cultural differences belonging to each generation, as organisations themselves are born into generations, time periods or eras when founded. My participants were from the military, and professional services such as law and the financial services industries. All these industries are steeped in traditional norms, still very present today. Had I incorporated a few participants representative of modern-day, non-traditional technology start-ups and institutions, ones indicative of new-age generations, perhaps results may have rendered different insights. At the very least this would have highlighted the voices of the youngest generation currently in the workforce and those that are more on the receiving end of the indistinct dynamics that operate when traditional leadership-followership relations are upturned. Perhaps this is not a limitation but more of what may have gotten located in the research when looking more closely at generation. Generation Z was somewhat forgotten.

7.1.5 The missing generation: GenZ

It is not lost on me that the one generation this research does not have sufficient representation of (if any) is what is known as Generation Z (Gen Z), the generation that is currently identified as most responsible for the disruption to business models

as they are known, and organisational structures as they have always been. This is also the generation that is said to have the sharpest differences with the elders and current ideologies. They are said to see constant societal change as a good thing, and are currently on the cusp of adulthood and uncertain futures. This is also the generation after my own. Might this research have been different with their voices more prolific? I think so. I find it interesting that this research 'stopped' at my own generation (not that I fully identify with it, and perhaps a paper for another time). This left me wondering if my (one's) own generation, and others, are even able to look behind them consciously without being asked to do so in a provocative question for research purposes. Of all my research limitations, this one saddens me most. I feel as if I were blinded to that generation and only on reflection has it become apparent. Again, this is something located in generation, as I saw a similar pattern with my participants, blinded to the next generation until asked to look, not just see, but to really observe.

7.1.6 Absence of a sub-section 3

BNIM as a biographical methodology recommends three sub-sections (SS) for data collection, however it is not uncommon for the SS3 to not be used. SS1 should be the SQUIN where the researcher asks and listens, SS2 should be the PINs that the researcher can hone in on, and finally SS3, the non-mandatory but useful sub-section that allows a researcher to ask descriptive questions that are slightly further removed from the grounded nature of the lived life and told story. For example, "How did you feel about being in a self-identified younger generation?" This section was omitted mostly because I felt that, firstly, I had enough rich data from SS1 and SS2, secondly because I was concerned that making use of SS3, a more

conscious semi-structured style interviewing method, that I would lose the biographical and unconscious aspects of the research methodology. More descriptive questioning may be useful in future research, targeting specific themes which may allow for a deeper drilling and particular exploration. Despite the fact that SS3 may have carried perhaps more transference or countertransference, thus a greater deal of subjectivity, and perhaps a further straying from a grounded theory analysis, it may be useful in future research. Ultimately, future research could benefit from exploring a more descriptive approach alongside a biographical approach.

7.1.7 Purposeful or purposive and snowball sampling

My sample population was purposeful: I specifically searched for participants that had had or are currently having an upward leadership career trajectory, assuming that, if any, they would have been faced with the most complex of the relationships and processes into which generational differences seems to get tangled up. Equally, snowball sampling meant that the referral of participants was largely in same or similar occupational realms, limiting the variety of industries contributing to this research. Perhaps these results would have looked different if this were a randomly chosen group of individuals, where the deeply complex dynamics of rivalry and competition were perhaps not as blatant, because the desire for progression and growth would perhaps not have been so strong or assumed. Would this have impacted the findings? Perhaps, but equally it may have given a different perspective, which is not present. Perhaps a suggestion for future research would be to negate the purposeful sample and have a look at a more random cross section of people.

7.2 Recommendations

Through the detailed analysis of the effect of generational differences, as perceived by participants in both their lived lives and told stories, this study attempted further to understand the impacts of generational differences and what might be located in this vague construct, from a systems-psychodynamics approach. This study did not specifically research potential interventions that would bring to the surface the unwanted and repressed thoughts and emotions that are inevitably cast aside into the empty container that is generation or generational differences. Nonetheless, below are some recommendations that, as a result of this research experience, I have reason to believe may prove to be useful in beginning to notice and name what might be going on with this intricate dynamic. All these recommendations are anchored in understanding more about what generational differences may mean at a deeper level, or what they may trigger, rather than attempting further to understand or tie a chronological rationale to birth years and collective attributes.

7.2.1 Using psychological processes to better understand what impacts generational differences have on organisational processes and relationships

The majority of both my participants' and my unconscious reactions to participant narratives are largely that: unconscious. I am therefore certain there were multiple reactions unacknowledged for myself and my participants. This made me reflect on how helpful a therapeutic stance in dealing with different generations or generational differences in a workplace might be. Understanding how the influence of family relationships, particularly those in formative years, set up a model in the mind around generation that is linked to, but equally different from, authority. This research explains some of the informal relations around age and generation that may be going on,

upwards, laterally and downwards. If these unconscious dynamics were to be revealed, made conscious, named and spoken about, what could that do to the processes and people that unhelpful previous experiences are projected into. Might murderous processes, such as succession planning, be less hostile? Could sense-making via counter-transference help us to understand more about this complex phenomenon with organisational processes? One would hope so.

7.2.2 Group relations conference – Generational differences: Exploring vulnerability and trust

In a GRC (group relations conference) participants have the opportunity to study group, organisational and social dynamics, specifically authority, role, agency and power, as well as the relationship between tradition, innovation and change and the interchange between external factors (such as economic and social factors) and the organisation itself. Because generational differences are so deeply entwined with external factors that affect the individual (depending on the years of their birth and growing up), at an individual, group and system level, a GRC is a thought-provoking opportunity that could bring insight into perceptions of generation in the organisation. The temporary organisation that a GRC sets up could provide valuable experimentation with tensions when generational differences are crossed with authority, task, agency and role, which may not be possible in organisations as they are. The opportunity to play and learn with generational difference in a live way, and gaining insight to these dynamics in complex organisational life, could be beneficial for further research into this field specifically.

7.2.3 OD consultants use of own generation as a tool

OD (organisational development) consultants choosing to work with this dynamic within individual, teams or larger groups or systems could find ways in which they could draw upon their own feelings, or experiences in relation to generational differences to enhance the therapeutic process. At the heart of what OD practitioners do is working with human systems. As messy human beings, working within a human system, it is imperative that we use ourselves as a tool. Knowing one's own generation, one's thoughts about generation/generational differences, and the deeper reflexivity that exists with knowing what generational difference exist in the relationships one works within, would be of significant benefit to OD consultants, to be aware of and to not discount the influence of it. Because generation is so generalised, and we use a systems psychodynamic model that is quite particular and specific, we may miss some aspect of it that is unconscious and dynamic, but equally our positioning in it. Using one's own generation may have the ability to support working messily within, rather than turning a blind eye to or ignoring, potentially challenging dynamics, as well as acting as a container for anxieties associated to these differences and associated triggers. Essentially, consultants using themselves as a tool, particularly their generational differences and experiences, will enable more thought-provoking conversation, making it OK to talk about the difficulties therein, alongside the other challenging topics with which OD consultants are working.

7.2.4 Generation in the mind as an activity

Organisation-in-the mind is a conscious or pre-conscious construct, focused around emotional experience of tasks, roles, purposes, rituals, accountability, competence, failure, success. It calls for Management. Institution-in-the mind is

an unconscious construct, focused around the emotional experience of ideals, values, hopes, beliefs, dreams, symbols, birth, life, death. It requires leadership. (Hutton et al., 1997)

In the same way that Hutton et al. talk about 'institution' versus 'organisation' in the mind, I wonder if we could create better understanding about the complexities of generation by differentiating between 'age in the mind' and 'generation in the mind'. Perhaps age in the mind is similar to organisation, and generation akin to institution. "Informed by research-based methodologies which engage with organisational and professional dilemmas through participative exploration – drawings, narrative, improvisation and delivered in creative interventions designed with both planned and emergent developments in mind" (Izod, 2023). Using the principles of organisation in the mind in creative ways, might enable a different aspect to be seen. Drawing on the unconscious aspects that are focused around the emotional experiences of collective ideals and norms might give more insight into the collective groups that are Generations and how individuals identify with them. If society is so drawn to this concept of grouping similar birth cohorts and calling them by a collective term, perhaps it would be beneficial to do exploratory work therein to make a more robust qualitative (systems psychodynamically led) definitions and explanations available.

7.2.5 Developing a relational (third) approach

It is not a new discovery that relational practices support connection, not only with oneself, but connection with others when facing challenges. "Underpinned by a range of theories 'the Relational Terrain', where the questions 'who am I' (identity) and 'who am I here? (place) help to orientate ourselves in shifting ecologies of work-place and societal systems" (Izod, 2023). Enabling a better relational practice around working

with generational difference might enable us to understand more about self and other, but also potentially to support connection where there is none. Supporting a journey that enables participants to make sense of what is happening in the here and now, particularly with the severity and frequency of volatile human systems, innovation, economies, societal shifts, and the emotions these have the ability to trigger. How do we create the opportunity to surface and manage multifaceted anxieties in relation to generational differences and different generations, and discover what it would take to risk seeing more of an individual, past that of the master signifier? Better connection between those from different generations could be achieved by shifting the way we think of those aspects attributed to different generations, processing the generational trauma (either passive or aggressive) and experiment with new ways of building relationships and organisational processes.

7.3 Summary: Revisiting the final research questions

The research question I had were as follows:

- 1) *What are the psychosocial influences that contribute to the perception of generation in individuals within an organisational context?*
- 2) *What exists across generations that influences organisational processes and relationships?*
- 3) *What impacts, if any, do perceived generational differences have on organisational change and leadership?*
- 4) *How, if at all, does the internalised idea of generational difference support or sabotage organisational processes and relationships? In what way are they functional or problematic?*
- 5) *What are the factors that influence the generation in the mind of participants and what impact does this have on professional identity, leadership and followership?*

I wanted to understand generational differences at a deeper level and considering the above questions, I feel I have been able to address much of this on the journey. I recognise there are still gaps and as stated before this was a modest research approach focusing on depth and not breadth. I recognise the limits but also the profound influence of generational difference. With that in mind, it felt disingenuous to directly answer the above questions assuming all answers are found, but rather to cast light on some of the nuances that situate these complex questions. Below is my summary in relation to my research questions.

From the challenge to traditional structures and ideas of authority, to how individuals choose to take up their identity, different generations have different internal schemas of perception around these differences that have both been influenced by immediate relationships and societal norms. Different generations seemed to have distinct perspectives on authority and leadership styles but it is not just that simple. Perspective did not seem isolated to generation as it related to age but rather a complex number of interactions from an individual and a collective perspective. Generational differences impact the acceptance of leadership, the exercise of power, and the organisation's overall hierarchy, as well as traditional forms of power and authority. The perceptions of generational differences influence how leadership is seen, how it is taken up, to what degree it is valued, the extent to which it is influenced by competition and many other aspects.

The findings and the discussion chapter examine in depth the impacts these differences have with in change and leadership. This research addresses the psychosocial factors that influence generation in an organisational context by looking at a number of different aspects from namely; family dynamics to external societal factors present throughout one's life. From relationships with family members and the generational representation at a familial level, along with the repetition of familiar patterns, to the cultures and norms of society at a given time, all of which influence how a person perceives and therefore behaviours within organisations. This is particularly addressed in the discussion chapter when GIM is developed though influences from OIM and habitus, how those internal perceptions are built and solidified. From previous family dynamics and relationships to societal norms and structures, existing mental models that are associated to various different generations

were found to be key influences in how organisational processes and relationships are not only understood but addressed.

In many ways the internalised idea of generational differences can either sabotage or support organisational processes or relationships depending on previous individual experiences and the repetition of those relationships played out within the organisation, as well as the influential societal norms influencing an individual. Many other factors such as position, role, task, lateral and vertical relationships as well as perceived competition and credibility can and do impact perceptions and internalizations and therefore the responses to such organisational processes.

Unconscious biases, stereotypes, and power struggles between generational cohorts manifest in organisations and depending on previous experiences and internalised structures, these generational conflicts may disrupt organisational functioning and can and do play out differently. Furthermore, differing attitudes towards innovation, risk, and stability—can either facilitate or hinder organisational change and leader-member exchanges. Particularly when considering role boundaries and how individuals from different generations perceive their roles and boundaries, impacting collaboration and role conflict.

From the capacity to change to the felt levels of competition and threat, to family dynamics and societal norms there are multiple factors that influence the GIM of participants and the impact is mostly seen in the defences against these anxieties, in the agency and authority with which people take up their role and unconscious biases and stereotypes that influence everything from decision making to team dynamics and

career progression. Depending on the positionality of the leader-member relationship and the generation in which the organisation is born into there are multiple factors at play which can shape perceptions of competence, potential, and worth, impacting how generational cohorts are integrated and valued within the workplace.

7.4 Conclusion

From the outset of this research, I suggested that generations appeared to be misunderstood and generational analysis seemingly disdained due to popular discourse. I suggested that there seemed to be limited research from a system psychodynamics approach and that the area of generational differences as a whole is complex and opaque, and awkward to study despite the deep influences it seems to have on organisational relationships and processes. In the final chapters and summations of this research I do not believe my view has changed: generational differences are awkward and nebulous, yet significant and influential, all at the same time. What has changed, however, is my view on the degree of agency (as per the defences) generational differences seems to have, as well as what that might mean for organisational relationships and processes. Perhaps even more so, than what the dynamics around traditional authority has taught us in organisational processes and relationships.

Generation seems to disrupt the known or formal authorities, systems and structures in subtle and various ways, and therefore needs to be held in mind because it has influence. The demolished organisational and technological margins in boundaryless organisations bring about a different type of challenge around boundaries between groups of people with deep seated differences, from perspectives and culture, to paradigm shifts, age and generation. However, although difficult to identify simply at times, given the complex nature and intersectionality of generational differences, an understanding of what is defended against may help us gain a deeper understanding of interpersonal dynamics within organisations.

Generation matters, its opaque and nebulous but because of this, because of this all or nothing quality to it, it matters, but it also makes it harder to see the influence it holds. The 'all-or-nothing' thinking around generations makes it nearly impossible for people to see past an overarching cloud of generalisations, and because of these overgeneralisations it makes generation an easy container for the unwanted thoughts and hidden feelings associated to different generations, and possibly the associated change, and it should therefore be noted. Generation in the mind describes a framework or a way of contextualising generational differences informed by the insights or methodologies of psychoanalysis, psychodynamics, systems thinking and group relations. Everyone, whether conscious or not, of the concept of generation, whether they identify with a specific generation or not, has a mental image of how it functions, and is subject to societal projections of generation. While perhaps not all would or could consciously agree on a unique set of differences that delineate one generation from another, they exist. In this sense, all generations and generational differences exist in the mind, and it is these 'in the mind' perceptions that bare significant influence in understanding and working with organisational dynamics.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Figures

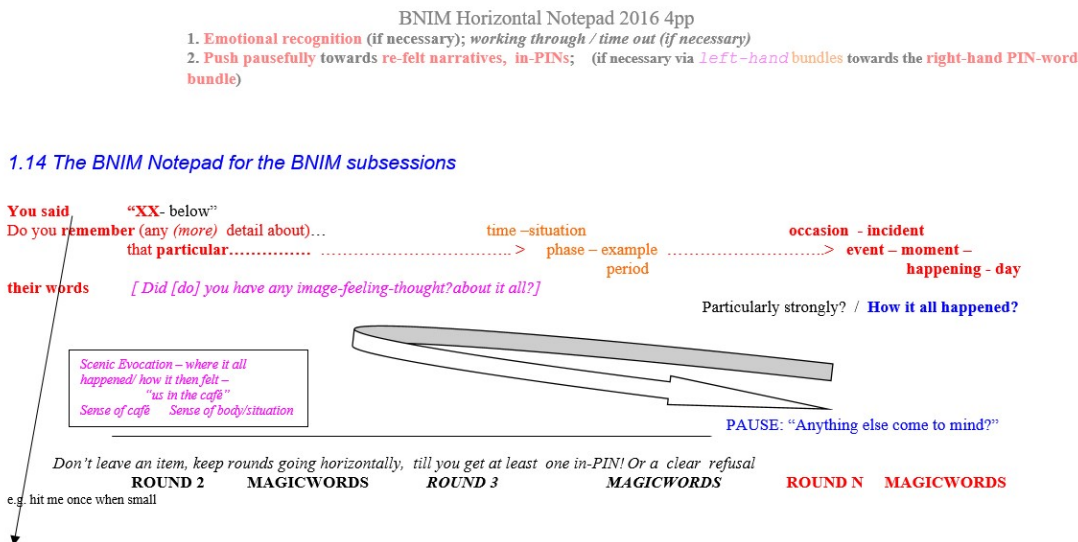


Figure 10 - BNIM Note pad

A SQUIN: Single Question aimed at inducing Narrative(s)

"Can you please tell me your life story
 [story of your life since X since you first came across Y until Z] : variants
 All the experiences and the events which were important for you, personally, up to now.

Start wherever you like
 Please take the time you need
 I'll listen first, I won't interrupt
 I'll just take some notes in case I have any further questions for after you've finished telling me about it all" *Repeat first para.*

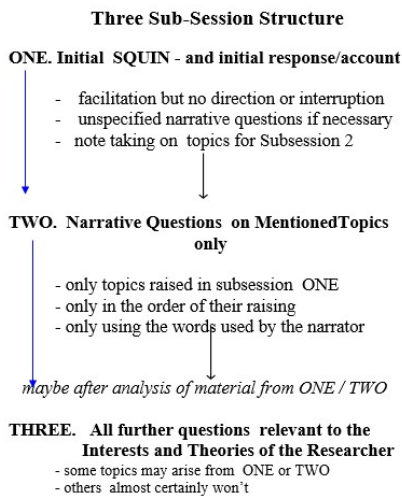


Figure 11 – BNIM SQUIN

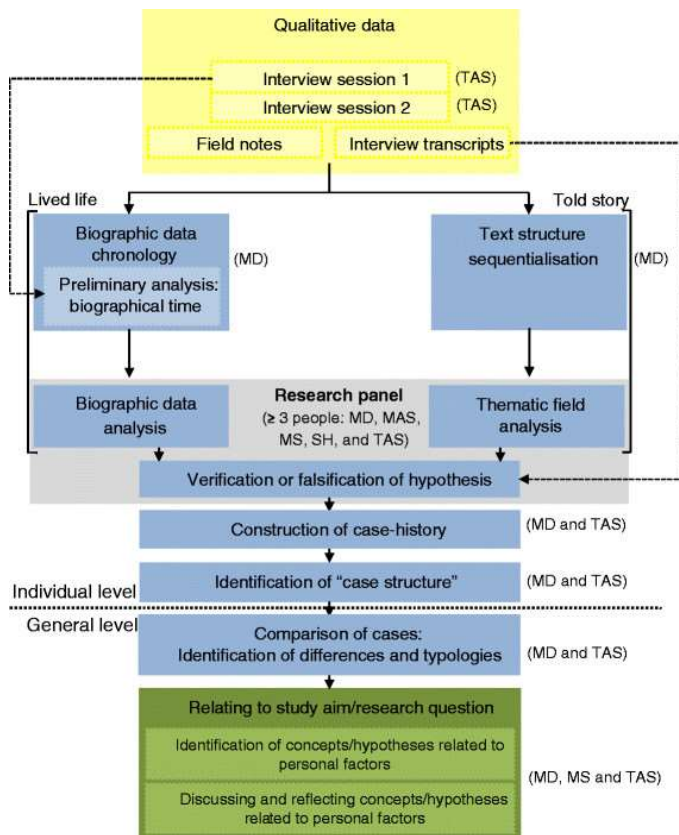


Figure 12 – BNIM data analysis

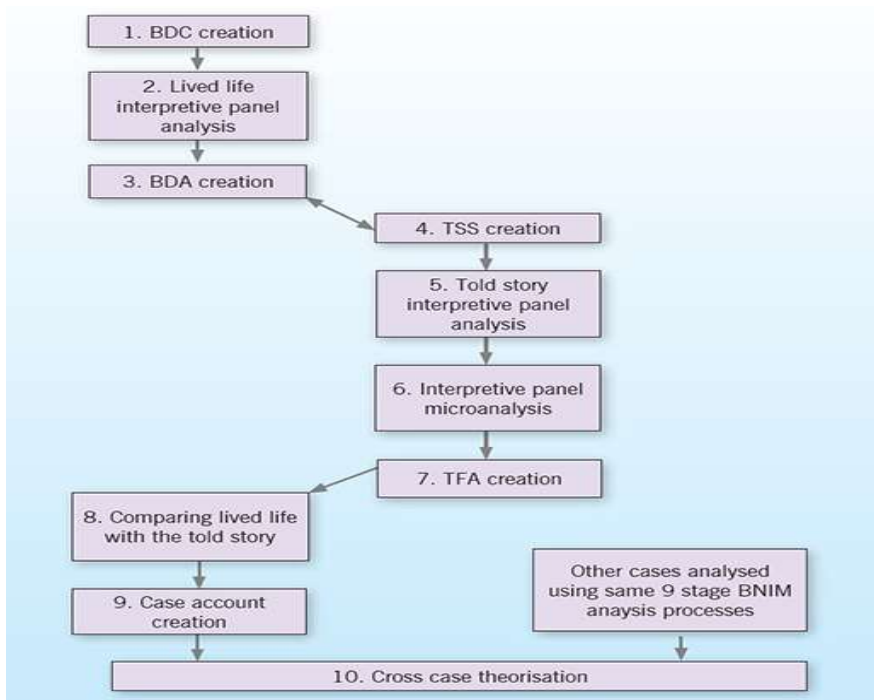


Figure13 – Grounded Theory

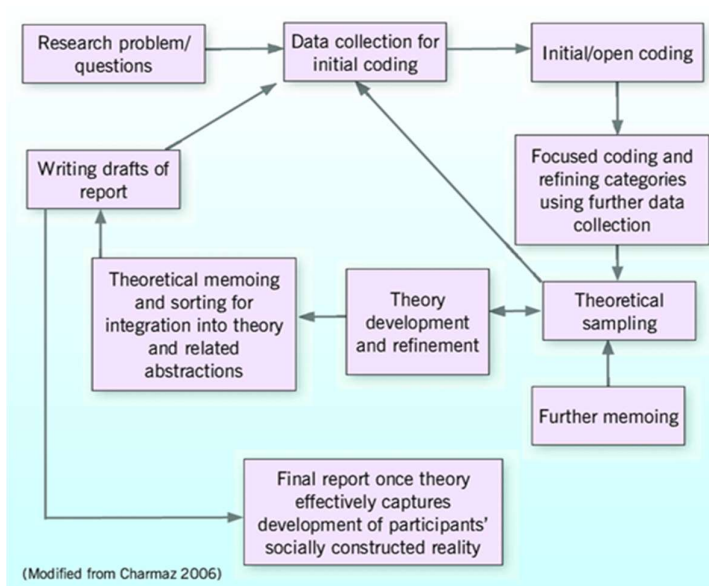


Figure 14 – Grounded Theory Model (Charmaz, 2006)

Appendix B - Tables

Table 2 – GIM connections to OIM

GIM construct is built on the following connections between the versions of OIM and GIM.

	Armstrong OIM (Armstrong, 2005, pp. 6 – 7)	Grubb OIM (Hutton, 1997, pp. 3-5)	GIM	Where GIM was shown
Characteristics	Emotional experience is not, just, property of the individual alone or located in purely individual space. An emotional experience of the organisation as a whole is always present	Emotional experiences are individual	Emotional experiences yes but the perception of others (which influences internal perceptions) and the societal projections of what a generation is/should be, are always present	Cole: "I'd actually been brought in into more senior level and all of them and I felt like quite an imposter because I was like, I don't know how I got this job anyway. And these people are all much older and more experienced and have more wisdom than I have. As I move up. In my leadership, a lot of people do say to me you are really credible, which is good. So I think i've always made sure that I know what I'm talking about where I'm at. I'm at least prepared and i've kind of thought through things before meetings because I felt like I always had to have to do that. So that my age and or my perceived age

				wouldn't impact you know people's perceptions of me".
	The emotional experience of the organisation as a whole is a function of interrelations between task, structure, culture and environment or context	Emotional experience for people are different as they interpret information differently (different values and beliefs) and thus have different perceptions	Emotional experiences are both individualised based on how individuals interpret generation but this is also predicated on structures, tasks and environment societally (i.e. Family and organisation)	Jerry: "So as I hit 40 was when I left the sabre squadrons to do to do a training job. And I think that's probably the time that i've first realised I'd hit 40 and I looked back at the squadron I just left with a lot of really young people in it. And since i've hit 40 and done a couple of other jobs going back to other sabre squadrons. I do realise now that I'm actually, in relative terms really, really old compared to the majority of the workforce."
	No boundary is impermeable – what is identified with by one member is related to the emotional undertow of transactions across that boundary	I, as a person, work in an institution, I introject (take into myself) aspects of what is happening to me from people and events to form internal Objects and Part objects. These are symbols of my external world which I	We introject aspects of generation from past people and events to form internal objects but the boundaries remain permeable and thus internal objects are	Eddy: "it just sort of highlights that maybe a different sort of mindset that some people have compared to others. And that was sort of because that was kind of late 2006 or 2005/6, that's you know,

		<p>use to think about my surroundings</p>	<p>influenced through transactions</p>	<p>that's when the generations are starting to get in my eyes you know, bit easier, bit softer and maybe sort of a bit more touchy feely and to be being coached a bit more... I think it's just sort of that generation where they're sort of really technology advanced. They're all over sort of technology and it's amazing to see that, you know, their computer knowledge and anything to do with tech. It is amazing and hands down better than what mine was. But on the flip side of that it's because not through their own fault, but they haven't had the things like Afghans and stuff like that. So you can train train train until you have rounds (bullets) coming the other way. You don't know how people are going to react."</p>
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	<p>The “world within a world” can appear as a foreign body and as an extension of the individual or as a term in the relatedness of the individual to his or her or their context - it can be denied disowned and defended against</p>	<p>Emotional experiences are repressed in organisational life because as a person-in-role in my institution I have my own needs and desires, fears and anxieties into which come the experiences from my workplace. I ‘Monitor’ consciously and unconsciously what I will allow myself to ‘Know’ and perceive, for the sake of my own survival, or for the sake of the institution, or for the sake of my own ambition.</p>	<p>Our emotional experiences are repressed when we know or have context. When generation brings about ambiguity and defies that which we have always known to be true in the mind, we monitor consciously and unconsciously that which keeps an order internally and externally we deny, disown or defend against the difference</p>	<p>Bernie: “your professional mentor as you went through (training) would thrash you, as well as a sergeant which quite frankly, was a complete knob. And actually from leadership's point of view, I learned a lot of not how to do things from him. I had an officer who was young and it was quite fractious between the training team, the sergeant, the training corporals, the sergeant and the officer. They didn't get on at all, and then the training team would pretty much listen to the sergeant because he was the senior soldier. So if I look back and think about that entire time from leadership's point of view is fucked up. Because you know, it wasn't working in harmony as the military should do. You had a guy which was saying, you know, he has clear</p>
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				<p>parameters which you have to do and train and you had an old guy which was just a complete knob, a horrible bit of work. One of his opening lines to us was (his dog was on the landing above us) "I'd rather see one of you cunts die than see a thorn in my Billy's dogs foot" and you're just sat there like Oh My God. You know, you're meant to be an inspiration but you don't value us. So straightaway and you know, very quickly, I realised he was a complete knob but he was a sergeant (older) which you had to appease because he had the power over the entire training team and those training team could make your life utter misery. But I had zero respect for him.</p>
	<p>The aim is to introduce clients to a world within a world and in doing so it</p>	<p>Organisation-in-the-mind' becomes the transitional object, which I need to</p>	<p>In GIM the transitional object is both created and discovered by the</p>	<p>Callum: "I remember thinking I was younger but, but still sort of same thing.</p>

	develops relatedness to the organisation	contain both my irrational thoughts and unformulated ideas as well as my rational ones.	owner but influenced later in how they are able to see a world within a world which develops the relatedness to one's own and other generations as well as societal projections/beliefs about generation	I didn't really feel any sort of age discrepancy until I started getting more towards more of a leadership role . Then maybe the more senior guys who you're sort of in parallel with would start to question why you're at that age, a lot younger to them, and then, why you're a lot younger, but in a sort of a position of authority starting started getting to that point. They didn't ever say anything, but you could definitely feel that certain people thinking "Why is he doing that job is too, too young" maybe even though the obviously didn't maybe truly feel like that way . I think it was more for maybe a natural instinct versus like, their actual thoughts of why , why is he doing that job? A lot of them didn't actually thought that. I think it was
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				just more of a...an emotional response".
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Appendix C – In-case analysis examples

Figure 15 – In-case analysis with SQUIN example

Jess

So as you know, I'm researching how people of different ages in organisations relate to each other. So can you please tell me the story of your leadership journey and your relationships with people of different ages, from when you first started thinking in your work about age differences, up until now? All those events and experiences that were important for you personally, I'll listen. I won't interrupt. I'll just take some notes in case I have any questions for you later. Please take your time. And please begin wherever you like.

I can read it again if you need?

Participant 3

No I can, Yeah, it depends how how interesting you want it to be on how far you want me to go back? Now I can start from when I joined the Marines and that sort of thing or, or go for more, it may be more interesting, but I suppose I've encountered things in both of my jobs. So maybe go from the Marines. Yeah. Good. Yeah. So I can broad brush my so I basically I didn't do very well education wise at school. So I thought of, you know, I did the best I could but I thought, right? natural progression I'm just going to join the military and at least I can sort of try and achieve something that way. Because obviously, my sister has mega academic brothers, practical builds houses, that sort of stuff. So I think I was a sort of last child and I needed to sort of prove myself. So that's why I went to the military. I went for the Marines because I wanted to be more elitist rather than just joining the Army or the Navy. And then because I lived in Portsmouth, Marines, sort of boating, I was into that sort of stuff. Anyway, I was into the sort of boating and so that's what I did.

I went travelling initially around South Africa, in fact, to get some sort of life experience before signed my life away for 22 years there I sort of because I was quite young, I was only 18 met, you know, a load of different people catching up with sort of older people as well as people my own age. So that was quite good to sort of, I thought sort of, you know, converse with because I was sort of used to school, people my own age group and then suddenly getting into the wide world. So I think travelling helped. And it was a good sort of good sort of experience to then join the military. I then joined the military. I was then only 19, I'd say not one of the youngest because obviously you can join at 16. But then found myself in a, you know, recruit block with 60 other people range ages ranging from 16 up to 28. So, you know, I was sort of not one of the youngest, but a top 10 of the younger people. So that was, you know, sort of an experience or the instructors a lot older, you know, someone had done the Falklands. So a lot of experience on the people that sort of trained me up, you know, like 35 to 40. You know, 35 to 38 year olds, teaching me and then I sort of just threw myself into it. I wasn't the fittest. I took all this sort of instruction well, you know, I understand it's the military. You know, some people don't, don't get it, you get shouted at, but I was just it was like water off a duck's back. It was just, it was a means to an end and I knew what I wanted to do after 30 weeks of training to get my green lid. And so basically, I've just sort of I wouldn't say breezed through training, but I did well, I took all the information sort of given to me. And I did well you



Pinnock, Jess

FAMILY ORDER

I noticed how he refers to himself as the last child but not the youngest. This lives up to how he acknowledges the foundations laid before him and expects others to do that when the next generation comes in as the last born making him the middle or first born, clearly more comfortable with first than middle. If parents get more confident and relax the rules with each child its interesting how he doesn't want or give that. He talks about proving himself as the last born and you can see throughout he expects those more junior to him to be doing that

There is also something very unsure about this, sort of



Pinnock, Jess

STRUCTURE OF GENERATION IN INSTITUTIONS

You only realise when you leave school, uni, regular military, unstructured organisations like tech companies that actually you can cross the horizontal line to a lateral line



Pinnock, Jess

LIFE EXPERIENCE AND WORK EXPERIENCE buys

credibility and either creates a hypersensitivity around difference in generation or totally obliterates it Connection between the two.



Pinnock, Jess

RELATIONSHIP TO AUTHORITY

Compliance means less threat in the psychosocial behaviour

Figure 16 – In-case analysis with PINS example

Jess
Can you tell me more about that particular moment when you realise that?

Participant 1
Maybe a bit of nerves. I guess. It first arrived and you realise that Yeah. That there is like an age difference but at the same time, I think it's quite good because if you're the youngest guy is like, you can always learn from from your you always feel like you can learn something from the older guys. Not to say can't learn things from the younger guys. But yeah, you definitely as a younger guy. You can like sort of grab onto and older guys do a lot more more life experience. And then sort of like a not like a father figure so much but like as a, you can like get you feel like you can get more information out of them to move forward. So I've never looked at as a bad thing. Have sort of looked at it as a good thing from my perspective, because it feels like yeah, that senior to me in the sort of same position, but I can get more information out of them than they can probably get out of me. Probably more helpful for me. Yeah.


Jess
You mentioned about feeling like a junior and that was imposed on you that you were younger. Yeah. Can you tell me a bit more about that moment?


Participant 1
It was more maybe, it's not like an organisational thing or a cultural thing. I think it's more like individual people. Like certain people seem like they may be hostile towards some young people coming through maybe because I don't know what it is. Whether they actually mean to do it or not. It's probably a different thing. But the definitely like the and you probably do stand out a bit. Because you just different to the rest maybe. Yeah. It's mainly just single individuals, certain individuals that see us as threat somewhere or maybe not up to standard because you're to junior or to young. Wherever they see that sort of imaginary line is that they impose a sort of response on to that


Jess
You also spoke of always catching up and I wondered if you could tell me a bit more about that particular situation.


Participant 1
I can't even remember when I said that now, which bit did I say I was always catching up was in response to the training of it right at the start?


Jess
Yeah, so it was right after you were talking about feeling Junior and feeling that like sort of the age was imposed upon you


 **Pinnock, Jess**
FAMDYN:
There is a expected belief that you can learn from those that come before you but that you may not be able to learn from those that come after you?

 **Pinnock, Jess**
FAMDYN/COMP:
Feels like a very one sided relationship where one of three outcomes is inevitable:
Parasitism (where one benefits and the other is harmed)

 **Pinnock, Jess**
CONSEP:
There is something about vulnerability being acceptable when you're younger but not so socially acceptable when you're older. There is no space for both to be vulnerable and "learning" at the same time therefore one sacrifices for the other. When you

 **Pinnock, Jess**
COMP:
What do people bring into the organisation and what does the organisational place in people that suggests that standing out is seen as desirable in that its rewarded yet proposed a threat of redundancy of others?

 **Pinnock, Jess**
CONSEP/COMP:
It feels like its not acceptable to not be of the norm and when you deviate from the sameness and the weness and you find individuality through progression/fast tracked leadership that's when the differences apply – before they didn't. Its only when

 **Pinnock, Jess**
COMP/COMPRED:
Who imposes the imaginary line?
What is the imaginary line? What does it hold?
Experience, credibility, length of service, amount of destruction witness, calibre of operations under belt?
Or age? Or neither until there is a felt difference

Appendix D – Pen pictures

Figure 17 – Pen Picture – Callum

Lived life – chronological order of events

**Years are approximate*

1987	Born
1995-2002	School Years
2002/3	Marines – joined at 16 years old
2003/4	Passed out of Marine Training
2004	Went to first unit and joined afghan tour at 17
2005/6	Went to next unit and another tour
2006/7	Special Forces Selection
2007/8	Joined Squadron
2011/12	Became Corporal
2014/15	Became Sergeant
2017/18	Became Colour Sergeant
2018/19	SFSG Selection
2019-2022	Became Troop Sergeant Major

Told story

Early Life & School Years

No information shared – story starts at 16 years old when he joined the marines.

Early Career

Callum starts his story by sharing that he joined the marines when he was 16 years old and felt really junior to the instructors as well as the other recruits who were all 10 years plus older than him. He goes on to explain that he felt like he was constantly catching up both in life and on the course. He shares that as he got older this felt like it got easier. He shares that he felt like he was always behind in marines training and as a result was under a lot more scrutiny so he had

to work that much harder and it took him a while to develop up to standard and then maintain. He mentions wanting to get into the group at this point, trying to find his feet in a new environment and find where he fits in. He mentions two different units and two different tours to Afghanistan, the first at which he was 17. The tours and the units seem, in his eyes, given him the credibility and experience he needed to go for bigger roles in more niche environments despite the fact that he still felt after that time that people were looking down on him due to his age. He shares that in between the two tours that he had gotten enough operational experience to be more confident. He then explains that he went on to do Selection for SF and passed while still feeling that he was the youngest, the age discrepancy didn't seem like such a big deal in this environment, until he got to leadership positions. *(note that when you join SF you give up all your rank and so he would have joined a squadron as a marine again irrespective of the rank he had obtained in the normal marines)*. Callum shares that he felt like it was easier as a younger guy to learn from the older guys he was surrounded by because they had more life experience and he could get more information out of them. He shares that there are people in the organisation who are more hostile to younger guys and the more different you are from the rest the more you stand out. That it was felt that because you are junior you can't be up to the standard.

Late Career

Later in his career Callum mentions that he takes up a number of different leadership roles and that's where he once again starts to feel the idea that people are judging his age and positionality in the organisation. He shares that when he got to Sergeant level it was more the fellow senior soldiers that were in parallel cohorts to him that he felt most judged by (i.e. other Sergeants that were much older than him but in the same position for what is a very structured and hierarchical organisation). It was these parallel cohorts that questioned his age and position of authority/role that he was in and invariably his capacity to perform the role/take up the authority. He then mentions how he fell out with a few lads over this. He talks about the fact that the animosity was more felt and in underlying behaviours than it ever was vocalised. Callum mentions that he thinks people didn't truly feel this was that it was more just natural instinct or an emotional response – seeing him as a threat. He talks about this response being in those that are on lateral level with him but not from the people he was leading. He also mentions that

this was more so for his peers/parallels cohorts that didn't actually work with him that questioned, placed judgement and saw him as a threat. He mentions that he then goes through another selection process for SFSG and there he felt that forgot age and seniority and it became more about ones skills, competence and experiences. The difference here for him was that in early career in the marines he was at the back whereas now he felt he was in the front and coming towards the top of the course which is when he started looking at his own age/seniority a lot differently. He also mentions the more senior you are the great the standard deviation for age at that level is which makes the discrepancy for age a lot bigger the more senior you go. But ultimately if you were younger in your cohort you could be viewed as competition. Callum mentions an invisible barrier that changes when you take a up a leadership role and you go from being a subordinate to alongside someone as a peer – the environment gets pricklier. He later mentions that when he experiences this or someone points it out he tries to dismiss it, not wanting to see I suggesting that it's the other person's problem not his but shares that he has tried to see how others would feel and what it might be like for them so that he can relate more to them but really struggled and could not see it. he cannot see how his role, agency, authority and his career can influence another's thoughts because they already feel that way, its just being triggered by him/his position and he shares how he is then made out to be the "aggressor" and on the defence in the situation when in reality they felt like that prior to him and they now are projecting animosity and jealous on him. In this space he gets close to trying to mention a gaslighting of some description where someone else feeling threatened makes them act out and you wonder what you've done wrong? Finally, Callum goes on to say that had the shoe been on the other foot where he is surpassed by someone younger than him that's when he might get this notion of people of different ages/generations and perhaps at that point he'd be like "oh that's what that feels like" but for now that hasn't happened yet and he is still a lot younger than many people on his trajectory. He finishes by saying that age doesn't matter, what you do matters and there are many older guys that he feels he couldn't do what they do and he reflects on the physicality of the job and how actually its harder in the beginning for younger lads to develop but its harder for older lads at the end to maintain and stay afloat.

Transition Points

There are a few transition points that appear to be influential in Callum' story.

1) His operational tour, 2) the leadership positions he takes up, 3) the invisible line (of experience and credibility) 4) from Marines to SF and 5) the realisation that at some point he won't be the youngest anymore. Callum operational tours transition him from being a young and inexperienced marine to a young marine with more experience than some of his senior people which gives him a confidence he never had prior. His transition from marines to SF is another defining transition for him where rank is lost and the career trajectory is begun again. Another transition point is around his leadership roles where he goes from individual contributor to a number of leadership roles that put a level of scrutiny as each one is taken up and how relationships around him are changing as a result. The invisible line is akin to both leadership and experience and that transition was made both when he obtained decent operational experience as well as when he stood out as a different/better/tall poppy amongst his peer group and the leadership dynamics changed. Lastly he flirts with transition before he ends his interview by where he realises that eventually he won't be the youngest anymore and that's something he needs to prepare for.

Perception (what kind of tale is this)

In Callum' story he seems to identify differently depending on his positionality in terms of the role he takes up and his own perception of his credibility and experience. As much as Callum constantly identifies that he is the youngest or most junior, he doesn't seem to identify with that/his generation particularly when in a leadership position (he mentions a lot about the threat or the competition inherent here) but equally when he speaks of being a young marine he doesn't do much to reference his peer group age wise but only the older generation and looking up to guys who had more life and operational experience. This could be because there were very few from his generation in the marines at that time and therefore identifies as a singleton as opposed to part of a wider generation and therefore took on an only child mentality constantly looking up to who he needed to get information or lessons from. For the generations that come after, he feels there is less to learn or at least gives the impression he is not interested in

learning from them. He identifies most with generations before him that have a wealth of knowledge that he can gain from. Having said this when he reflects on his position of leadership I wonder if he feels more enamoured by the generation after him because he wants to guide them and provide them with that life lessons knowledge that he sought out when he was a young soldier. Callum doesn't actually mention generation and sticks to the age descriptor and while he says age isn't a thing, its unconsciously bigger that he perceives and there is a pride he feels for having that badge of honour as the youngest and he uses the word threat and I think he feels that he loses a bit of his shininess should someone even younger than him have a better career trajectory. This in my mind goes hand in hand with the only child analogy where he was singled out from the beginning of his career and that's what he most strongly identifies with.

There is a theme that although people can start from different ages/generations in a cohort of people, there is a sameness to the group until individual routes are carved and when that difference appears (in Callum's case achievement, taking up agency to push forward and power/authority) the sameness and the group belonging is no longer available, one is cast out, that's when generation is identified, "blamed/used" for the explanation as to why that's not right or should not be possible.

In his story Callum shares the journey of confidence associated to experiences and therefore credibility which can make age or generation null and void. You get the sense that when you are not sure of yourself and you have a low level of self-efficacy, then your age is a very real visible artefact to you until you allow another label to speak for you such as experience or life stage where there is a space of neutrality (neither being too young nor too old) and then as you age the pendulum swings.

What stands out to me most about Callum's story is that generational differences are palpable in organisations where authority is considered. There is a very strong theme (his perception of what others perceive) that authority should only be awarded to those that have earned it by age not experience and thus there is a nexus among leadership, power and authority it's impact on how or to what extent generation is seen or perceived in organisations. He shares how its

just a natural instinct or an emotional response which is incredibly interesting id I think about the fact emotions are reactions that human beings experience in response to events or situations – the type of emotion a person experiences is determined by the circumstance that triggers the emotion. So what is being trigger? Envy? Lack? Previous experiences? This leads me to think that depending on ones formative years and their exposure and experience with authority and power is very dependant on how they react to generations displaying the same agency. Lastly Callum talks about an invisible line that is very real line for him and others where behaviour and attitudes change once a realisation has been made around the intersectionality of skill, competence, experience and age where ultimately the age for either the perceiver or receiver no longer matters. For him on his journey his age and his generation in the mind focuses on the difference that its created for him in his experience and how he has been a stand out/isolated case as a result. His internal picture is related to external events and assumptions such as being judged, questioned and doubted in his various leadership and physical roles that results in him consciously not wanting to believe that this is the real reason disparities exist (it's just a person's instinct and not intentional) but unconsciously realises this is what's happened (due to emotional triggers and instinctive drives) and is also how he is thinking about generations to come with regards to his own early experiences (not learning from younger people) and his current position (the youngest).

Figure 18 – Pen Picture - Lara

Lived life – chronological order of events

**Years are approximate*

1957	Born
1978	Left university
1979	Join a law firm (articles) joined at 22
1981	2 years as an article clerk rotating around the business
1982	Qualified as a lawyer
1987	5 years as a junior lawyer

1988	Decided to start a family at 26
1988	Became a professional support/knowledge lawyer
1991	Made partner
1992	Had second son
1992-2000	Built up a team of 40 knowledge lawyers
2000/2001- 2009	Became a consultant
2008	Ran leadership and development courses
2009	Set up consultancy business
2015-2018	Approximate retirement

Told story

Early Life & School Years

No information shared – story starts at 22 years old when she starts her articles at Freshfields.

Early Career

Lara starts off her early career with her articles and then qualifying as a junior lawyer straight onto client facing work. She refers to the fact that she had no work life balance at that time and that she decided that if she were going to have a family this type of balance or lack thereof was not ideal. She then goes on to interview for another job before Freshfields asks her to stay and she does. The organisation invented a job for her that was tasked with standardising documents and creating governance across the different firms and it was in this role that she negotiated 2 days a week from home and her first son was born. She was also paid significantly less in this role due to her WFH. She then recruited a team and the knowledge lawyer network grew. Just before her second child was born she made partner at the firm. Lara's experiences as a trainee and a junior lawyer were much that age didn't matter and that your experience or credibility was far more important. She shares that she far more felt the dichotomy of male/female as opposed to age related discrepancies in her early career, especially with regards to being a mom and choosing what was called the "mummy track" of work.

Late Career

After Lara made partner in the firm she began to build up her network of knowledge lawyers and also became more aware of what leadership was and what it meant/looked like to be a good leader. When she made partner she recalls of those 210 partners, probably 15 were women and so 2-3 years into her partner role she became more involved in the gender balance issue of the firm. She explains that her fellow female partner colleagues were a mixed bunch that were partly supportive and partly not in a way that resembled needing to earn your stripes. Lara talks about a hierarchical but flat structure in her experience later in her career where while your PQE establishes your place in the firm and that is quite defining but it's flat in the sense that people work together across all levels for the goal of the client facing work. She speaks of an equality across partners too whereby each partner is entitled to a vote and each vote has the same weight irrespective of age, experience or tenure it was equal standing. Lara goes on to say again that it was less about age and more about gender. She often refers to the fact that people were older, but that age did not confer any kind of automatic respect or seniority. It was all about how good you were really, or how good you were perceived to be. Lara often references the the eternal dilemma for the working woman and motherhood and how she isn't sure that it's got any easier for my generation. She then steps more into the consultancy space and feels more of a them and us between the partners and the lawyers/consultants which is role related. When she references managing people older than her, she speaks to the respect she had of their roles and their tasks that was not usual for lawyers to have when in management positions. She speaks to feeling awkward about managing people older than her due to the experience and sage difference by tries not to think about it too much. Lara speaks about being a consensus driven person and that was the grounding for majority of her leadership interaction. Finally in her late career Lara reflect that occasionally she would work with lawyers a lot younger than her and think to herself that the person was only 4 year older than her son and that she tried to ignore that.

Transition Points

- 1) Becoming a qualified lawyer – Lara has a transition point where she goes from being a trainee to a qualified junior lawyer and having zero work life balance – in this transition Lara refers to being an overachiever and very ambitious and working late to please the senior partners until 4 years later she realises that if she is going to have a family this isn't sustainable.
- 2) becoming a mother/working part-time – another transition point for Lara is when she goes from full to part time due to becoming a mother for the first time. In this transition Lara feels starkly the difference between male and female lawyers and the harshness of gender inequality in the workplace.
- 3) Becoming a partner – in this transition point while Lara is still feeling the gender inequality she is more on the fighting end of it and takes on various different leadership roles within the knowledge lawyer space. She also realises here that experience and gender were more dominant than age.
- 4) Consulting – lastly as Lara transition to outside the boundary of the internal organisation she feels the them and us concept and pursues her career from a training and development perspective.

Perception (what kind of tale is this)

Lara's tale is one that is dominated more by gender than by age however there are multiple intersections where the two are inextricably linked. Interestingly Lara often refers more to gender than age but as she brings her story to life and where those infliction points exist there is often a generational/age difference in older men having options of younger mothers/partners. I wonder about Lara's perception about generation when gender was such a strong complexity in her life. There is something oedipal in her story about the senior men in her organisation and the women partners that came before her. There are a few places where different generations really stand out in her story and with this in mind the core themes are more about credibility and experience, authority and power and how people chose to take up their agency. Lara's view of her own generation or the generation that she identifies with is one that was on the cusp of change an innovation, where boundaries were being pushed and new ways of working were being considered where is was incredibly difficult for women in that environment but she doesn't view it as any easier for those that come after her. While in her story she doesn't quite connect with the generation that comes after her in a way that's at a peer level, she connects with them from a maternal and nurturing perspective (which may make sense since her children are of that generation). In terms of a generation up there are 2 levels, one up there is a strong

connection for Lara where she identifies that majority of her social circle is older than her and were senior when she was junior, but then from another layer up that seems too far away to connect with where there was a teach that was due to be imposed on her as opposed to the support that she sought out and now shares with a generation below. My impression is that what she never got from the generation that preceded her what she wanted and as such made amends with the generation that followed her. She speaks to an underlying respect for those that are in authority and positions of power in a way that made it automated – the seniority meant you were credible and experienced which was what was respected, and if you were younger and had that to you then people were surprised.

What stood out most to me in this interview was how Lara's perception of her own generation, other generations she identified with and those that she did not was all predicated on a very rigid social structure. The hierarchical structure you are part of from birth, through child development, into school and university, the one that is apparent in your familial dynamics and all through potential social interactions are all classified hierarchical and her work experience is an extension of that. As a result my view is that her perception of generation is very rigid in a hierarchical structure by whichever defining mechanism makes sense and her few points in her narrative where she felt awkward around managing older people and where she chose to ignore the age of the young lawyers she need to work with because their age was too close to her sons. These are examples of not knowing how to function outside the hierarchical boundaries applicable to this and the intolerable dynamics that different ages (difference in hierarchical structure) brings to the workplace for many people. Often work is the first place where these boundaries no longer exist and given that families are our first institutions we belong to we try to replicate the order and it fails because the organisation is not set up that way from an authority and power perspective and that's where processes are hindered or facilitated. Generation in the mind for Lara seems to be an extension of all social structures that categorise by age and what is more important or prevalent in her story is the credibility and experience before the age.

Figure 19 – Pen Picture – Eddy

Lived life – chronological order of events**Years are approximate*

1980	Born – last child
1985-1996/97	School Years
1998	Gap Year/Travels around South Africa – 18 years old
1999	Marines – joined at 19 years old
2000s	Passed out of Marine Training
2001	42 Commando Unit
2001	Med Trip
2001	Sierra Leone Trip
2002/3	Lance Corporal in Iraq leading a small team
2002/3	Arctic Trip – South Georgia – Lance Corporal leading a small team but quite senior
2002/3	Commendation for Arctic trip helicopter crash rescue
2002-2004	Picked up Corporal
2004	Lympstone Training Team
2005	Special Forces Selection
2005	Passed Selection
2005	Started SF (16 years in X sqn)
2005-2011	Multiple Afghan tours – 4 or 5 back to back tours
2006	Afghan Tour – lost an eye in IED blast
2008	Instructor in the boat team
2010	When back to X sqn (16 years in X sqn)
2012	Became a Team Leader
2013	Hostage rescue
2015	Became a TSM
2020	Got divorced and moved houses
2021	SF to Civilian Transition

2022	Contract work
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Told story

Early Life & School Years

Eddy starts his story by sharing that he is the last child and needs to prove himself and the way he knew how to do that was to join the military and see if he could achieve something that way as opposed to competing with an academic sister or a practical hands-on bother. He explains that he joined the marines to be more elitist as opposed to just the army. He then explains that he went up to one year of A levels before deciding that that was not for him where he then worked multiple small jobs to earn enough money to do a gap year in South Africa before joining the marines.

Early Career

Eddy's early career was spent in the marines, from the age of 19 until around about 25 years old where he progressed through the ranks of lance corporal and corporal and went on multiple operational tours to Africa and Iraq. The majority of his early career sees Eddy taking up small but mighty roles where his experience and responsibility is tested as both a leader and as a soldier. In his early career Eddy was often the or within the youngest in training, on tours and in leadership positions. He speaks highly of experienced individuals and predicated his future aspirations on those he looks up to. He prides himself on the amount of experience he gets as a young marine as well as his ability to cope with high amounts of trauma very early on but also his ability to be used as a deployable resource multiple times over. Eddy refers to mirroring those in leadership positions and shares the sense of pride he feels when the behaviour is replicated with those he trains/leads and references it as the initial foundation of success in his career and other.

Late Career

Eddy then speaks about joining Special Forces at around 25 years old and spend 16 years there. He references his team and friends as family in this leg of his career and values the relationships and bonds built which I think challenge his sense of identity in his home life as

well as his transition points. Eddy spent 16 years in the Special Forces as an individual with a lot of potential making me wonder about what leadership roles/responsibility he was avoiding. Eddy speaks to steep learning curves and multiple roles that see him doing similar things but starting from scratch i.e. leading a team of people or taking up instructors' roles but in a very different environment and under different unwritten rules. His later career is as if not more kinetic than his early career seeing him deploy on multiple operational tours under extremely strenuous situations where trauma is present in each trip – both mental and physical injury apparent. He seems the change in generations in both his later career and his early career mainly in his instructor roles where he shares the felt difference he sees in how he perceives people as well as and therefore his interactions with them. In his later career Eddy often refers to, despite suggesting he is emotionally unattached, the nurturing position that being an instructor and a leader enables him to take up. He comments in his later career about the physical differences that he can see in the different generations and how that concerns him in the wider/holistic primary task of the military – the green army stuff.

Transition Points

Nicks main transition points occur on the basis of 3 different variables 1) leadership rank 2) traumatic events/operational experiences and 3) in institution. Eddy goes from civilian school leaver to wanderlust in a gap year, to basic military institution and then into elitist military intuition and back to civilian world (never truly leaving the military as its military contracting is his main source of work now). His leadership transitions are structured in the confines of the military but see him starting from zero 3 times in his career. He goes from LC to corporal in the marines and then back to marine then to team leader (corporal) and then Troop Sergeant Major (Sergeant) in SF and now to contractor/loss of identity in SF. his other transition points are generally associated to traumatic events and operational tours that spur him on to seek something more in terms of progression. His divorce is also a huge transition point for him although he doesn't speak to it much only that it gave him some realisation of perhaps how difficult it may be to be with someone like himself.

Perception (what kind of tale is this)

Eddy's story is one that seems to look back with respect and forward with disappointment. He has a strong view of the generation that comes after him in a way that is unapproving but only glamour and respect for those that came before him. He references what this "before" generation either expects or gets that he didn't and therefore questions the calibre of the people that come through this perceived dropping of standards. He does not identify with this generation from a physicality of the job perspective but is in "politely" awe of their other abilities such as techie side of things (unconscious I don't believe Eddy values this at all). It seems Nicks tale is one of admiration for the things that his predecessors deemed important and the basis of which he was measured – being as hard as possible with as much operational experience as possible – that's what makes you good at what you do. Having professionalism and balance (but unconsciously be swayed in favour of the job always) Eddy's tale is one of different mindset and he sees these mindsets differ across generations mainly in leadership and training roles he takes up as opposed to on a peer to peer/lateral relations level. Nicks sense of generation seems to be attached to authority, achievement and experience. He often speaks about the veterans that he predicated his style and learnings on. When he mentions the corporals and sergeants that he looked up to there was relative difference in age, approx. 8-10 years and he speaks highly of them and what knowledge they were able to impart. But when he references the "younger generations" there is the same age gap apparent but the differences are glaringly obvious to him where they are named and even labelled. In fact, some folks in his labelled "PlayStation generation" would be of similar age to him by default of the fact that you can have such a wide age range on joining the marines (16-30). When Eddy mentions taking lads through training and that they had duvets as opposed to brick beds – that is indicative of that time not that generation as there is no defined generation in that training group but interestingly that is placed on generation. The same is said for when he mentions the way in which generations coming through now don't have operational experience. There are some soldiers that are near enough his age (within 5 years) who join SF with zero operational experience yet this is attributed to generation/age as opposed to the paradigm shift that has changed the ways of working and marco shifts that impact political, economic and societal changes. Eddy's sense of identity lies in that of hard-core experience and the physicality of war of those that came before him and of his own generation that he was lucky enough to be the

last that experienced this level of combat. Nicks perception of younger/future generations is based on lack – what they wont have and what they wont see and therefore a blocker in how he relates to them and build relationships outside of the one that is a nurturing role to build them up should these opportunities ever arise. Generation that come after Eddy are not generations that he identifies with as he views them as softer or weaker and does not identify with that in a way that offers equality but rather in a way that offers parenthood – he feels a sense of duty to impart knowledge as opposed to seeing them as equal. This manifests in how future training cohorts need to be treated and what work arounds are in place for him to do his job which seems to result in a lack of respect because “they didn’t get it as bad”. The concept of initiation is a deep valued concept for Eddy in how he relates to different generations, in how he is taken in and how he takes other in. Experience is currency for Eddy in his tale of generations and experience is what earns you stripes. Eddy’s story is one that speak of respect towards authority that’s naturally found in a ranked organisation like the military and a patriarchal familial institution – from him taking instruction well to expecting his subordinates to do so – Nicks view of authority in a very hierarchical organisation is one he finds comfort and familiarity in and when predecessors challenge that its something that waivers his respect he offers younger/future generations.

Generation in the mind for Eddy seems to be that generations as it is being experienced by him through external events such as his experience of leadership – being led and leading and assumptions that may have been prevalent for him as the last born and the youngest mean that for him he is always looking up to those that have come before and laid foundation. Eddy not being used to having people/generations come after him in formative years may mean that he has limited internalised experience of what that could mean based on limited external experiences. This situation is derived from his own way of seeing the world – from previous familial positions, lived experiences and institutional experiences leadership positions. I believe Eddy’s perception is one predicated on respecting your elders given that his inner experiences of his interactions, relations and activities have put him in a position of being the youngest and thus looking up more than he would look down or across to identify experience/credibility or authority/sense of identity. You see this in how he needs to prove himself up but not down and

yet takes a very nurturing but strict position with those below/after him. Equally this is mirrored in the competition he experiences from his family right through training and even in his operations where the need to be identified as stand out by seniors/authority/the institution is valued before peer respect as its not mentioned. His reality is structured in such a way that suggests that people (irrespective of generation) that come AFTER him do not and cannot provide the same level of learning and role modelling than those BEFORE him can, irrespective of age. Generation for Eddy is not the factor but positionality in relation to his generation/place/order is what constructs his perception around generations.

Figure 20 – Pen Picture - Cole

Lived life – chronological order of events

**Years are approximate*

1990	Born
1994-2006	School years
2006-2012	University years
2013/4	Started working at Accenture
2015/6	Took on first leadership position
2017	Moved to Australia
2018	Moved back to the UK
2019-2021	Started working in house as an internal consultant/internal role
2021	Started working for a Alsek in an individual contributor role
2022 (current)	Took on a senior manager role in Alsek

Told story

Early Life & School Years

Cole starts her story from her university end into her first role and thus there is no history of her early life or her school years.

Early Career

Cole went to Oxford University and joined Accenture straight out of University as an analyst. In her early career at Accenture she talks about being part of a group of insecure overachievers that work relentless hours (and suffer from burnout as a result) but party as hard as they work which formed a bond between her and 67 of the other new starters at Accenture in a 5 week on-boarding. Her early career saw her move from analyst to consultant and eventually into junior management. Her reflection of ages comes in a number of different ways where she says that the company hire straight out of university so everyone in the starting cohort is roughly of the same age and the organisation itself “it’s quite a traditional pyramid shape where the majority of people there are at the kind of analyst, consultant and manager, career stages”. She then goes on to say that even in this hierarchy and the pyramid structure “the leadership teams that you interact with, are still probably, you know, they’re still very young, they’re still in the 30s and 40s. And actually, the only people at Accenture who are older are so senior at that point that you don’t actually interact with them at all. I didn’t really realise they existed if I’m very honest”. With this in mind Cole reflects that there was much more competition within peer groups in that people all have a similar ambition to grow and develop as well as the fact that these people are naturally all at similar life stages which also instigates a level of competition both in and outside the office. “I think there are some tensions sometimes there when you’re all competing, but also friends which is bonding but also very easy for comparison”.

Cole shares that early on in her career and up until now she has always felt that she both is and looks younger (possibly younger than she is) and has always worried that has impacted her credibility and thus thinks it’s her own insecurities that are coming through. While she is bubbly and friendly she has purposefully been quite “cut to the chase” about her work “So that my age and or my perceived age wouldn’t impact you know people’s perceptions of me... but I perceive that sometimes when I speak perhaps people wouldn’t take me as seriously. I think that is probably me, but large part just, you know my own insecurities, but I do feel like age played a role in in that and how I how I perceived by like, stage of kind of leadership development, if that makes”. In her early journey Cole takes on a few leadership roles as well as moving to Australia before coming back to the UK.

Late Career

When Cole comes back to the UK she takes on a few more leadership roles where she feels she jumped forward a few steps ahead and took on large part of responsibility she wasn't anticipating. Cole shares from a different lens in her current role that she is working with the proposed 5 generations in the workforce and that people of different ages have different priorities. She shares that "I didn't really didn't really understand as well some of the people who have kind of more senior and at a different stage in life because they had different priorities and to me at the time, was thinking all I want to do is excel in my career and work hard and I don't understand why people don't care about these programmes and these milestones and thinking I never want to ever want to be like I always want to really care I'm obviously now a bit older and starting to also reassess my priorities"

Cole's later career is littered with reflection in a number of different ways from forgetting what its like to be new and not know how to do anything (i.e. her industrial placement student) to new people in her team taking on daunting tasks for the first time. She also has a number of different experiences not only leading people of the same age but also leading people older who were perceivably on a level and the challenge that brings with regards to the perception of whether or not you are fit to lead someone and how you take up your authority or expertise. In her leadership journey she also mentions the older generation and that what feels accessible and works for her in her development journey is having a boss that is older by 5 years which is a "really good role model because is more experienced and slightly more senior but not so far away and ahead in her career that I can't kind of work out how to get there and follow her example". Cole also shares as she steps into these leadership roles that the safety net goes the more senior you get and she realises "suddenly, like, there is no one to catch me for this stuff"

Her experience with other generation has a few reflections where she thinks about how her physical stature has potentially impacted others perceptions of her ability to do the job she is doing "so I am 5 foot and look very young. And I'm quiet, I just genuinely enthusiastic, quite bubbly and smiley and I think I've always worked in financial services, which is typically very male dominated" and this has always made her think about how she comes across and therefore how put together she needs to be in her approach. This has and does often pull on

the concept of imposter syndrome for Cole and particularly through her later career he is often left thinking am I good enough to be here, do I know what I am talking about.

She reflects on the nature of what her role is looking to do now and shares that “there are what four or five different ones (generations) across different companies, loyalty, just I wouldn't say they're not loyal, but I think the loyalty means different things” Now, when you're younger, I think it's slightly strange to think I'll be in this company from day one until I retire. It's just not the attitude anymore and the way the way people digest information, want to digest information and kind of want to think about their careers is so different as well. So that's been a very interesting challenge that we're trying to solve. And how we inspire and engage all of those different groups and unite them under one vision that still tailored very differently. Cole ultimately shares that she doesn't think that “Age doesn't equal seniority or drive or anything but it can feel uncomfortable at the time because of the culture of the organisation”

Lastly in Cole's later career she mentions how she is au fait in handling older generations – particularly men – given that she has this familiarity back home “I find it almost easier as well to sometimes relate to people that are similar age to my parents in both age and context” despite feeling that people that are older within her organisation feel so far removed.

Transition Points

Cole has a few transition points 1) when she joins Accenture. In this transition while her structure is similar in that its people of similar ages as it were in university, the expectation of work and the pressure of delivering client work becomes very apparent to her and she risks burnout a few times. 2) when she takes on her first leadership position. She realises then the context of leadership and how far removed or how close different layers are as well as what its like to be overlooked as a leader because you are small, female or softer spoken. 3) when she leads people of same/similar age and older than her. When she takes on a more senior roles and finds herself leading people that were once her peers as well as people who think that they could or should be doing her job she is struck by the difficult nature of trying to be well like and well respected, of having and being friendly but also drawing a line where a manager-employee relationship boundary needs to be established. 4) her leadership development journey.

Throughout her journey, which she is still on, there are a number of different points of reflection that give her context to past and future generations which in turn helps her to develop perspective. There are also multiple moments that give her perspective on leadership and what it means to empower people and trust people. Lastly her relationship with expertise and how feeling like you know what you doing when you realise you don't and you have the oh shit moment that there is so much more to learn. Almost looking back on herself in quite a cringeworthy way at her arrogance and naivety.

Perception (what kind of tale is this)

Cole's tale is one of reflection – to her own admittance it felt like a coaching session as she walked through her leadership journey step by step. While it appears that she identifies with an “up and coming” generation, people who think differently, it seems that she sees herself separate or individualised from collective descriptions because of her journey and that she has been in situations that are not of the ordinary i.e. leading people older than her, being able to deal with older people and being sent in to do so, taking on a skip level leadership role after little time to onboard and after being an individual contributor initially. All of these experiences make her stand out from the rest of even what she may identify as her generation. She has an array of experience that put her in a position of more authority, expertise, experience and it almost translates as her identifying as older but seen as younger. I think she identifies most with a slightly older group of people that are her role models, the people she aspires to be like but equally sees herself as very much like them and of the same group. She speaks about being far enough from them to identify a career but not too far away from them that they feel inaccessible and as a result it seems she identifies with them as her people as opposed to the generation she is currently in.

In her perceptions of generations below her, she feels tension of needing to support and teach, to take on the responsibility of managing but also the vulnerability that she once felt when at a “new” to the organisation place and in a “young” of age mentality where nothing is a norm or custom and everything is a steep learning curve. She takes up a somewhat nurturing and condescending type of role with the younger generations – almost portraying that she is

superior. In her view of older generations, she looks up to them in a sense of approval seeking and needing to be shown the ropes but equally eager to demonstrate her ability without the support. The support from older generations is a comfort blanket. In her examples of this you can often see her desire to be told “good girl” and to be given good feedback about her being “good enough” in the role, even by calling her mom after not knowing what to do in a meeting – she seems to need that approval from the generation above (authority figures) to know she is doing well. Interesting the seemingly open and somewhat playful relationship she seems to have with her dad is what enables her to be able to “deal with old grumpy men” more so than some of her colleagues showing that potentially familial dynamics are still very relevant for her in the workplace.

She only once mentions that age doesn't equal seniority (that this is potentially organisational culture driven which she has sought out in the organisations she works for) and as such seniority and rank, authority, agency and expertise are for her more important than age is but it is seen as a very attractive/impressive feature to have all of these characteristics WHILE being younger. An accolade of sorts to have arrived here prior to a specific age of either the person or generation before – for what is out of the norm. The attraction here or compelling drive is less about age and more about how to differentiate and how to stand out (albeit age makes it look more impressive and is by default a stand out factor). While I am not sure that her idea of generation has manifested in her desire to stand out but her perception of herself where age and generation certainly play a role, that has facilitated some of how she manifests generation for her self and how young she feels to have a seat at the table and therefore how she thinks people perceive her. A lot can be said for the organisations that she has chosen to work for and the nature of financial services from a culture, gender and age perspective. My perception is that Cole finds comfort in an older organisational culture anchored in tradition and old school norms because she finds a sense of comfort in that as to her own testament she is a structured person who “is very establishment” which these organisations have and as a result she aligns her identity to older generations but equally thin environment gives her more of an opportunity to stand out as a bright young thing which both hinders and helps her – thus making generation apparent to her in individualised ways.

Figure 21 – Pen Picture - Bernie

Lived life – chronological order of events**Years are approximate*

1976	Born
1980 - 1994	School Years
1994/1995	A levels
1996	Joined Marines
2000	Served on a few tours
2004	Joined SF
2008	Picked up Corporal
2010	Sergeant
2012	More tours
2013	Colour sergeant
2015	Sqn Sergeant major
2017	RSM
2019	Command Sergeant Major of UKSF
2021	Left the group

Told story

Early Life & School Years

Bernie's story lightly touches on school years where he explains that school was a natural hierarchy/process that had a lot of structure. Bernie refers to being "peer related anyway. And there's a hierarchy I guess within your school, which naturally follows". He speaks about a natural a hierarchy within those of the different personalities (no directly age) but suggests that "I guess you knew a pecking order within the school. But they were all when I reflect were, everyone is at the same level right, they all peers". Interesting this is only on reflection as opposed to in the moment.

He then goes on to do A levels before leaving education.

Early Career

Bernie then jumps straight into his military career where he joins the marines shortly after his 20th birthday. While Bernie doesn't talk a lot about the details of his career – he speaks more about the experience he has with mostly leadership and, to a degree, different ages. Bernie starts off by saying what he found really interesting was “very early on in my career, is that how I can be on a training journey with anyone from 16 to 30. And yet, we were being instructed by people which were about 24, 25. So it kind of flipped what you're used to from a from a school children's life and sort of like a narrow view I guess to, then my first opening experience with leadership and ages actually didn't make any difference really, it was a position you were in at the time and very quickly, age didn't really become a thing for me”. In this he shares how joining the marines created a baseline of abilities despite the different ages. Bernie also mentions in his early career when people in instructing positions were very influential in his career but a few years down the line when he worked alongside him it was a really disheartening experience because he wasn't at all what he thought he was, what he had made himself out to be. Bernie also makes reference to the fact that in his early career he always wanted to learn from the best largely because “I'm super competitive and therefore, it's, you always want to be better than the person you're looking at I guess”. Bernie shares that mentorship in the forces is difficult because other than your immediate leadership line, other ranks always felt very far removed from you and that “trying to have a mentor who is too far removed from you is quite hard because you're never, they'd never fully open up and you'd never be able to have the interaction certainly within the military that you could have with someone which was a closer rank”. So for Bernie in his early career it was always about who he could look up to, who would be championing him and who he could learn the most from. Lastly his early career was also about learning how not to do things based on the experiences he had with his leaders.

Late Career

In his later career from when he joined the special forces onwards he has a realisation about working with the incredible people you do is that you have “incredible leaders I guess which you will follow for through thick through hell and high water but but you don't get good managers”. He refers to leaders as people who have drive and you look up to but managers as

people that bring you on and develop you and that for him the epitome of a leader is someone who can balance driving but also nurturing his people (a maturity to leadership). So ultimately what he was looking for in his later career as he became more of a senior leader was someone who could balance being an incredible operator but look after his people too. In his later career, much like his earlier career, Bernie references that age is not a thing for him in the military “I guess I've never gone Oh, he's older than me. He must know better. He's younger than me. He must know less. I don't think that's the case at all”. Instead his view on age, particularly of those younger, “I find it more. I admire certain individuals which have come at a very early age...just huge amounts of experience, you know...super young, super talented, and you realised actually age isn't the problem here is their experiences and what they can bring to the party”. His view on leadership then extends to “So I think going to your point, leadership age, I don't think there's such a case, the only thing the benefit of age, allows you to mature and your views and then allows you to become probably a more refined leader to get the balance between what is management and leadership”. With this statement in mind Bernie feels in his career this was applicable to him, he learned through developing himself and gaining maturity. His counterview although is that “have you got someone who's got the aptitude to learn very quickly and then come up with that sort of conclusion earlier on? or does that take development and if that's the case, then perhaps having a bit more age does pay dividends?” Ultimately its about what someone can do, has done and will do (experience, potential and credibility) before its about age and age only really comes in if this trifactor of what makes someone great doesn't apply – then we possibly peg it down to age.

Bernie shares in his experiences that its less about age and more about credibility and the ability to be a good thinker and articulate your ideas with confidence than it was ever about age. He shares that not everyone agrees with his view on age and that it shouldn't be that way. He also shares that as you go up in rank in his career you take on additional responsibility and more authority and therefore it is a requirement that you change and adapt which may or may not be easier with age/maturity/experience.

Bernie explains in his later career he was looking for different things from leaders but that those leaders weren't necessarily your peer – its could come from a subordinate. He references the best bits of advice he ever got were from people who were his peers or subordinates (that were

in fact older than him) and that's where he gained a lot of leadership perspective from – that you can learn from anyone at any age but you need to be open to it. As a result, this defined how he took on senior leadership roles within SF – it was all about balance, empathy, understanding and knowing your people way more than you think you do. In his later career there were also some key defining moments for him such as his best friend having PTSD and when he was RSM how he needed to grapple with the ratio of 1:3 divorces and do his best to manage operational output with welfare/well-being of the lads. Lastly Bernie, while he dismisses age he shares that he does look up to the CO's and the DSF's that he has worked with, because of the balance they advocated for and the thinking they demonstrated.

Transition Points

Bernie has a few transition points within his story: 1) From school to marines where he realised that actually you're all at peer level at school and now you're in an eclectic mix with all ages and people have wildly differing life experiences – diversity. 2) From trainee to soldier where he suffers a disappointment that the leaders he looked up to are not as great as he made them out to be and he closes that skill and experience gap as he does so in coming alongside them competency wise. 3) From marines to SF where he goes from being in a pretty structured institution to one with less structure and more relationships based where there is less emphasis on age/rank and more on credibility. 4) from an operational soldier to leader where he steps away from “door kicking” and does more to focus on strategically leading a team from behind. And lastly from just a leader to a manager and a leader where through his experiences around emotion, understanding, loss, grief, trauma he realises that there is more to being a soldier than being hardcore macho all the time and more to being a leader than just being charismatic and having a great drive but actually nurturing and caring for your people and above all role modelling and advocating for balance. There are small pinnacle moments of realisation that foster these larger transition points for Bernie.

Perception (what kind of tale is this)

My perception of Bernie's story is mostly that while one thing is confidently said, something totally different is inherently felt which made this narrative complex and difficult to tell. A very

interesting version of his biographic journey – to a degree it was more an experienced led narrative about his interactions with leadership than it was about his life story. He speaks mostly about what good leadership looks like and how/where he was able to learn and take from people and what he needed to make him a well-rounded leader he is today. I am not sure if the question was misunderstood or if it was more tolerable to talk widely about experiences than age – but there is something in that data for me with this participant. He litters age through his stories where he reflects on the relevance of age and the role it played in his leadership journey. Bernie often suggests directly that age isn't a thing but indirectly much of his narrative is beset with certain ways of representing a view that make one feel otherwise about how he sees certain generations. For example, whenever he references the bright young soldiers that have proved that you need to listen to people of all ages irrespective of how young or inexperienced they may seem, he refers to them as people he admires and is impressed by but never someone who could be a role model to him. The role models he has mentioned throughout his story have by and large been the people that he has looked up to (up being very literal) in that its always been leaders ahead of him in age and journey. So you can be impressed by someone younger but you cannot be impressed upon by someone younger – that is reserved for someone ahead of you in journey but more notably age.

While Bernie suggests that “age doesn't pay a difference. Everyone's been through the same journey. Everyone's got to the same place”, age is still prevalent physically in his narrative in that “The older people probably struggle because they're more likely to get injured and it is a bit harder to get up in the mornings, etc. The younger people had so much to learn because they didn't have the life skills. But nevertheless, within training no matter what, by the end of it, you baselined and then after that the experiences gained through your own personal experiences”. This indicated in his story that age does matter but to the extent that you allow it to – can you mitigate for the shortcomings of age in either direction? What's clear from his story is that no matter old or young – you are still developing. Bernie shares that “I found sometimes actually, the people which were younger, learn quicker, develop faster because they were firstly they hadn't built up a preconception of how to do stuff and almost formulate their own idea or how to form an idea, an idea already formed, they were willing to learn so their progression that speed sometimes with the younger guys was incredible compared to the older more older guys”

which to me tells a story that actually there may be a preference in the environment and if not a preference at the very least a felt difference. The contradiction that I experience Bernie as sharing is not only in the above in saying that it didn't count but in fact it was visible (so in theory would have counted somehow) but also in his own reflection. While he shares that age doesn't pay dividend and that you don't need to be older to be more experienced or mature or have a certain well-rounded view on things, he shares that that was "for me 100% age has made a difference. It's refined me without shadow of a doubt". If this was his experience and his inner narrative – would he not see others through this lens too? His perception of generation in the mind/age in the mind and how its impacted him – would he not view others through the same lens? So there is something in Bernie's story about 1) separating what happened to/with him from what might go on for others and therefore influencing his perception of generation. 2) The generation above him being well refined after years of exposure, experience and reflection that gave them the licence and ability to impart knowledge and be in the running to be role models, but for the generation below him they are not that refined yet, they are brilliant yes and talented without doubt but not polished enough to be a leader he'd look up to. I am also not sure that there is a level of comfort with looking up to someone who is "below" you – something in the social structure doesn't allow is this reversal of roles and so you can only admire but not look up to. There was something equalising in this narrative about going from being in a vertical layer of structure with someone of different ages to then coming alongside them – the story told of almost realising that people aren't always worthy of the pedestal you potentially put them on as leaders/seniors when you come alongside them, a mask is removed when authority equalizes, and that those that remain there in your esteem when you come alongside them – those are the leaders to look up to and learn from – ultimately the leaders you respect.

What was also interesting was how he mentions age downward but never upward – he mitigates for his experience to younger but not older. He often talks about how someone is so young but is absolutely worth their weight in their opinion and the role they take up but he has no examples of someone older but still being able to do the job. There were no example such as Bob is 55 and he is still super adaptable to what's changing in the operational field. The story almost reads as though if you are part of the older generation you don't need to quantify yourself or your experience – it doesn't need to be approval seeking. Its almost as if that's expected of

the generation above or that it would be too disrespectful to point out an imperfection in the generation above. I am left with the feeling that I triggered something for him being younger than he is and therefore that he needed to send praise towards the direction of my generation. Where his generation is what I was left asking myself – there was a degree of clarity for me around how he feels one up and one down, even two up and two down, as he mentions his children and ranks too far removed from him in his experiences to connect with, but I struggled to see where he located himself – what was his and what he identified with? I had the association in my mind that Bernie was in between and therefore floating in between generations, not older because he doesn't connect or see himself as a leader other look up to and thus doesn't fit in there but not younger because there have been decades of experience he has to separate himself from the younger generations. I experienced Bernie as being in purgatory with regards to generational identification and as such it was easier for him to reflect on his experiences with leadership as opposed to age in an effort to reconcile the contradiction he feels in his experiences of age and generation and ultimately self-identity.

Figure 22 – Pen Picture - Jerry

Lived life – chronological order of events

**Years are approximate*

1977	Born
1980-1982	Lived in Moscow ages 3-5 years
1983/4	Lived in Hong Kong
1984	Went to a French school at 7 years in London
1995	Went to university
1999	Joined the army
2001	Did a year in civvy street
2002	Joined the marines (25years old)
2005	Went on Selection (28 years old)
2006	Passed Selection (29 years old)

2008	Did Junior command course
2012	Took on Team Leader job
2012-2018	Various other leadership positions
2018-2021	Training position – left sabre sqn (40 years old)
2021 - current	RSM position he is currently in now at age (45 years old)

Told story

Early Life & School Years

Jerry starts his story off by talking about his diverse background and school years as he shares he has French German Russian background on one side and then English and Irish on the other. He shares that he travelled extensively during school ages and lived in Hong Kong and Moscow, and then travelled to see family quite extensively and went to a French school in London. Whilst his reflections here are not about age or generation, they are more about diversity and that the school structure provide a commonality whereby you can still establish interpersonal relationship despite not sharing their heritage. Ultimately, he realised that you can engage with people at school and whilst in the background, you've got some really deep-seated divisions between peoples and cultures. Jerry then explains he went on to university after school.

Early Career

Jerry shares that he joins the military after university and suggests that he always found the hierarchical system in the army something that was really difficult to navigate through and that it was really hard to engage with people above a certain rank because they're so distant from you in terms of your lived experience and the job. He then left the army and did a year on civvy street. Thereafter he joined the marines as what he feels was an older/late stage than most (the age of 25) and then joined the special forces, again older than most/late than most, at the age of 29. Its in the SF organisation that Jerry shares he went on a host of leadership development courses in what was a really set pathway of things (Junior command course, senior command course and then a Warrant Officer command course). Jerry's main

observation of this time in his career is that either because he was older or because he was an SF member on a conventional military course, or a combination of both, people tended to look up to him and as such he was tasked with more of the responsibility and more of the helping role.

Late Career

Later in his career after numerous leadership development courses Jerry takes up various leadership roles from team leader where he was asked to step up a few ranks to when he eventually left the sabre sqn and took on a training manager role. In this time Jerry shares that he never really thought about the age difference in this unit. He never thought of age as a factor when he engaged with people who are coming into the organisation or are junior in the organisation. He reflects that he always thought of the links that, the chains that link the people in this unit aren't necessarily based on age they are based on common principles (mutual trust, hard work ethic, respect) and that those principles are not necessarily bound by age. He also shares that in this organisation people are judged on performance - physical attributes, physical prowess – and he was not convinced that age was necessarily the defining factor in terms of how other people view your performance. Jerry reflects on comparison between the WW2 RSM of this unit's age and his age and the difference is 2 decades – this feels a stark difference to him but also a reminder that its not about age but about ability, equally that situational variables during the war were very different to them now. Context and environment are important. Jerry also shares a contradiction that people (particularly leaders) may be judged more on interpersonal skills as opposed to physical ability. He also shares that he hopes it hasn't changed but perhaps he is naive to the fact that as the unit has changed, younger people perceive the older guys in the unit differently. Now in his most senior role of RSM his reflection is more that effectiveness is a better measure of interpersonal or a better measure of relationships then, then age is. He has not ever viewed time served or age as a factor. He has just judge them on their, on their ability to deliver against what they're mandated to deliver. Lastly Jerry reflects on the term dinosaur and how the term is bounded around and used for those older folks that 1) are older, 2) have adverse attitudes to change 3) are still hanging around and wont let go of the institution. He shares his realisation that that could possibly be him now as he shifts from where he was to where he is not and becomes acutely aware of that.

Transition Points

There are a few transition points that appear to be influential in Jerry's story. 1) His school years 2) joining the military 3) joins SF 4) leadership courses 5) his final leadership position.

Jerry goes from being a child at home with a certain surrounding to a very diverse and unique environment where there are a multitude of different cultures, languages, norms etc in a different country altogether. His second transition point is more from going from civilian life in university into the structure that is the military and how difficult it was to connect with leaders (and then back into civilian world and back to military – he repeats this transition). he then joins the special forces and experiences hierarchy in a different way, unlike in the conventional military where he feels age is less permeable in this organisation. He then goes on a number of different leadership courses and takes on numerous leadership roles that remind him of the ability and performance needed in the role as well as the age and positionality he holds in the courses and if that's why people naturally defer to him. Lastly Jerry in his role as RSM is on the edge of a realisation that he may be one of the “dinosaurs cutting around camp” either because of his age, attitude to change or the fact that he is still there.

Perception (what kind of tale is this)

Jerry's story is one of a lot of contraction and in hind sight reflection that I am not sure has previously happened. Jerry feels that age has never been a factor in his relationships he has built from school right the way through the military but refers more in his story to culture, diversity, backgrounds/heritage and social status than he does about age – he even refers to the special forces as a “class-less, not rank-less organisation”. Where Jerry feels that age has been a non-entity he appears somewhat contradictory in that he will say its never bared relevance but people are judged on physical ability which naturally declines with age. “There's also an element in in this in this organisation that a lot is judged on performance. So physical attributes, physical prowess is important” “I don't think I've ever factored in age. In my interpersonal relation, relationships or on when judging leadership style. Being here (SF), you obviously know that people have served a long time in the military. But I don't ever view time served or their age as a factor. I just judge them on their, on their ability to deliver against what they're mandated to deliver I'd say that effectiveness is a better measure of interpersonal or a

better measure of relationships than, then age is. I've never thought of age as a factor when I engage with people who are coming into the organisation or are junior in the organisation. I suppose I've always thought of the links that, well those chains that link the people in this unit aren't necessarily based on age they are based on principles. And the common principles would be mutual trust, hard work ethic, respect and so I don't see that those those principles are necessarily bounded by age”

What stands out to me about Jerry's story is that while he suggests that he has never factored age into his decisions or relationships/leadership yet he describes how difficult the hierarchy in the military is to navigate for a young soldier “I probably always found the hierarchical system in the army as something that really difficult to navigate through in that and it really hard to engage with people above a certain rank because they're so distant from you in terms of your lived experience in terms of the job... its really formulaic” and while he does say the he thinks this may have changed I am wondering about what his relationship to an older generation might be as a result of this experience and therefore where he sees himself – too far removed from that generation and therefore not part of it.

Jerry refers to himself as older a lot of the time (older but not old – on the cusp) – older to join the army, then the marines, then SF and finally he refers to himself as being 20 years older than the RSM on D Day in WW2. I experienced Jerry as struggling to identify where he belongs in terms of generation. Always on the edge but never inside the realms of a generation. I felt he contradicted where he was, wanting to be seen as younger but slowly realising he is on the older side. I saw this in his self-confirmation of his physical ability in the role. Interesting I felt he was trying to convince himself that he was still worthy of an SF role, that he was still young and capable, the way he repeatedly referenced that he can and still does the physical aspect of the job despite the fact that he is “relatively old now, in comparison to the rest of the workforce here I still think that the fact that I can, I was able to do physically demanding work meant that I wasn't getting judged by my age rather than my role”. The physically demanding task in relation to the role is akin to the credibility/ability you bring to the nature of the role. Jerry is scared to become one of the dinosaurs on camp (either physically or mentally) and that realisation is stark for him. I am not sure where he sits on that fence and I am not sure he knows either. He didn't seem to identify with a specific generation and I got the impression he saw

himself as an outlier because of this very different school experience and entering the military so late. I felt that he aligned himself more with a generation that came before him in terms of being more mature and a natural leader, having learnt to read people a lot sooner than most and having a very well-travelled past (and likely having spent more time with older folks) – this give the impression that he is beyond his years for his age because his development was potentially a lot more rapid from an early age. Not so much that he was robbed of childhood but I think he grew up quicker in a very “posh” environment that meant he was always acting up. I think he connects with the generation after him in a way that is paternal/nurturing/learning/leading in that he needs to provide for them and does not judge them on age but rather the ability to be mature about their role and align to values and performance and the potential they could have – I see this in his commentary on his leadership courses “it was probably a benefit that I was slightly older than the other people that I was interacting with.” And while that could have been due to age or experience (being SF on a conventional military course) what he shared was that why people were more attached to him for help and tasking him with responsibility wasn’t clear “I don't know really where that line in the sand is”

Finally, he talks about the younger guys perceiving the older guys differently but not that the older guys perceive the younger guys differently – the ones that are coming in now. A very one-way observation. There appears to be a reflection of his projection or his own perception of himself and how he feels about his ability to still be effective in this role despite him potentially being seen as a dinosaur, which is on contrast to what he says about age not being a factor. Jerry has a realisation that he may no longer been seen as older than most in this current position, but just old. The relatively of the spectrum of age feels to have caught up with him where before he was slightly older than most, he now runs the risk of being just old, he has lost the degrees of comparison of age and has arrived at the end of the spectrum and potentially no longer capable and no longer of use since people are judged in this unit on ability and performance – I think this is a fear that has shaped how Jerry perceives ages around him, his own age and therefore his generation and others.

Side note: There is something in Jerry's story for me about socio-economic status or ones placing in society and how that enables you to act up or down a generation. My impression I was left with here is

that being part of a diplomat society and having travelled as he did with the sorts of schools he went to his exposure to “difference/diversity” in general was higher and therefore potentially more or less desensitized to it. There is something in the story that because of where he comes from he cannot/is not allowed to have an opinion on generation – its silenced – he wasn’t allowed to reflect on age because it was politically incorrect to have a view on this and so his responses feel very politically guarded. With this in mind it feels to me Jerry is not part of an average generation – he is an inbetweener and this manifests in his very neutral position on age and making more about everything else from values to ability to credibility.

Figure 23 – Pen Picture - Kevin

Lived life – chronological order of events

**Years are approximate*

1988	Born
1991	Parent Separation when a toddler
1993-1999	Early School Years 5-11
2000-2004	Middle school – changed schools to bigger school 12-16
2004-2006	Harpbury College at 16
2006	Left for America at 18
2009	Moved back to the UK (London)
2009-2011	Working 4 jobs to pay rent
2011-2015	Sales job at the Daily Telegraph
2015-2018	Job as a commercial manager in Insurance company
2017	Married
2018	1 st Child was born
2019	Started own business/CEO
2021	Mentoring on NHS Clinical Entrepreneurs programme

Told story

Early Life & School Years

In Kevin's early life he experienced a lot of self-professed trauma as a young child due to 1) an absent father 2) a low socioeconomic status 3) a mother with minor mental health issues and 4) a troublesome schooling path. He describes, in his story in his early years, how his father was never around and, when he was he, was always being told off for doing toddler things like climbing on chairs etc. "It probably starts with a type of childhood I had, I think, being brought up in a single parent home, having a very poor and intermittent relationship with my father. He always came across as a very powerful figure, or tried to materialise himself as one. So the only time I ever really saw him growing up was when he was telling me off for something". On the basis of this Kevin explains that he has always had a distaste for people in power (he uses power and authority interchangeably) but also explains that he as a result also needed to be a leader figure in his house very early on in his life. In his early life he was constantly in trouble for acting like the class clown, leading other children astray and being generally disruptive to the class. Kevin is also the youngest of 3 children with a sister 2 years younger than him and a brother 9 years younger than him.

Kevin then went on to Hartbury College where he continued to be disruptive "But you know, the same sorts of things occurred again, I just wanted to be around people and play the clown wasn't really bothered about learning, but I knew I had to. When I finished I kind of thought to myself, well, you fucked that up. Like your whole education you've got okay. You know, you've really done a good thing of this. If you've not applied yourself in the way that you should" and continued to feel a strong distain towards power and authority. This led him to look for something different to do post college in hopes that he would prevent himself from doing something silly. At this point he got on a flight and went to America to join Camp America Foundation and work in holiday camps with children teaching sports etc. It was on this flight that he meets an older gentleman who shows him guidance and kindness and he felt admiration towards the older generation for the first time "that was like the first time a figure that I kind of ended up looking up to was like, Yeah, that's the type of guy I'd like to be I didn't even know him"

Early Career

In Stevens early career he comes back to London from America and works a multitude of different jobs to pay rent. He also has a girlfriend that this stage who he describes as controlling and micromanaging as were the organisations he was working for and his distaste of power and authority continues. He then finds himself working at the Daily Telegraph in a sales role with a constant desire to be disruptive because he doesn't like the way things are done and cannot understand why he is not allowed to do it differently – he describes a very rigid structure which he is unable to thrive in and as a result rebels and gets into trouble and subsequently leaves. He then joins a commercial insurance company and begins his journey in insurance sales and leadership.

Late Career

Later in his career Kevin thrives in his commercial role and later becomes manager in this organisation and finds it cutthroat in that the “MO of the company it was horrendous like, everything is gone and spreadsheets and reporting on the day at the right time with figures were down and people get you know, heads on slabs and all that sort of stuff”. But he enjoyed that role given that it allowed him to “just be bolshie, be passionate to go out and sell stuff. Allow me the flexibility to recruit people and I really liked navigating. It was good fun, because often different, different complications every day.” While he was thriving and making the organisation in excess of £10m and hiring 30 people, he also found and married his now wife. Once Kevin realises that what he is doing in this firm he could do for himself he then decided to take the jump and open up his own organisation which ends in severed relationships with his current employer, potential law suits and an onslaught of insults after what was a long journey together. Kevin then opens up his own organisation, is currently CEO with a successful business and is also mentoring on the NHS clinical entrepreneurial programme.

Transition Points

There are a few transition points for Kevin in his journey but majority of his key realisations have been recently and some even in this conversation. 1) When his dad leaves home for the first time. When his dad leaves and his world seems different and this is a key point that impacts a lot of how he takes in the outer world in relation to authority and power as well as how he

takes up his own leadership position as “head of the house”. His dad leaving continues to provide him with multiple opportunities for introspection and as a result more transition points.

2) When other parents don’t want him around. He realises here that he is not at his best and that he is wasting his talents in an effort to fit in with the group and dismiss a tumultuous home life as well as constantly being called out by all authority figures

3) When he leaves for America and is shown kindness by an older man for what feels like the first time ever and the scary moment that is leaving home and going into the unknown.

4) When he returns to London and takes his first role and tries to make it as he places pressure on himself to be the breadwinner for the family and be “wealthy”.

5) When he is successful in his commercial manager role and thrives in an industry and in a way that he has no respect for and tries to find his place in the tension of it.

6) When he has a child and the traumatic birth experience as well as (and more predominantly) his absence when his wife and child needed him most and the reflection thereof.

7) When he reads *Awareness* by DeMillo and realises that other people’s actions are not in your control but your understanding of your emotions, triggers and reactions are within your control and you owe it to yourself to work through those things that cut you previously so you don’t bleed on the people that didn’t hurt you/yourself.

Perception (what kind of tale is this)

Stevens tale is one ridding in tension of what has been and what could be. His story is caked with anger and resentment to previous generations (particular his father and other authority figures who remind him of his father) but a yearning for understanding and betterment in how he tries to become aware of this in his own journey and then provide opportunities to those younger than him that he never had. It is clear in Kevin’s story (and to his own admission) that he has a lot to work through with his relationship with his father and the childhood trauma he experienced. He uses the terms “people of authority” and “people of power” interchangeably, albeit it’s not the same thing: where power is defined as the ability or potential of an individual to influence others and control their actions, authority is the legitimized power a person is granted. Interesting to my mind in this story there are uncomfortable relationships with both, particularly associated to generation. Where people in power had the capacity to influence Kevin’s thoughts, emotions etc – he actually seeks them out in his journey, from popular kids

to a group that he just wants to fit into because the influence his thinking etc. whereas with authority he repels the legitimized aspects of someone role in the sense that “just because someone put you there does not mean you know better or I should listen” and this “calling out” of legitimized power was first experienced with his father after repeated disappointments. For the most part people in authority have been older than Kevin – parents, teachers, managers etc. and so this concept of wrongfully legitimized power is deeply associated with older generations for Kevin. This trajectory continues throughout his life and career where no one in a position of authority is able to channel his ingenuity and as a result it masquerades as disruptiveness when it becomes non-constructive. Interestingly Kevin now finds himself in a position where he can be purposefully disruptive as a force for good in the tech insurance industry and as a result, is not only finding a lot of success, but is also seemingly happier than he has been for a while and is allowing himself space for a lot of introspection.

Kevin’s story is one that is filled with many contradictions, plenty justifications for behaviours and a painful amount of “checking” to see if he has done the right thing. I found this interesting because we are the same age – I felt like he was asking for validation from me as a peer but as someone who he saw as having more expertise in an area than himself. This is synonymous with the theme in this tale where Kevin aligns himself more to a peer group where he feels more comfortable but is still constantly seeking validation: i.e. fitting in, watching American football instead of soccer, being a class clown to be seen as funny etc. This leads me to believe that perhaps, for Kevin, expertise outweighs age and experience – this is also based on his current employee population demographic.

While Kevin identifies with his own generation in that he feels most at ease and a liken to them – a young, innovative but mature generation. He takes up one of two roles depending on how he situates himself within his generation, firstly as “less than” and therefore seeking approval or as “more than” and therefore trying to coach/teach. It doesn’t seem ok for Kevin to just “be” with his generation – there is always “trying” of some sort which leads me to think it doesn’t feel like a natural identification for him but maybe based more on situational variables – age, school years, music, milestones, technology. Kevin does not see himself as part of a younger generation as he saw himself as “too old too soon” but nowhere near dad’s generation and the creepiness of those middle-aged white men he has come to know as the older generation. He

feels nurturing and a deep desire to reach and develop those like himself who never had that chance. He identifies with his same generation as people the same age as him that understand the nuances of how he grew up but I think he sees himself as different because of his experiences – more mature based on his bag of experiences (life and business). There is a smaller buffer of a generation just above him where this one man showed kindness and some mentors he has found in the insurance field have shown him that older is not necessarily poisonous and that that generation feels safe enough to interact with, without risking facing all of the disappointment the older generations have gifted him in their misunderstanding of him. Might it be that when a generation itself gives life to the next generation that perception is changed – when people become parents what shifts in terms of their positionality to generations in, before and after?

Appendix E – Remainder of findings

4.2 Formation of generation in the mind: The influence of external factors

This section looks to discuss the formation of generation in the mind as it relates to external factors.

4.2.1 Introduction

This finding looks at the relationship between generational differences and the external factors from different periods (those living contemporaneously) which influenced participants' lives, and therefore their perceptions in relation to generational differences. These external factors being technology, economics, politics, demographics, social, and cultural factors present during participants' lives: the situation of the world, as it were, at the time that one grows up. These external factors seem to have the potential to influence participants in multiple ways, and perhaps distinguish one generation from another. As a result, this could possibly contribute to the perceptions created in generational differences, namely different generations associated to or with different global signifiers, both good and bad. The core of this finding is about the nature of the shifts in paradigms and/or different eras that influenced the daily lives of participants, which in turn influenced their perception of their own generation and others. Equally, these trends have shaped the era that each individual has grown up in and, as such, has resulted in the apparent distinction between generations, and therefore potential perceptions, that form as a result of the disparate periods (and their characteristics) with which participants identify.

From the introduction of new technology, to the shaping of gender equality, this finding aims to address how the fundamental changes in underlying assumptions affect both

membership of, and perceptions of, generation. This includes how the models of thinking that shape each era appear to happen universally, but seem to be located generationally. That imparts onto the generations associated with those times and changes, which in turn have the potential to impact the perception of various generations (one's own and others). This creates largely the patterns established from how different generations and these influential factors interact, and to what extent they influence each other, and how that essentially had/has an effect on how a generation is formed in the mind.

<p>Taking into consideration the complex infrastructures and substructures of each era, and how this manifested itself in participants' experiences of their own and other generations and thus to what degree this has influenced their perceptions. All of the participants in some way described the 1) nature of societal paradigm shifts and how seemingly different things were for people of different ages during different times, and</p> <p>2) how changes brought about by external factors had shaped both their experience and thus opinion of their identified generation and how they</p>	<p>Eddy</p> <p>"I think, you know, that sort of generation or that I was in back then he says, you know, early 2000s. It was a sort of a harder, I think, a steeper learning curve and a harder way to learn. It was always a sink or swim. There was no sort of, you know, cotton wool stuff or, you know, cuddling you if you didn't get it, you know, you're going to either get shot or you're just going to get beasted."</p> <p>Cole</p> <p>"I think culture has changed now as well. But at the time, it was almost a badge of honour for how exhausted you could be, how much work to produce and how</p>
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<p>perceived other generations in comparison (despite sometimes a supposed lack of a sense of clarity around exactly which generation they belonged to).</p>	<p>much you could go out and party together.”</p>
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4.2.2 The perceived impact of external factors

What became clear from participants' narratives is that these various external forces, and the repositioning of societal paradigms, throughout time, are absorbed, developed and organised, and have the potential to affect the way people experience their world and/or their worldview. This then seemed to have the proclivity to affect how individuals perceive and make sense of themselves and others, in relation to generation and membership thereof. Thinking about this particularly from moments in time and the paradigm shifts people experience, that are shaped by these external factors. The participants expressed that their experiences, consciously or unconsciously, had the potential to shape their perceptions, identities, their work, and society itself, which in turn impacted how generation itself materialised for them, and how perceptions can be developed.

In addition, this finding will explore the influence of external factors and these repositioning of societal paradigms at the organisational level. What seemed to become clear from participants' narratives, is that organisations appear to provide an environment where generations collide, not one or two, but all of the purported generations present in the workforce of today. Where wider tensions seem to come to the fore or are continually being navigated, something more than just a collision of

generations (and therefore a collision of different norms from different eras), but also how these wider influences are mediated or become mediated through various organisational structures and processes. This in turn had the capacity to affect relationships, perceptions and plausibly performance, both on an individual and organisational level.

<p>It seems as if each generation tended to have its own artefacts, their own technology, own social cues, and their own ways of interacting. In this example, the quality of artefacts, the PlayStation (as the gaming console itself) belonged to the generation that it was introduced to and they were brought up with it.</p> <p>Another example (as seen later) is where the Falklands is used as a symbolic milestone of what kind of experiences someone was exposed to.</p> <p>The explanation is later put in social perspective where staying as late as one can at work is a badge of honour, collected for that generation. The use of artefacts as a kind of symbol of generation, one's own and others, like symbolic objects collected at each shift</p>	<p>Eddy</p> <p>“They’re almost sort of quite a PlayStation Generation. A lot of them haven’t lived in ... camping was like a novelty for them. They’d never made their own beds. And being a corporal, you know we have to show them everything. It was an eye opener for me to see how ... sort of how shielded some people were, and, and not really realising what they’ve joined.”</p>
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<p>in the paradigm, collecting them en route and using them to identify what others may have. This is a display of generation of sorts. Ultimately, what gets collected in one generation is somehow identified with and used to ascertain one's own generation in relation to these artefacts, which are influenced by external factors.</p>	
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This finding will share examples from a technological, cultural, economic, societal/socio-political perspective: how participants shared experiences manifested in talking about culture changes, societal paradigm shifts in the world, technology changes, swings in organisational norms and how influences from different times impacted their positionality with regard to generation and age.

External factor/participant	Callum	Lara	Eddy	Cole	Bernie	Jerry	Kevin
Technological factors			X	X		X	X
Cultural factors (societal and organisational)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Socio-political factors	X		X		X	X	
Socio-demographic factors		X	X	X	X	X	X

Economic factors		X		X	X		X
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Table 1 – External factors present in participants' narratives

4.2.3 Technological factors

From a technological perspective the effect of it on a generation was felt prominently throughout multiple participants' interviews, particularly in a manner of comparison. It seems that technology was more demonised by older participants, as well as participants that were coming from more traditional organisations (e.g. law, financial services, the military). What seemed to transpire throughout the interviews was a distaste for technology, more specifically towards the generation to which technological advancements were attributed. Alternatively, those participants were protectively identifying with their generation's own artefacts that play out through adult life, e.g. a fax machine, a PlayStation, or Siri. It was suggested that there were two main reasons for those sentiments: 1) the fear of change and the frustration that innovation brings, and 2) the anger, and other emotions, associated with it if one's generational artefacts are becoming seemingly redundant.

<p>The thought that technology could be replacing what feels familiar (and thus right) to those of previous generations was a sentiment that participants seemed to speak to, and openly protest, that it is not something they agree with. On the other hand, this also potentially suggested or represented the threat that</p>	<p>Eddy</p> <p>"I think it's just sort of that generation where they're sort of really technology advanced. They're all over sort of technology and it's amazing to see that, you know, their computer knowledge and anything to do with tech. It is amazing and hands down better than what mine</p>
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came with advancement and the proposed risk succession brings alongside the fear of being made redundant.

was. But on the flip side of that, it's because not through their own fault, but they haven't had the things like Afghans and stuff like that. So, you can train, train, train until you have rounds come in the other way. You don't know how people are going to react. And I think the ... the era that we had where everyone was in Afghan and then joining SF, you've got some hardened people, but now as it's gradually fading out, you're going to have no one with any experience in the first time. This obviously, in my opinion, you know, the first time they got on a job and as people shooting back, you just don't know how they're going to react. Because there's ... so yeah, they're just that may be potentially a different mindset. You know, there's some of the things I've experienced where if you're next to people when they get shot or get blown up. You know, you can't really train that into people unless you're in maybe ... do virtual reality. And that's not really, it's virtual, so you're never going

	<p>to see the ... you know ... the trauma and stuff like that. But you never know I could be, could be, could be wrong ... you know, we had warfighting experience from 2003 up to 2016, 17, with proper rounds coming against you, so you know, without that experience, it's just not, it's hard to know if people are going to be, how they're going to react ..."</p>
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<p>Conversely, there too seemed to be the frustration directed to those generations that were not seen as part of the group and keeping up with the changes in these shifts, people that were not technology savvy and thus deemed incompetent. Almost as if the generations that were custodians of the technology were unable to see how people may have functioned without it or in a different way, proposing an aspect of disconnect and differentiation between generations, and thus affecting the perceptions.</p>	<p>Kevin</p> <p>"On our last, the role I was working for the older bloke like, the way I felt about that was just like, you know, this is ... this is stupid, you won't do this. Why? Can't We? Why can't we try something different? You know, why? Why are we doing it this way when we could do it this way? We're not making as much money here because of your sort of inability to grasp"</p>
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Equally, there was a sentiment that was shared that technology was potentially taking away that which made the industry or job what it is. That technology waters down the approach used by those who went before and that it averts future generations from truly understanding how difficult or threatening scenarios were without this ‘aid’ of technology, seemed to activate anger in some participants. This was seen when participants seemed to suggest that the experiences now available to those in the work force do not come close to what they had experienced, and therefore is not ‘the real deal’, which could have an effect on the organisation and its success or longevity. It seemed that the negative attribution or the vilification of technology sat with the generation that technology had stemmed from, as opposed to a wider societal source being responsible for the innovation and change. Interestingly, in the quote below the participant starts by saying that “It’s just the way of the world”, but then his narrative follows on to suggest that there is someone responsible for that change.

<p>Eddy goes as far as to suggest it is going to go “full circle”, possibly a denial of the changes being voiced. When this structure, as identified by a certain generation (that acted as a container for social anxieties projected into it), no longer exists or changes, it seems to have a noticeable impact. Where does that projection go? It seemed from the examples (and that of other examples in this finding to follow) that those anxieties</p>	<p>Eddy “It was just the way of the world. I mean, it’s ... it’s what is our work stuff, which like is the direction that they’re going in at work, and it’s almost like ... it’s quite techy, and it’s ... it’s standoffish. But ultimately, you can have as much technology, in my eyes, you can have as much technology as you want, but at some point, you’re still going to have to have someone pull that trigger. Because</p>
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<p>around change, innovation and otherness get located in the different generations as blame, potentially to discharge the uncomfortable emotions associated to change and the fear of redundancy, including any other potential social defences against anxiety.</p>	<p>that's your whole job. You can spy on people from space and all that sort of stuff, but if you want someone to do something to someone else, you just got to be there physically. So yeah, it's gonna go full circle, but then it we just need another conflict and then it could go, it could happen again. It's just ... it's all a bit more hands off and we'll observe stuff and what not up, but it could go back to normal."</p>
<p>It is interesting how participants' views change in retrospect, potentially indicating that time to get used to a change reduces the fear and anxiety associated to said change, which potentially opens up some more positive characteristics associated to the generations responsible for the change, but still noting a comparison of how easy people have it today and how challenging it was to function under previous generational circumstances.</p>	<p>Lara "Then, you know, it was all I had to plug into the ... into ... they had to install a new telephone line. And I had to plug into the telephone and the whole thing was a nightmare. And I had a fax machine that was constantly working away so it was ... and I certainly couldn't do video calls. You know, I spent all my time on the phone with the fax working away, so it was a very different experience. So, so to be honest, I didn't care really. I'd</p>

	probably care more now, but I didn't then.
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Finally, technology seemed to have a very tangible effect on how the perception of generational differences manifested vis-à-vis an external factor. Perhaps because there were physical artefacts from a technological perspective that had or does make it easier to quantify the related experiences, whereas other external factors had less of this feature.

4.2.4 Cultural factors

From a cultural perspective, interestingly, there were shifts that participants spoke to that acknowledged how different norms from different eras could impress upon people what is expected, and therefore what gets done. This seemed to have an effect on how perceptions were created, where cultural norms from different eras directly influenced the perception one has of different generations. The examples below are thought-provoking in how they shed light on this from a cultural perspective.

One angle looks at it from not only when (at what age or life stage) difference starts to become apparent to participants, but also how different the times were when they were children as opposed to now, with regard to what is globally, culturally accepted: that which people of a certain era were exposed to that leads them to think in a certain way, where that way is then characteristic of a certain generation and as such perceptions occur, e.g. progression around interracial aspects. What was not clear, nor further explored, was whether exposure to different cultures early on in one's life either negatively or positively (if at all) affects one's perceptions of generation. Whether perceptions of generational differences were global in thought or if in fact a

cosmopolitan approach to one's experiences and thus thinking may result in slightly different perception creation.

<p>This example sheds light on how ties between cultures were stronger some 30 odd years ago (in his case) and how conflicts or relations among different cultures have been moulded over the years due to various different external factors. The example gives insight into how different external effects on cultural aspects throughout one's life can, and likely does, affect the perception of different generations and thus how they might potentially act, feel, and think, about cultural changes on the basis of their proximity to the events. Having said that, proximity could refer to age, race, gender, or other perspectives, but for this purpose the focus is age and therefore generation. What is also perhaps worth considering here, is that this impression that was left by certain historical events or era norms, that influence one's perception of generational difference,</p>	<p>Jerry</p> <p>“So, I went to my school in London, aged seven... where I noticed it first. I also noticed it going back slightly. I lived in Moscow between the ages of three to five, and we lived in an apartment block in Moscow, next door to some, to an Ethiopian family.... And I think that's probably the first time I was aware of people being really different, different from me ... There's also, I realised quite young, that there were Jewish people and Palestinian people at my school... And in the background, was probably aware of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But I suppose that I realised that you can engage with people at school, whilst in the background, you've got some really deep-seated divisions between peoples and cultures.”</p>
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<p>seems to occur at a young age, from when difference is noted, thus, potentially suggesting that there is from a very early age the layers of difference that help participants discern what is them and what is us or me and hence help generation perception formation. Even so, from a group dynamics perspective, the fear of being excluded and the need to belong seems to drive the desire to identify with the varying aspects that are characteristic of each generation or at the very least each paradigm shift.</p>	
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From a different angle, the cultural perspective also sheds light on how the norm within organisational culture (what gets measured and what gets done, what employees are influenced by) has shifted. Perhaps from what it was when one first joined an organisation, or the way it was when their parents or siblings entered the world of work, to now, where there seemed the sentiment is that things are different.

<p>The quotes below shed light on the organisational cultural changes, where it seems that societal cultural shifts and norms have the potential to influence</p>	<p>Cole “I think the culture has changed now as well. But at the time, it was almost a badge of honour for how exhausted you</p>
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<p>organisational culture, which seems to give participants an awareness as to what generation someone is from, on the basis of what their expectations were with regard to aspects of organisational culture was, as well as that which was celebrated, i.e. what clothes were acceptable, how late one would work, if drinking alcohol was a pre-requisite in networking, etc. One participant even went as far as to call it a movement and how things have seemed to do a complete turn on what is now deemed positive versus negative organisational behaviour.</p>	<p>could be, how much work to produce and how much you could go out and party together.</p> <p>Kevin</p> <p>“I suppose the ... the work-life balance, I wouldn't call it a movement, but how work-life balance is now perceived in this ... in the current, as we are now. It's deemed as a negative thing to have to work from 7 am in the morning until 8 pm at night every day, but that's what I was doing.”</p>
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These examples show that the influence of historical events (globally around the world and locally in organisations) in participants' lives had the potential to shape their views of different generations on the basis of what was normed within their lifetimes, or their generations, and reinforced within organisational culture during their careers. How close they were to that change, and therefore their perspectives when these norms undergo change, in relation to generation.

4.2.5 Socio-political factors

Not dissimilar to cultural factors (more the expression within society such as language or religion), socio-political factors such as policies or power dynamics within society seemed to have materialised in participants' narratives as key events or political structures and their effects, that influenced generational identification and as such the norms and perceptions born from this.

<p>This quote speaks about what was acceptable then versus now, where the stimulus seems to be one of a socio-political agenda. One participant highlights his time in Afghanistan and speaks of being the only real fighters in a war zone amongst a group of technical people and reflecting on the thought that they should have had counselling for what they experienced, but they didn't because it wasn't the 'done' thing. It was not a norm, as he suggests it is today in that line of work. It seems he uses his colleague's wartime experience, or the degree of how rough the tours were, as a dial for deciphering which generation they come from and thus if they had a harder or easier learning curve on the basis of the experience they had,</p>	<p>Eddy</p> <p>“some of the medics hadn't seen anything, we had to turn them around, put them back on the helicopter, because they just haven't seen such a horrific site. It was useless, they couldn't even patch people up... And then it just sort of highlights that maybe a different sort of mindset that some people have compared to others. And that was sort of because that was kind of late 2006 or 2005/6, that's ... you know ... that's when the generations are starting to get ... in my eyes ... you know, bit easier, bit softer and maybe sort of a bit more touchy-feely and to be being coached a bit more.</p> <p>“The instructors are a lot older, you know, someone had done the Falklands.</p>
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suggesting that on a linear scale, tours have gotten easier and wars have become less, and that soldiers have become 'softer' as the newer generations have entered the workforce. Their narrative suggests that if someone had hard-core wartime experience, they must be of an older generation and thus likely to have more respect for them, which is a gauge of some description. He also reflects on the fact that "nowadays" one wouldn't see a soldier do multiple tours because of how the mental health effects have been so impactful in today's day and age. It seems from his narrative that he coalesces that time as the junction of the height of Afghanistan war, amalgamated with generations becoming softer, given that they hadn't had this real-time war experience for so many consecutive years. Whilst these new soldiers were training, he was fighting, hence the divide between his and their generation. This socio-political change from extreme Afghanistan

So, a lot of experience on the people that sort of trained me up, you know, like 35- to 40-year olds, teaching me.

"My team, so I was one of the youngest in my team of eight. So, you had a corporal and sergeant both in the 30s and I was sort of the young ... you know, the new straight out training into the, into the multiple, you know, the team of eight, it was good as a steep learning curve. So much to take on, you know, so much more experienced than me. But on the whole, I think, you know, that sort of generation or I was in back then he says, you know, early 2000s. It was a sort of a harder, I think, a steeper learning curve and a harder way to learn. It was always a sink or swim. There was no sort of, you know, cotton wool stuff or, you know, cuddling you. If you didn't get it, you know, you're going to either get shot or you're just going to get beasted. So, you have to learn, you have to learn the

<p>wartimes and zero emphasis on soldier mental health, to limited (if any) active wartimes and significant emphasis on mental health, is how this participant distinguishes generations (and ultimately his perceptions of them). The events that participants experienced or see others experience, appear to be deemed key milestones and navigation points. It seems war (fighting) experience and one's reactions to said experience is telling of the time they were born into and the age or time at which they joined the forces, which in turn influences the perception of which generation they are from and thus the relationships they may have.</p>	<p>information quickly. You have to apply yourself, I think a lot a lot better. And that's where I sort of, I got my baseline sort of training from there. My experience from there.</p> <p>“It was the early days of Afghan, so we did the ridiculous thing. Yeah, like four or five off the bat, just because there was rotations and stuff. So, I was the only sort of proper, proper ... well, there's only two or three proper scrappers. The rest are sort of techie people. So, I took it quite hard. And then probably in today's era, probably should have got like counselling on it and stuff like that. We have the duty: Are you ok about stuff' and you know, being macho, we were like yep, no dramas, crack on. Looking back, it was ... as I am now completely outside looking back on that, probably quite as bad or worse than I thought ... yeah, probably should have got a lot more help than I did.</p>
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	<p>“I guess at the time (10–15 years ago), people sort of, kind of, knew about it or, you know, understood, but it wasn’t a thing, it wasn’t ... seemed to be taken seriously at all. Even though ... did we have a psych nurse on campus by then ... possibly, but no one really ... you know ... you SF, why would you get mental health issues? You just, just ... why would you ... you know, just get to sleep and it’d be fine.”</p>
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From socio-political factors, participants seemed to be suggesting that being born into a certain era and thus into a specific paradigm, that the way they viewed generations could potentially be through that lens and via the norms of that lens.

4.2.6 Socio-demographic factors

From a social-demographic perspective, the below focuses on some of the demographic mechanisms that materialise in the social structure that influence the perception of generational differences. More specifically, gender and how different times or eras meant different norms for different generations.

<p>From participants’ quotes, they give the examples of how different it is today, to how it was back then, but equally how it</p>	<p>Lara</p> <p>“Well, there are more opportunities to work part-time, so I ... you know, one of</p>
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<p>may not have gotten any better. It seems, from the two examples below, that this participant is alluding to the complexity of social change, which shapes different generations' expectations, but not necessarily the outcomes. In the first example she speaks to how her pay was reduced as she chose to work from home as a mother and how she never challenged that, because that is just how it was for women back then. Her second quote goes on to suggest that age is irrelevant and that it was more about being a working mother and that she had to resign because part-time working was not allowed, suggesting it is no easier for mothers today than it was in 1991. What is interesting is that while the "eternal dilemma of a working woman" seems no different today than it was many years ago, what does seem different is the nuances around how being a working mother is possible from a flexible working</p>	<p>my sons has now ... has just got a job at a good law firm doing two months on and a month off which happens to be what he wants to do with his life. So, I mean, that wouldn't suit a working mother, I don't think, not in my view anyway, but I think it's in some respects ... it's got easier. People can take a year off when their child is little, you know ... I only got three months. And that was partly my choice. I just don't know that it's really got any easier when your children are older. You can work part-time. There are more part-time opportunities. So, there is that which does make it better, but I think the dilemma is still the same. I ... you know, I don't know how ... if you choose to work part-time at a law firm. I don't know what that does to your career in the long term. My son doesn't care, but actually I would have cared at that stage.</p> <p>"I guess you will probably ... your generation will be horrified to learn that I</p>
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<p>perspective, more so now than it ever was back then.</p> <p>When Lara was asked to share more about why she thought it had not gotten any easier for my generation, she shared that the dilemma in social structures remained the same <i>despite</i> so many adjustments being available to women today. Additionally, she suggests that is because of the underlying impetus that it may have on reputation and career, which inherently has the capacity to influence the perceptions you have of someone, i.e. this individual is not serious about their career because they choose to do XYZ instead of doing it how it was done in my day. The perception around what the right way is to take on your career can, and did, have an impact where gender and parenthood was concerned.</p>	<p>was still working from home two days a week. And the way that partners were then paid was that it was by profit share and we all got depending on our seniority as partners, we got a certain number of profit points. So, you know, you would get however many 1000 pounds per point. And junior partners started on 20 points. And I started on 16. And the reason I started on 16 was not because I wasn't doing client-facing work. It was because I was working from home two days a week. And I was told that if I went back to the office full time, I would get my four points back and I never did, so I never did. But you know, because ... because of the way it was for women in those days, I just said: "Oh, thank you. That's lovely." I never said: "Oh, my God, what do you mean?" I just said: "That's fine. Thank you." ... So, when they said they would make me a partner, you know, and I was the first non-fee earning partner they'd ever made. Never mind mom with a child. So, so for me</p>
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	<p>becoming a partner was just a huge deal. I think I was the only woman to be made up in my ... I can't remember how many of us were made up, but I think I was the only woman and I was certainly the only person who was working some of the time from home and on non-client work. I was so pleased to be made a partner, that I didn't care. I really didn't care. It's only now, when I look back and I see how homework and also working from home was a very different experience."</p> <p>"I guess, of the ... I think I was partner number 210 of those 210 partners, probably 15 were women. And the rest were all men. And actually, I mean one of the depressing things that's ... that's not changed dramatically: the male-female dichotomy. I was far more conscious of that, than I was of seniority."</p>
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These quotes are representative of the norms around gender that different eras seem to challenge constantly, which are then attributed to the different generations which appears to give rise to the perceptions of different generations. While there is much to

be unpicked in the intersectionality of gender and different generations, this depth is outside the scope of this research. For this finding the concept of gender equality and how the participant describes how women were treated in 1991 versus how it is today, is an example of how these shifts and social norms have characterised the different generations and therefore has agency in their perceptions. In terms of their own lived experiences and what the expectation was for participants then within the workplace contrasted with now, makes people from these significant times, associated with key changes, somewhat recognisable on the basis of what they experienced and, ultimately, how they were treated.

From a demographic perspective, participants shared information about what the workforce looks like now in comparison to what it may have looked like previously. Ultimately, the suggestion is that the workforce is changing, so much so that multiple generations are now within the same 'market' competing for the same roles, but potentially wanting different things from a career.

<p>The quote suggests that people have different expectations and want different things from their careers on the basis of when they were born and thus when they have entered the world of work and potentially what kind of expectation society has helped them derive. More prominently, the quote below is introducing the notion that younger generations are more interested in</p>	<p>Cole</p> <p>“So, what I hadn't really anticipated with then moving suddenly, you've got a very diverse workforce, five generations in the workforce currently I think, and there's no ... everybody wants different things and everybody has different expectations, different priorities, different values. One of the challenges is that we have five generations in the workforce, and</p>
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<p>having multiple careers in many companies whereas older generations are more interested in building their career in an upward trajectory at the same organisation, and thus organisations need to be able to adapt to both where that was not the case many years ago: then there was only one view. The quote seems to suggest that depending on what the expectation of the individual is and where they place importance (on the basis of when they were born) and how they communicate that, has possibly led to the creation of perceptions of generations, i.e. how she shared her perceptions in the quote itself as she reflects on what older people want in their careers versus what she may want as a self-professed member of a younger generation.</p>	<p>actually they're very different expectations, so people who are more senior in Alsek obviously, they're kind of ... they've been there for 20 years. They've grown their career. They want to just get more and more senior, and I think people coming in now have very different expectations for a career. They expect to have ... what four or five different ones across different companies. Loyalty, just I wouldn't say they're not loyal, but I think the loyalty means different things. Now, when you're younger, I think it's slightly strange to think: I'll be in this company from day one until I retire. It's just not the attitude anymore and the way ... the way people digest information, want to digest information and kind of want to think about their careers, is so different as well."</p>
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4.2.7 Economic factors

Somewhat different to the socio-political effects, but not completely dissimilar, the economic paradigm shifts seem to have had an impact in how individuals take up their careers, as well as how education, banking and governance is viewed.

<p>The examples from Kevin suggest how one does not need an education, as so many in the industry he is from (financial services) suggest that you do. He references “kids are saying ... want to be a YouTubers” of which there is no degree to study in order to go into that industry. The nature of jobs and job prospects are totally different for people of future generations, which is an indication of a changing world of work, as these jobs did not exist 20 years ago. The wave of digital influence seems to have the capacity to disorganise traditional economics by creating new opportunities for mid-sized businesses to grow, while disrupting established players in various industries: everything that seems to depict a new generation. It seems that when viewing this as part of that disruption, that felt acceptable, but</p>	<p>Kevin</p> <p>“... because nobody HAS to have an education nowadays to be successful in anything in my opinion”.</p> <p>“I’m not, I’m not a fan of governance at all. I hate banks, you know, the majority of my assets and wealth are in crypto-currency now.”</p>
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<p>outside of that generation, that is where blame felt more appropriate. Additionally, he also shares that he hates banks and governance potentially because, given this participant's age, he identifies with the generation that saw its parents' banks foreclose on homes and some big institutions go under in the Great Recession, therefore there is an association of distrust of governance with that generation.</p>	
<p>Cole references the shift she has seen in needing a host of degrees and experience behind your name in previous years, versus today where the potential or the willingness to learn to do a job well seems to account for more than industry and/or job knowledge, much differently to how it was 20–30 years ago. This seems to separate, and therefore create a perception, by those generations that had different experiences.</p>	<p>Cole</p> <p>"I think the world is kind of changing now, moving away from a 'Have you done it?' before, to 'Can you learn to ...?' or 'Do you have the capacity to...?' A change and a willingness to learn to."</p>

4.2.8 The impact of paradigm norms and shifts on generational perception

The difference in the norms that are born out of different eras, due to the influence from external factors belonging to each era and societal paradigm shifts, seemed to have a weighty influence on how perceptions of generations are created in one's mind. In that the attributes of each of those eras (and impinging societal shifts) were directly attributable to the people associated from that specific time and thus generation, further influencing the perception formation. The concept of influencing external factors is littered with the notion of change: in going from one norm to another, these shifts in paradigms appear to be the focal point at which something was deemed to be either vilified or celebrated in relation to generation, almost as an identifier or a marker that needed to be protected.

In each of the participants' narratives there seemed to be a binary sense-making process for participants when thinking of these external factors. The external factors shaped their eras and thus what belonged to theirs, versus what belonged to another generation, seemed to create a split. This appeared more prominent when the loss of the old, or the daunt of the new was the focal point in the narratives or the PINs.

<p>As per the example below, this also seemed to be present in one's frustration with another generation for not being able to get on-board with what one's own generation was representing, in this case technology. While these external factors seem generalised or opaque, they seemed equally powerful, powerful enough to render a direct correlation</p>	<p>Kevin</p> <p>"On our last, the role I was working for the older bloke ... like, the way I felt about that was just ... like, you know, this is ... this is stupid, you won't do this. Why? Can't we? Why can't we try something different? You know, why? Why are we doing [it] this way when we could do it this way? We're not making</p>
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<p>between age and the external factor itself and thus perpetuating the perception creation.</p>	<p>as much money here because of your sort of inability to grasp technology ... was it ... was that sort of like?".</p> <p>Bernie</p> <p>"Very quickly, I realised he was a complete knob, but he was a sergeant which you had to appease, because he had the power over the entire training team and those training teams could make your life utter misery ... The further you go up in rank and position of authority, therefore the requirements of you change, and therefore you have to adapt."</p>
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It seems people began to think inwardly about their own generation (only where they show reflexive and negative capacity), questioning what was key to their era and thus their time, but even more so outwardly began to think about the other generations, and what is NOT theirs and/or them. At times this seemed to shift to a focus of blaming the other in an attempt to eject the discomfort from the overwhelming. It seems the changing societal paradigm, or the substantial repositioning in the wider social field may become generationally contested as people from different eras face off to each other alongside their norms. In turn, this seemed to be accompanied by a degree of remorse, regret, loss, reappraisal or denigration. Throughout interviews, it appeared

that some participants were able to assimilate this shift better than others. There is some evidence that would suggest that one's reflective capacity later on in life, through a myriad of experiences enable this reflection, but equally, there is evidence to suggest that this is innate within some participants from an early age. While this is deep research, the nuances of integrating different generational experiences and the individual tendencies one develops on how they intertwine was outside of the scope of this research question.

4.2.9 From an organisational perspective

It appeared as though, when faced with the differences presented by different generations in complex organisational life, that is when participants demonstrated the most amount of anguish with the loss of boundaries in society that has been present arguably for between 16–21 years of one's life.

<p>It seems from participants' examples that some organisations internalise the wider generations' structures and values (i.e. culture), which has the potential to impact on structures and values (i.e. culture) within, and possibly the capacity to change it. This suggests that some systems may be more affected by generation in terms of internal structure (also repeating a family model as seen in 'Family dynamics and generation in the mind'). This may mean that a particular</p>	<p>Kevin</p> <p>"I can compare it to my brother's job. Like right now, you know, he works for Network Rail. They literally have to wait for someone to die or retire until they can progress. Like, because that's just like 60- or 70-year-old blokes just sat taken up seats doing nothing."</p>
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<p>identification with generational external factors or societal shifts may be held onto for some time after they are dissolving in a wider social field. There are some industries (within this research Network Rail and financial services), which are also possibly symbolic or representative of a generation, which may be dependent on when the organisation itself was 'born'.</p>	
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4.2.10 Summary

Ultimately, it seems that there was the propensity for external factors in the wider social-economic field (those which support the establishment in the mind of the generation), that were possibly idealised, vilified or denigrated. Specifically, in this research, what gets called out by participants is the shifts globally and organisationally with regard to gender or age in influential positions and/or loyalty, versus employability and technology, as stated in the examples.

What was not further explored, but would be useful in terms of understanding generations better, particularly that of the 'overlap' of different generations straddling the nexus of certain paradigm shifts or external factors. Looking more closely at the outcome of blended generations' experiences. If generations in their finite form exist at all, a crossover of influence from each of these eras, those that have some, but perhaps not all in common with a group of people born from a specific year. Equally,

within the realm of this research, it is challenging to go in depth of each of these societal signifiers that bring about so much complexity in how generations are viewed and thus what perceptions are or have been created as a result. In summary, this finding gives some insight into many of the questions being asked by this research, namely the influences that contribute to the perception of generation in individuals within an organisational context. What external factors exist across generations that influence organisational processes and relationships and those that are, or can be, internalised by generations and organisations, and finally how those manifest themselves in the perceptions that are created.

4.6 Formation of generation in the mind: Intergenerational connectedness and separateness (the self and the other)

This section looks to discuss the formation of generation in the mind as it relates to intergenerational connectedness and separateness.

4.6.1 Introduction

Whilst similar to findings alluded to in the previous sections, this finding focuses on the specificity of the connectedness and the separateness that seemed unconsciously highlighted by participants. This finding focuses on the nexus of shared experiences, where, despite perceived generational differences, participants highlighted that there is in us (as a collective) the velocity to drive either a separateness or connectedness, based on these shared experiences across different generations. This finding is thus anchored in the commonality of experience or the lack thereof, where there was a shared experience that had the power to connect individuals across different

generations, irrespective of generational membership, and almost nullify the differences therein. What I came to find is that there are some moments, events, or milestones that have the capacity to create a sense of kinship amongst different generations. This affiliation seemed able to create space for empathy and understanding among generations, or at least the ability to see past these aspects of a generation that were unlike theirs or that participants felt was undesirable.

This was visible collectively and at the individual level. Where participants had been through an event that was particularly difficult (a war, an organisational change, effect of a policy change) which affected them at a different collective level, rather than generational membership – a human level, an organisational level, a gender level, a cultural level. These difficult moments in time seemed to enable a degree of empathy for those to come who had all shared the experience. These points of connection ranged from shared experiences, but could also be seen in shared attributes or goals, for example being incredibly ambitious or looking to pass a certain course. These shared moments and the associated emotions, thoughts, and feelings manifested in a connectedness which would be suggestive of having the power to eradicate the generational differences that may exist in the mind (influencing one's actions and behaviours), or at least not be used in a binary way of what is right and wrong, but an acceptance of what is different. Participants' narratives suggested that without this fastening of a shared experience, only a separateness is possible, and that some of the perception of generational difference can be predicated on the fear of being separate or different.

4.6.2 Connectedness

Connectedness revealed itself in a sense of intergenerational cohesion, where something stronger than age seemed able to facilitate a relationship, such as a shared challenge, shared experiences, an alignment in meaning, or shared values that developed a shared respect, irrespective of a person's age and generational membership. It is in this that different generations were able to connect and see past the differences that seemed to place them in silos. Silos make it increasingly difficult to navigate uncertain times. It seemed that in connectedness there was an intergenerational storytelling (legacy and tales) of sorts that provided a vehicle for connecting those that were disconnected by different generations, but connected by the same love or a common ground. Examples include the uniqueness of a single-gendered experience or the heaviness of loss on the battlefield, that could move most people, irrespective of age. It was or is in these moments that participants found that this unique space for connection and deeper relationships were possible.

<p>In the example from Eddy, where he shares how he and his team were involved in a IED blast and irrespective of the different individuals, from different generations, he refers to them as family and that these experiences, good or bad, are what intertwine them as people.</p>	<p>Eddy</p> <p>“(After an IED blast where his team were affected and he lost an eye) ... So, I was like, right, I just need to get back to the squadron. Because over the years you realise that, you know, the squadron ... is your family, because you spend so much time together. So, you have so many experiences together. And yeah, you ... you experience bad things, but then you also experience good times,</p>
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	<p>you know ... holidays and trips, work trips and activities. So, you know ... you easily spend ... you know the vast majority of your ... your life with these lads. So, it's like a family."</p>
<p>Generational difference, especially when considered as a potential overarching kind of identity, that which is not static but fluid, seems to be diluted or dissolved under certain conditions. This can be seen in Lara's example where, despite the different times and different generations that pass through the organisations, there is a commonality of the eternal dilemma for the working women that all working mothers seem to be faced with, which has the power to unite them as opposed to focus on the generational difference. It seems this eternal dilemma or being a mother holds more agency, to the extent that it may even nullify the agency generational differences holds.</p>	<p>Lara</p> <p>"... but I also needed to be at home or to see my children and that was ... that was the, you know, the eternal dilemma for the working woman. And I don't know that it's got any easier for your generation, frankly."</p>

<p>The example from Jerry that suggests that those soldiers that join the special forces are not based on age, but on the principles that have allowed them to all arrive to where they have voluntarily put themselves through exceptionally arduous selection processes to join a select group of individuals. That, irrespective of generational differences, is what has the capacity to build an intergenerational connectedness, despite the difference in age.</p>	<p>Jerry</p> <p>“I’ve always thought of the links that, well those chains that link the people in this unit aren’t necessarily based on age, they are based on principles. And the common principles would be mutual trust, hard work ethic, respect, and so I don’t see that those ... those principles are necessarily bounded by age.”</p>
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4.6.3 Separateness

From a separateness perspective, one of the ways this manifested itself in participants’ narratives is how there seemed to be more focused on ‘the other’ generation as opposed to the generation with which they identified (albeit identification with a certain generation was fragmented). Having said that, I got the sense that there were some unconscious forces (not of the deliberate self) materialising in what participants were sharing, which was possibly being demonstrated in this focus of the other, rather than the self. It felt easier to give a depiction of what is not ‘us’, or what we do not like about ‘us’, or the victimising of self in that ‘they’ had or have it easier than we did. This was characterised by the other and the separateness. Participants’ narratives seemed to suggest that on some levels generation is defined by what one is not and the other is, used to reinforce points of identification, as in ME or NOT ME. People seemed to fear

otherness (participants' narratives are an example of this), and otherness-panic was prevalent to me in conscious or defended ways, especially compounded by fear of extinction by this otherness (where loss will later be discussed).

<p>In this example Cole shares that people just sit on final salaries and have no career drive, but follows up to say that it is OK. This to me translated as pointing out what was different with that generation in comparison to her generation and therefore why they feel so different. Even the discourse of 'no career drive', contrasted with 'hunger and enthusiasm', is showing the difference between 'us' and 'them': a clear separation.</p>	<p>Cole</p> <p>"(The organisational culture) I think there are a lot of people that have been there a long time, that sit on final salaries and have no career drive, because you know, they're just quite happy, which is absolutely fine. But in our current context, we have a lot of work to do. And I think there's a lot of hunger and enthusiasm to build something fresh."</p>
<p>Kevin's experience is another example of this, where once again there is a clear distinction between those who are ambitious and those who are not. They are aligned to different generations and as such point to the separateness.</p>	<p>Kevin</p> <p>"I just kind of like ... just kind of smash it out. And, and I think that in terms of, like my career, as soon as I feel plateau, I'm out like, I just ... there's no ... you hit a ceiling really quick within organisations, particularly insurance like you know. If I can, if I can compare it to my brother's</p>

	<p>job, like right now, you know, he works for Network Rail. They literally have to wait for someone to die or retire until they can progress, like, because that's just like 60- or 70-year-old blokes, just sat, taken up seats doing ... I've always been over ambitious"</p>
<p>In a slightly different way, with the example from Lara, there was also evidence in participants' narratives that, while there was a commonality, a desire to have others not have it so easy or to have others experience the same hardships, this desire seemed to create a separateness. In this example we can see how being a successful woman could develop a connectedness on the basis of a shared experience of climbing the ladder as a woman, but then equally there is something in this connectedness about needing to earn that and until that connectedness is earned, it remains separate. Perhaps this is an example of where the agency of generational</p>	<p>Lara</p> <p>"The most successful female partners were all quite senior by that stage. And they were quite brutal. They had no, no sympathy for people who were finding it difficult. Their attitude was absolutely 'if you can't stand the heat, get out the kitchen'. They just were not at all ... they were perfectly nice to talk to, but they were ... and they didn't ... they didn't crush women in the sense of you know ... the sort of pulling up the ladder after them. They just expected women to go through the same difficult circumstances as they had had to."</p>

differences, despite the agency of successful women as a collective, does not lose its potency.	
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4.6.4 In summary

In summary, it seems the organisational stories we tell and the legacies we use to instil a degree of connectedness and commonality could potentially hold more agency than the perceived generational differences in the mind. Although, equally, these differences in the mind hold the agency to drive a deeper separateness, such that connection at any level may seem impossible. Once again, generational difference seems to be an elusive aspect that is fluid and nebulous when it comes to intergenerational relationships. The capacity for connectedness and separateness across different generations seems to have broad psychosocial influences that affect the varying perceptions of generation in the mind within organisations.

4.7 Formation of generation in the mind: Suppression and repression of generational differences

This section looks to discuss the formation of generation in the mind as it relates to suppression and repression of generational differences.

4.7.1 Introduction

This finding focuses on the conscious and unconscious avoidance of generational differences as a feature in one's experience, particularly from a leadership standpoint. This finding looks at both that which is repressed unconsciously, blocking unwanted

thoughts, and that which is suppressed: consciously or deliberately trying to forget or not think about difficult or unwanted thoughts. The sense I got from participants was that there were other factors that seemed, to them, more relevant and thus more valid than age, when it came to walking through the impact of their experiences of generational differences. A number of participants, through their reflectivity in answering the SQUIN, suggested that in their experiences of leading or working with people of different ages, what defined their experience was not about generational differences or age, but rather about something else (in many cases gender, credibility, capability, authority, etc.). Some participants said that age was simply never a factor. However, that was perhaps the nexus of suppression and repression. Looking at participant narratives, there seemed to be underlying notions that would suggest generational differences were important in their experiences, but perhaps too difficult to articulate or hidden in the guise of other signifiers that indicated generational difference, yet were never espoused as that. Once again, in this finding we accept that age and age differences could be mediating for the concept of generations and generational differences. It is important to note that in this finding, it was observed how this denial of age ever being a factor in one's career seemed to come from the stance of being older and in the direction of those younger, while younger and middle-aged positionalities suggested that age was indeed a factor in how they lead or were led by people in their careers. This seemed to be the case, irrespective of generation or age and more the directionality.

4.7.2 Repression of age

The repression of generational differences or, at the very least the repression of age being a factor when thinking about generational difference, as it shows up in one's leadership journey and the associated relationships and processes, transpired in the

way participants justified their views. The way that participants suggested that age was not a factor, when in their narratives a different story unfolded, seemed to show that they may be unaware of exactly when or how the anxiety around generational differences originated, thus suggesting it could be repressed. In exploring the repression of age, we will look at two different viewpoints: 1) Bernie, an older individual looking at a view of younger individuals with a present perspective; 2) Lara, looking at it from a personal past perspective; and 3) Callum, looking at it from a present or future personal perspective.

<p>The example where Bernie suggests that age has never been a factor for him, that he has not judged others based on age, but rather experience and competence, feels somewhat contradictory. While this is what he says, his told story and the nuances of his narrative, suggest that age has been a determinant, because not only does it enable maturity of thought, in his view, but also that it refines you as a leader, thus better able to take on roles with more authority and power. Throughout his narrative, Bernie suggests that his experiences in hindsight taught him that age was not an issue, or should not be an issue, and thus people should not be judged on the</p>	<p>Bernie</p> <p>“I guess I’ve never gone: ‘Oh, he’s older than me. He must know better. He’s younger than me. He must know less’. I don’t think that’s the case at all. I don’t think age has ever been an issue for me ... So, I think going to your point, leadership and age, I don’t think there’s such a case, the only thing ... the benefit of age allows you to mature and your views and then allows you to become probably a more refined leader...have you got someone who’s got the aptitude to learn very quickly and then come up with that sort of conclusion earlier on? Or does that take development, and if that’s</p>
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<p>basis of age, yet he suggests that age has refined him and made him a better leader, where in fact age did pay dividends for him. His narratives suggest that on the basis of this experience and the underlying repression of age being an influential factor in his career, he potentially views and assesses others within the same limitation, despite suggesting otherwise.</p>	<p>the case, then perhaps having a bit more age does pay dividends?”</p>
<p>Similarly, in Lara’s narrative she suggests that age did not mean that you automatically respected someone, and that age simply was irrelevant, yet in the same narrative she shares with us that desire for approval from those more senior or older than her, as well as the fear she has associated with those in more senior positions. This to me this articulates relevance of age, or a different generation, as seen in the unconscious repressed feelings, and/or repetition of familiar patterns towards more senior people or older generations (likely established in formative years as</p>	<p>Lara</p> <p>“Age was only relevant to the extent that you were ... that it had made somebody experienced ... So, age did not confer any kind of automatic respect or seniority. It was all about how good you were, really, or how good you were perceived to be. It was much more about experience than age, age was ... was irrelevant. Really. It was about when you knew what you were doing or not.</p> <p>“When I was a very junior lawyer, the age of the partner did have an impact on me, you know, when they were older than my</p>

<p>discussed in 'Family dynamics'), despite suggesting that age was irrelevant. On the contrary, it seemed very relevant, but perhaps not obvious to her or too difficult to bring into the conscious. Ultimately where Lara, and others, have suggested that age or generational difference is not a determinant for organisational relationships and processes, it seems that unconsciously it may be, as it provokes significant degrees of anxiety, and as such seems to have had a profound impact on perceptions of others, and thus generation, in the mind.</p>	<p>father or at least my father's age ... I was always so terrified some senior lawyer would tell me they wanted me to research something and I wouldn't have understood, but I wouldn't dare to ask ... (the man I worked for) he wasn't particularly great at leadership, but because he was so charismatic, particularly junior lawyers who worked for him, we would all have jumped off the top of the high building if he told us to. And so, we did whatever he wanted us to do, because we all wanted his approval. In fact, if any partner told me I'd done a good job, I was so pleased that I went off and work three times harder for the next one."</p>
<p>What is interesting about Callum's experience is that he shares a reflection that he does not know what it is like to have surpassed him, where he feels like the older individual looking at younger individuals in a more senior position, as he is still on his path of being the youngest in a senior role. He suggests</p>	<p>Callum "I think people of different ages (will affect me) when someone who's younger than me surpasses me. I suppose when that day comes, maybe then at that point I'll be like: 'Oh, that's what it feels like'. Or I suppose that's probably what I'm getting at there. But at</p>

<p>that when that happens, he may understand what it is like. Still, with this reflection, he goes on to say that age is not a factor, despite suggesting that he may have a different experience and emotional reaction to age differences later. It felt like he was almost catching himself mid thought as the idea of being in a different position (older reflecting on younger) felt unbearable.</p>	<p>the moment I'm still sort of on my trajectory I'm on, but I'm still a lot younger than most people, still at this point. Which I don't think is a thing, I don't think it's that important, the age thing. I just think it matters what you're doing. But because there's a lot of older guys still, like from my perspective, looking at them now, there's a lot older guys who ... I don't know whether I could do what they're doing when they're that age."</p>
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Ultimately, the repression of age as a factor could be seen unconsciously in many of the participants' narratives, and even in what is a reflective narrative process, it still remained beneath the surface. Some participants even responded with "Did I really say that?" when revisiting PINs (word for word as participants said it), suggesting that their processing of their experiences surrounding generational difference may have some degree of repression.

4.7.3 Suppression of age

While there seemed to be compelling indications of repression in participants' narratives, there equally seemed to be indications of suppression. In line with psychoanalytic theory, suppression is different from repression, because suppression is conscious, a conscious effort to push away unwanted thoughts, emotions, memories and phantasies from the mind or inhibit expression of these thoughts and emotions. There seemed to be a few examples where participants were aware of the feelings or

experiences regarding generational difference and openly spoke about them, but attempted to justify them in a way that seemed like a sophisticated attempt to dismiss them. The examples below from Bernie and Lara articulate this.

<p>Bernie shares that as a leader, generally younger lads were more challenging and he suggests this is down to maturity, but that older people could also have had strategic damage to the service. However, he shares that he would likely choose an older person for a more strategic role and then seems to dismiss that via his justification that comes in to suggest that age should not matter, experience should. My feeling was that he had made a few decisions similar to this where he had judged and thus not selected younger individuals for these roles and that that could have been a mistake. It felt to me like he was reflecting on his own selection decisions that could have possibly been more reflective of how he feels today: that age is irrelevant. His suppression of age as a factor here seems to be that he is</p>	<p>Bernie</p> <p>“Just goes to show that actually age doesn’t really ... in our world [the military] ... shouldn’t really make a difference. And I think the only times it has ever played out, sometimes is suddenly from the Special Forces world, is if you are ... if that maturity doesn’t extend to their personal lives ... For that can actually happen to anyone, but generally as a rule, you had more of a nightmare with the younger lads, because they were still young, single, living the life with a lot of money. That then ... that played out so for more responsible jobs. You would be selective who you choose. And if they were very young, you’d have to take into consideration, were they in the right place, from I guess emotional and personal point of view in order to be given the responsibilities, where if they</p>
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<p>pushing the unwanted thought that older people were better for these roles, out of mind, potentially because those were not the right decisions.</p>	<p>may, they might muck up, then they could have strategic damage to the ... to the service. But that said, there's been just as a fuckup done by young, eh old people, as there has been by young people. So, it's just ... you probably are far more conscious in your initial viewpoint over a younger person. You probably would pick a more senior older guy, but that's probably a wrong way to look at it. If that makes sense. It's just because they're young, but the reality of it is, it makes no difference, it is about the person and their experiences."</p>
<p>In this example you can see Lara suggested that she worked with people her son's age or similar and that seemed to me like a stark reminder of her age and thus place in the organisation. For whatever that realisation could have triggered for her in terms of unwanted thoughts, I believe that she felt the need to suppress the conscious thought of individuals similarly to her son's age, as it felt like a painful reminder of her own</p>	<p>Lara "Occasionally I would look at them and think: 'Oh my God, you're only four years older than my son'. But I tried to ignore that. They were colleagues. I suppose that was how it worked. Okay."</p>

<p>age, and perhaps her nearing irrelevance in the organisation. Equally, it felt that she needed to suppress maternal feelings and phantasies in order to treat individuals like colleagues. So, as much as she may suggest that age was not a factor, for her the relevance of age may have been a strong influence in her relationships as much as she tried to suppress those formative experiences.</p>	
<p>Finally, in the example from Jerry, there is something in the suppression of age that allows for differing levels of authority and power to be taken up outside of what is a traditional structure. The suppression of unwanted thoughts around being younger or older than an individual, but able to take a more senior role: a relativity of what young means. In my mind Jerry uses age and entry into the organisation as a way to deal with the fact that a friend he worked alongside, was younger than him, but in a more senior role that he was, and went on to</p>	<p>Jerry</p> <p>“The reality being is whether you’re young or whether you’ve just joined the organisation, regardless or not, you can still be seen as young ... And so I just been promoted to sergeant, but then I was going straight into a colour sergeant’s role. So just above, and I took the place of a friend of mine as he recovered. And actually that friend, on reflection, is younger, couple of years younger than me. Even though I was more junior than him, he’d come to this organisation quite young. I came to this</p>

<p>take over. His suppression of whatever emotions he felt about that experience (likely an envy of sorts) manifests as a justification for when an individual takes up a role in relation to when they enter the organisation, likely making it then easier to tolerate that situation and the associated emotions.</p>	<p>organisation quite late. So that's the first time that I thought ... that's the first time that I thought, age isn't really a factor here."</p>
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4.7.4 Summary

In summary, the unconscious repression and conscious suppression of age or generational differences suggest that participants' perceptions of generational differences seem to manifest in organisational processes and relationships. There are multiple psychosocial aspects that can, and do, influence one's perception of generational differences over time, yet some perceptions remain stuck in familiar patterns and repressed feelings associated to those of other generations. As participants progressed, their narratives from childhood to adolescence and then into adulthood, these defence mechanisms seemed to be consistent over time. Most notably for this research, in this finding we can see how participants' anxieties, as defended subjects, are mobilised mostly at the unconscious level and influence their perceptions of those older and younger than them.

4.8 Formation of generation in the mind: The physicality of ageing

This section looks to discuss the formation of generation in the mind as it relates the physicality of aging.

4.8.1 Introduction

This finding is about how one's physical appearance potentially affects the perception others may have of one's age and therefore influences the formation of generation in the mind. The physicality of aging also included the physical components of a job and the associated assumptions about how an individual may present, or what they are physically able to do. This manifested in the youthful or strong appearance of individuals, and particularly in roles where there was a physical component to a job, e.g. the military. The physicality of aging as a finding supports the narrative of how much, or to what extent, individuals internalise what they observe, the assumptions they make that influence how they interact with others, and how they present themselves as a result. These assumptions then seemed to influence their perceptions of age and therefore their perceptions of generational differences. The sense I got from the participants when reflecting on the physicality of age (and aging) and the impact on the perceptions of generational differences, is that it was a 'live' attribute, visible in some way, and in most, almost inescapable. It seemed that participants' perceptions were based on tangible features that one could directly observe in one's physical appearance or physical output (i.e. how many press ups could one do, how tall they are, and affecting how young they look) and therefore make assumptions based on that physicality. This finding aims to look at what participants internalised about the physical attributes of aging and the assumptions they made regarding others in relation to these physical attributes, which in turn influenced their perceptions of generation in the mind, as it relates to the physical attributes of age or generation.

It is important to note, particularly within this finding, the difference between age and generation, what the word itself can represent for those reflecting on their experience and thus their perceptions (a limitation discussed later). The perceptions of age differences and generational differences propose that perceptions of older age were associated with physical decline (e.g. 'slow', or 'lack physical prowess'), and younger age associated with physical abilities (e.g. 'being able to train harder' or 'wake up in the morning with no aches and pains'). Whereas perceptions of older generations were more likely to be aligned to responsibility and levels of self-actualisation and lifestyle (e.g. 'hard working' or 'life experience') and younger generations were more likely to be associated with negative sentiments (e.g. 'self-entitled', 'lazy' or 'unaware of how easy they have it'). Interestingly, age and generation seemed to have represented opposing positive and negative sentiments in different ways within this finding, further bolstering the hypothesis that age and generation cannot be looked at in isolation and that the social identity aspect of generations, generational membership and thus generation in the mind, are imperative for understanding and working with this complex phenomenon in the workplace. In this finding, it would be fair to suggest that age is mediating for generation in how people brought their perceptions to life.

4.8.2 The influence of physical attributes on the perception of generations

The physicality of aging speaks to what individuals internalised as per their own perceptions of what they looked like, what age-related demeanour they seemingly emitted and thus how they felt others then formed perceptions as a result. This transpired in both upward and downward fashions, how participants felt when they looked younger, which seemed to translate as incompetent or not good enough for leadership roles, and then how participants felt when they looked older and equally felt incompetent or not good enough. It seemed there was a sweet spot for what age

(or generation) was ideal, somewhere in the middle: mentally and physically fit and young enough to take on the physicality of a role and the demands of work life, but not so young that one didn't have enough experience. Also, old enough to have the experience, knowledge and prowess, but not too old that one was seen as not strong enough, or current enough.

4.8.2.1 *Looking and feeling too young*

There was evidence from participants that suggested that when people felt that they were too young or had young-looking physical attributes, that it had a direct effect on how they were perceived and thus treated within the workplace. This can be seen in two different ways: 1) in one's facial appearance that leads people to assume that the individual is too young and does not have the experience to take up a role; or 2) in one's bodily appearance that leads people to assume that the individual is not strong or developed enough to take up a role or complete a task. The former is particularly true for those working in corporate environments where age is synonymous with experience and expertise. The latter was particularly true for the military environment from where 50% of my participants were.

<p>This example from Cole shows how her own perception of her being too young to take up a role seems to be reflected in how she feels about her appearance and thus how others may perceive her. She explains that she looks young, too young, for the role that she is in and as such people place judgement on her</p>	<p>Cole "I perceive that sometimes when I speak, perhaps people wouldn't take me as seriously. I think that is probably me, but a large part just, you know, my own insecurities, but I do feel like age played a role in that and how I ... how I perceived by like, stage of ... kind of</p>
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capability. This makes her alter her behaviour and perhaps even internalise some of that narrative which is projected by others.

leadership development, if that makes sense ... I've always found it quite difficult to be ... so, I am 5 foot and look very young. And I'm quite, I just genuinely enthusiastic, quite bubbly and smiley ... and throughout my kind of career journey, working with clients who are typically middle-aged white men. I found it quite frustrating and challenging at times to ... I don't know what the right word is ... not assert my authority, but just kind of be recognised for my expertise as well. Frustrating, because I think I look younger than I am. And so be like, you're talking to this 20-year-old guy rather than me So that was an interesting thing that I've kind of always struggled with. Even today, just before this, I was on a call with someone who ... I mean, he is probably in his late 50s, and we are now at the same level. But he was making comments like: 'Oh, oh wow! Such big pieces of work for such a young lady'."

<p>The examples from both Callum and Eddy show where their ability to take up a role or undertake a task was directly assessed on their physical ability. These examples demonstrate that not only was it about how they felt physically in themselves when comparing themselves to others, but equally about how others then judged them. Once again, it seemed from participants' narratives that this judgement from others had the power to influence one's own perceptions and vice versa, that one's own perception seemed to be emitted in their dispositions, and thus influence the perceptions others then held. These perceptions then seemed to influence generation in the mind, as it related to physical attributes. It is unclear which is the primary influence, the influence of self or others' perceptions, but what is clear is that the perception of self and others based on what one physically looks like can be a determinant for how a</p>	<p>Eddy</p> <p>"I suppose it was just, you notice when you're when you're younger, body shape as well. But you know when you're ... I was 19, I wasn't the ... wasn't the biggest. I was quite skinny because I was a runner. You've got almost ... what you know, 20- to 23-year-old grown man who's like massive and you just like: 'Oh my God, how, how can I compete like this?'"</p> <p>Callum</p> <p>"I think it was 17 when I joined the first unit and once again, I was by far the youngest ... in the military in general is when you feel like you're sort of behind and then I sort of the Eye of Mordor comes on to you ... I sort of felt like I was always catching up. But it was like I was physically behind, mentally behind, I think. And it took a while for me to develop, whilst trying to maintain on the trajectory, so I was probably like lower on the trajectory than most people. Try to</p>
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<p>perception of the individual, and thus the generation, can be formed.</p>	<p>maintain and then having to work harder, just to stay at that level and then eventually sort of came in line with the rest of the cohort I think.”</p>
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It seemed that looking younger was synonymous with being less experienced/capable, therefore less credible and less worthy of a certain rank, task or position of authority. This ‘judgement’ was often placed onto younger individuals by older individuals, either in the same cohort or slightly above them in leadership positionality, which could be seen as defending against the internal perceived lack of achievement attributable to that age (insecurity). What also transpired was the potential threat or a survival anxiety about becoming extinct or redundant in role if younger, more eager people are able to do so quicker, with fewer resources, for less money.

4.8.2.2 Looking and feeling too old

From the perspective of looking and feeling too old it seemed that, from a physicality perspective, similar fears existed for those participants who felt that they were being judged for being too old or looking too old, to take up a role or undertake an activity. Again, this seemed to be both something that was a self-perception as well as a perception from others, yet unclear as to which influences which.

<p>From the examples from Jerry, it is evident that in his own judgement of others that are older and potentially the same age as him, his concern is that he is that person now that he once judged.</p>	<p>Jerry “... there’s also an element in ... in this ... in this organisation that a lot is judged on (physical) performance. So physical attributes, physical prowess is important</p>
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<p>What is interesting about his narrative is that he suggests that as long as an individual can perform, there is no judgement based on age, yet he still labels himself as old and is conscious of how others may view him. What is more, is that his last quote equally goes on to suggest that even though older individuals may perform in the same manner, the effort required to do so is the thing that is judged, which begets further judgement of older individuals or generations. His narrative in general seems somewhat contradictory in nature and this is yet another example of the potency that generation has and how it can get into the narratives of individuals, there but not there, relevant but not relevant, all at the same time.</p>	<p>and again, I'm ... I'm not sure that age isn't necessarily the defining factor in terms of how other people view you ... I'm relatively old now, in comparison to the rest of the workforce here. I still think that the fact that I can do physically demanding work, meant that I wasn't getting judged by my age rather than my role ... And I suppose that is the thing that made me realise it doesn't matter how old you are, it's whether you can physically perform and on the selection course, and it's whether you can perform physically, will be part of it, when you get to this organisation."</p> <p>"I should be more aware of the fact that the younger generation, how they view the older generation, when you talk about some of the older guys in the unit, the term 'dinosaur' gets brought out now and again in this organisation. I don't know whether that's ... whether that is a dinosaur in terms of their attitudes or dinosaur in terms of their age and/or how long they had served here, but whenever</p>
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	<p>I hear the term, I think 'Ah! It's related to those guys that have been in this unit for 20 years', and now I am thinking: 'Fuck, I am that dude now', ... As the unit has changed, younger people perceive the older guys in the unit differently. Whether that's based on their physicality, and I'm not entirely sure?</p> <p>"Everyone's been through the same journey. Everyone's got to the same place. The older people probably struggle because they're more likely to get injured, is a bit harder to get up in the mornings, etc."</p>
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4.8.3 Potential impact of paradigm shifts on these assumptions

It would be amiss not to mention the effect that paradigm shifts (and by default different generations) have on what the current norms or requirements from a physical perspective are or were. It seems from participants' narratives that what was an expectation or standard from a physicality perspective, generations ago, may not be the same as it is today.

<p>This quote from Eddy suggests that given the change of lifestyle that is brought on by development, that by default requires less from individuals from a physicality perspective in the military. So, based on what one's opinion and output were for what was required, it is likely that that impacted what generation one was from (or identified with) and thus what perception they built of own and other generations when physicality was brought into question. Equally, as per Jerry's example, what was young or old and thus capable or incapable then versus now, is different and likely influence the perceptions of generations.</p>	<p>Eddy</p> <p>"I believe it's still the same calibre of people coming through. But I think physical-wise, I think people are injuring themselves more whether ... whether or not their bodies aren't used to it. They haven't had a sort of almost like a harder time in the Marines. Things you know, less walking, more vehicle based".</p> <p>Jerry</p> <p>"So, where I became the RSM of this unit at age 45, I know for example the RSM of the commando unit during Second World War on D-Day, the RSM was 25 years old."</p>
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It seems that the interrelation of the physical age of individuals and the social factors surrounding age (generation) e.g. technology, influence the individual thoughts and behaviours and as such one's perceptions, which could further exacerbate the differences in perception when it comes to generational differences and the physicality of aging.

4.8.4 Summary

In summary, the physical features of young and old appeared to be permeable and ostensibly visible to each other, and this tangible difference in the generations seemed to be influential in how perceptions were formed. While there will always be exceptions to the rule, for the most part physical features such as wrinkles, muscles, hair, youthfulness, etc. seemed to be determining factors assuming one's age, generational membership, and equally their related competence. This perception that individuals develop (of themselves and of others) in relation to generation, has the potential to affect the relationships they hold, and how they choose to navigate them within the organisation, based on the relationship those perceptions have with the formation of generation in the mind.

4.9 Formation of generation in the mind: Influences of life stages on generation

This section looks to discuss the formation of generation in the mind as it relates to the influences of life stage on generation.

4.9.1 Introduction

The core focus in this finding is the nature of different life stages and subsequent influences these life stages seem to have on the construct of generation in the mind. The link to generation is in the concept of age and progression through the years and thus stages of life. For the purposes of this finding, life stages are grouped into the ages and stages we go through as we learn and grow, from infancy, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, mid-life to old age, including the concept of living contemporaneously. This finding highlights the life experiences in each stage, which layers upon one another and influences the direction of one's life, the future life stages, and experiences which in turn seem to have the capacity to shape behaviours and

perceptions in the mind. Life stages can be looked at in two ways within this finding.

1) Chronologically: the life stages that are associated with age and are typically linear in approach, e.g. infancy or adulthood, and are typically related to living contemporaneously. 2) Experientially: the life stages that are primarily associated with milestones and events that can be linear to a degree, but are typically non-linear and possibly even unrelated to living contemporaneously, e.g. graduation, marriage, parenthood.

4.9.2 Chronological life stages

The chronological life stages refer to the age-related milestones or developments that characterise an individual's life stage and the institutions and societal structures situated around age and those associated development, e.g. school years and progressing from 4–18 years. All of the development prior to entry into the organisation bears influence on how generation in the mind is structured, given the degree of sameness in one's formative years. This sameness is in relation to age and linear progression, as opposed to family environments and individual experiences. The relationship with different generations in these years seemed less complex than it is once one moves into the organisation, largely because people are of the same age within immediate social groups (outside of the family) in pre-work life years. It seems that it is when individuals enter the organisation that the concept of different generations and associated assumptions make more of an impact. It is in these pre-work years that there is a comparison and identification of our generation begins, as it is likely people are all of the same generation and as such the other is yet to exist in one's immediate social circle.

<p>As you can see from both Eddy and Bernie's examples, there are set peer groups which seem to share a sameness until such time that you reach the world of work. As such the development within these groups seems to be relatively similar and thus the linear development is similar. This idea also suggests that people, through social structures such as school, are kept within a same cohort of not only being born in similar or the same birth years, but equally living contemporaneously. This grouping tends to place less contention among different generations in these early life stages, because there seems to be significantly less generational differences.</p>	<p>Eddy</p> <p>"I thought sort of, you know, converse with because, I was sort of used to school, people my own age group and then suddenly getting into the wide world. So, I think travelling helped."</p> <p>Bernie</p> <p>"Prior to that (a career) it is all school base, so you're peer related anyway. School was school. I mean, I was in a school of about 1000 people, so you had naturally a hierarchy within those of the different personalities, I guess. You know, cool kids, rugby team, football teams, that sort of thing. But when I reflect, it's all peer related ... And then I joined [the military] when I was 20, and then you join with a quite an eclectic mix of people from 16-year-olds to 30-year-olds, as a peer group ... you've got people from 30-years-old, who've had two, three careers and 16-year-olds, which have literally just come out of school. What I found really interesting,</p>
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	<p>very early on in my career, is that how I can be on a training journey with anyone from 16 to 30. And yet, we were being instructed by people which were about 24, 25. So, it kind of flipped what you're used to from a ... from a school children's life and sort of like a narrow view I guess to, then my first open experience with leadership."</p>
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It seems that it is only when participants arrived at their careers and into the organisations, that there was more exposure to different generations or people at different life stages, more so than that which a family setting presents. The more individuals were then exposed to these differences, the more it seemed to either confirm or challenge their perceptions of their own and other generations. Moreover, this development of the individual at these various different life stages seemed to be aligned to a deeper sense of self, one that appeared to be linked to more sophisticated thinking around generational differences, at each age a suggested development in thought and world view, an openness to experience.

<p>This finding suggests that at each of these life stages we go through, as we age, we may find the capacity to be more open to the differences that generations bring and as such less splitting occurs of what is good or bad, but can simply just</p>	<p>Bernie "As I progressed as a leader and people have led around me, I find it more. I admire certain individuals which have come at a very early age. And again, just huge amounts of experience ... Super</p>
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<p>be seen as different. It is in that progression and reflexivity that different life stages bring, where generational differences have the potential to lose agency, as per Bernie's example.</p>	<p>young, super talented, and you realised, actually, age isn't the problem here, is their experiences and what they can bring to the party."</p>
<p>However, where the sophisticated thinking around this progression and reflexivity fails, is where generational difference have agency, as per Cole's example (in retrospect).</p>	<p>Cole "Something I am experiencing at in my current role which is just very different, because you have so many different generations in the workforce and actually, people got different priorities. I think when I was ... when I was at Accenture and starting off, I didn't really ... didn't really understand as well some of the people who have kind of more senior and at a different stage in life, because they had different priorities and to me at the time, was thinking all I want to do is excel in my career and work hard and I don't understand why people don't care about these programmes and these milestones and thinking I never want to, ever want to be like that. I always want to really care. I'm obviously now a bit older</p>

	and starting to also re-assess my priorities.”
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4.9.3 Experiential life stages

There is an aspect to life stages that challenges the notion of generational differences and the association to people born in the same year (and living contemporaneously). This finding suggests that the power of a shared experience or joint arrival at a milestone despite different life stages, can be (and likely is) stronger than just simply being born in the same year. Possibly diluting the power of generational differences on the one hand, but on the other solidifying them even more as the stark differences appear. A similar finding was shared in the Intergenerational connectedness and separateness finding.

<p>This example highlights both of these aspects in that, firstly where Lara says that my “generation would be horrified to know” it indicates that things have changed and it is more acceptable to work from home, or more flexibly, and this concept draws a line for what was hard for women back then, is now easier for women today. However, in the same quote she suggests it is not any easier for women today, because the same problems still exist for working women,</p>	<p>Lara “I guess you will probably ... your generation will be horrified to learn that I was still working from home two days a week. And I was told that if I ... when I went back to the office full time, I would get my four points back and I never did so, I never did. I loved my law firm management. I loved thinking about the strategy and where the firm was going and how what my team was doing. But I also needed to be at home or to see my</p>
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<p>irrespective of the generation they come from. Thus, having children in the same paradigm, irrespective of age, can unite people from different generations, e.g. a 20-year-old and a 40-year-old both having children in 1995 may not have been as easy as the same two people having a child in 2020, and the perception seems to be that people born into specific times have it easier. It is thus the experiential life stage that has the capacity to either enable or disable the power of generational differences.</p>	<p>children and that was, that was the, you know, the eternal dilemma for the working woman. And I don't know that it's got any easier for your generation, frankly."</p>
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Life stages seem to have the power to devalue generational differences because of the common ground available that provides the opportunity for shared experiences and hence a connectedness, irrespective of the year born. What living contemporaneously does not preclude is the likelihood that people will live lives differently and reach transition points at different times and hence life stages may not always align to birth years. To illustrate the point, let us consider which of the below three candidate couples are the most similar. 1) A married couple in their late twenties, married with a toddler, living and working in Plymouth as civil servants. 2) Individuals in their late twenties, working for a start-up in London and living in a house to share. 3) A couple in their early forties living in Oxford with young tweens. Although candidate couples 1 and 3 are generationally separated by nearly two decades, it is likely that

being parents with home-owner responsibilities have more shared experiences than that of the candidate couples 1 and 2 who are generationally closer in years and are cohorts.

<p>Closer to this research, consider this quote. While there is an eclectic mix of people joining a new career at the same time, the most common thing drawing them together is the fact that they are all starting from the same baseline.</p>	<p>Bernie</p> <p>“We had 30-year-olds, who’ve had two three careers and 16-year olds, which have literally just come out of school. We were, you know, even to the point ... we had a guy from the training team, teaching us how to wash ourselves in the shower, and he’s pulling all parts of his body apart, washing them up and you’re like ‘Ah man, I know how to wash myself’. But that was the point, everyone from different backgrounds and different walks of lives and maturity levels to almost, I guess it is to create a baseline amongst us.”</p>
<p>In this example Jerry talks about a specific group of individuals that go on selection to become part of a Tier 1 Special Ops teams, and those individuals are from all walks of life and arrive at this organisation at different</p>	<p>Jerry</p> <p>“I’ve never in, in, in all honesty, I’ve never really thought about the age difference in this unit. I’ve never thought of age as a factor when I engage with people who are coming into the organisation or are</p>

<p>ages, but are bound by the same training and operational experience. This seems to negate their difference in age, but rather speaks to the stage of life experience by which their shared experience connects them, irrespective of generation, suggesting that shared experiences are potentially more powerful than simply sharing birth years or eras.</p>	<p>junior in the organisation. I suppose I've always thought of the links that, well those chains that link the people in this unit, aren't necessarily based on age, they are based on principles. And the common principles would be mutual trust, hard work ethic, respect, and so I don't see that those ... those principles are necessarily bounded by age.</p>
<p>Equally, in the this quote Jerry talks about being old or at least old relative to other in the organisation he joined, inferring that despite someone's age, the time at which they join an organisation may be outside of the realms of traditional structure (attributable to generations) and as such the experiential milestones and shared experiences of joining this particular organisation may mean that people connect here at different ages or from different generations. This in turn allows for that intergenerational shared experiences and seemed to have the</p>	<p>Jerry</p> <p>"I joined the Marines ... I was old, I was already 25. I didn't hang around for long in ... in the Marines and went for selection quite early in my military career. But in relative terms a little bit older than most, than some, I should say. So, I came to this organisation, aged 29. So, as I hit 40 was when I left the sabre squadrons to do ... to do a training job. And I think that's probably the time that I've first realised I'd hit 40 and I looked back at the squadron I just left with a lot of really young people in it. And since I've hit 40 and done a couple of other jobs</p>

<p>capacity to negate generation all together.</p>	<p>going back to other sabre squadrons. I do realise now that I'm actually, in relative terms really, really old compared to the majority of the workforce".</p>
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<p>Generationally these recruits could be of the same or different (before and after) generations, but the collective shared experience is that they are all at the beginning of a new career, one he has been in for a few years and one that he started when he was in a different life stage to now, hence the apparent divide between him and this 'new generation'. That, in his view, is that things are different (seemingly easier or softer) for this generation, potentially an attempt to discharge that which he does not identify with. Equally, he seems to mourn a time (his time) where fewer rules were applicable and more nonconformist activity meant that he was potentially treated differently, and hence the defences and angst against the change</p>	<p>Eddy Well, yeah, because I was ... I was at Lympstone²¹ on the training team before going on selection. So initially, it was just little things like the recruits instead of having sheets and blankets that were given, duvets, you know. And so that was one major turning point for us. You used to have bed blocks on a Wednesday and change, but now it's a duvet. How hard is it to make a duvet? You weren't allowed to give them press ups without a PTI involved, unless you're in the field, if you're in the field, anything went. But on camp, everything was documented. You had to write. You had to write full-on reports. If someone was getting ... if you wanted to get rid of someone you didn't see ... if someone was not good enough,</p>
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²¹ Location and name of the training facility for the Royal Marines

<p>of the rules and norms around this training, which seems to be projected into the generation that are now affected by these changes.</p>	<p>you had to almost write three pages that had to be documented weeks in advance, just to get rid of something. And it's just sort of in my eyes, I was just like, well, if they're not very good or they're not making it, let's just get rid of them rather than putting more time and effort into them. So that was sort of an ... that was sort of, you know, almost like my, you know, the long screwdriver. People were telling us we had to do that.</p>
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4.9.4 Conflicts inherent in asynchronous life stages and paradigm shifts

The relationship between the generation one identifies with, and the generations that precede and follow that generation, seemed to be characterised by changes, evolutions and differences. Whilst one can identify with a specific generation, there may be a need to engage more with realities of living in the times of a different generation. The ubiquitousness of needing to navigate those interconnected paradigms is what seemed to put strain on the nebulous concept of generation and generational identity. For example, a 'baby boomer' who is living and working in a technology-bound 2020 where artificial intelligence and machine learning characterise the way work is done, was born in one era, but working in another, seemed to be a source of some of the tension. This is relevant for life stages, as the life stages one progresses through are not concurrent with how paradigm shifts shape new norms that people need to work within. In particular, in a certain life stage where one internally

experiences being a baby boomer, but externally needs to live their lives in the times of the millennial era, for example.

<p>It seemed that participants were often experiencing the anxiety of being born into one era, but living out a certain life stage in another, with that there was a sentiment of anxiety around loss or fear of the unknown. For example, in the quote where Jerry realised that he is now the person he used to point fingers at for their antiquated behaviour and on reflection realises that people view him as that person now. It is in this changing of the times, that it seems some of the participants seemed to defend against the anxieties inherent in this relationship which seemed to be anything from fear of redundancy, the fear of aging, and the fear of the unknown and newness.</p>	<p>Jerry</p> <p>“I should be more aware of the fact that the younger generation, how they view the older generation, like the term ‘dinosaur’ gets brought out now and again in this organisation and whenever I hear the term I think: ‘Ah! It’s related to those guys that have been in this unit for 20 years’, and now I am thinking: ‘Fuck, I am that dude now’. And ... an ... on reflection, now that I don’t doubt it that there are people who view me as ... like the dinosaur, whether that is in terms of my age, or whether that is in terms of ... of the way I problem solve or ... or tackle issues in the unit.”</p>
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Having said that, it was found that at times, the two shall meet: the same life stage chronologically as well as experientially, i.e. living contemporaneously and being in similar experiential life stages, seem to result in a stronger sense of generation and thus generational difference.

<p>As Cole suggests, by the bonding and the comparison, that when people are</p>	<p>Cole</p>
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<p>the same age and share similar experiences, the concept of generation can feel that much stronger.</p>	<p>“So, I think there was much more competition when you can ... when you’re working in groups at the same age. You know, you’re all kind of equally ambitious and equally hungry to do well. So that’s perhaps something I would also say is that when you’re working in teams of the same, the same age, you can assume for the most part, you have very similar life ambitions and you’re at similar life stages which is bonding, but also very easy for comparison.”</p>
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4.9.5 The transitional nature of life stages

With the developmental aspect to this concept of life stages, it seems that when individuals undertake this transformational journey, and attempt to convey aspects of themselves, that societal and generational anxieties can possibly get located in these transitional processes. There is the potential of discharging of the discomfort through blame and scapegoating of other generations. It seems as though the desires and anxieties about future stages, or missed opportunities and regrets in formative stages, may possibly get stuck in the blame that shifts between generations when things get too difficult. Participants’ narratives seemed to allude to a generativity (the producing, generating and passing on to younger generations) as they transitioned from one life stage to another, which seemed to exist irrespective of age or life stage. It seemed

that this generativity was loaded with introspection or reflection about the life lived, which seemed to be coupled with a sense of loss for what was.

4.9.6 Organisational life stages

Considering the life stages of organisations here is possibly helpful too, in that as much as humans go through infancy to old age, so do organisations. As an individual is born into an era, so is an organisation. It is not lost on me that the majority of the organisations the participants came from are those steeped in tradition and have been around for a number of years. The nature of the industry is discussed later as a limitation in this study.

Organisations may project their life stages and assumptions about generation onto the members of that organisation, which in turn makes some life stages (and hence ages) more attractive for that organisation. In the same way that participants had preconceived opinions about different life stages, organisations have preconceived notions of different generations, their capacity for skill attainment, potential for learning, capacity for leadership responsibilities, their entry and exit to and from the organisation, as well as what is inherently expected at each level within the roles and organisations. Considering the PRO (person, role, organisation) model, organisational life stages are paramount when thinking about the impact of generational perceptions at each of these, to the extent that that have been used in organisational decision-making processes, such as selection and development. For example, the era in which the military was established, the generation of the organisation if you will, seems to have an effect on the organisation's perception of generation, the organisation's generation in the mind, and thus its decisions, influences and behaviours.

<p>In this example Bernie suggests that people of a certain age, specifically their maturity and the life stages they were at (active avoidance of young single soldiers), were chosen to take up strategic operational roles. That was largely because of the nature of the role and the potential risk to the organisation, as deemed by the organisation itself, steeped in bureaucracy and hierarchal tradition, as is the military. Note the Freudian slip in bold about younger people making a 'fuck up'.</p>	<p>Bernie</p> <p>“And I think the only times age has ever played out, sometimes is suddenly from the Special Forces world, is if you are ... if that maturity doesn't extend to their personal lives. For that can actually happen to anyone, but generally as a rule, you had more of a nightmare with the younger lads, because they were still young, single, living the life with a lot of money that then that played out ... so for more responsible jobs you would be selective who you choose. And if they were very young, you'd have to take into consideration were they in the right place from, I guess, [an] emotional and personal point of view, in order to be given the responsibilities where if they may, they might fuck up, then they could have strategic damage to the ... to the service. But that said, there's been just as a fuckup done by young, ah old people, as there has been by young people, so it's just ... you probably are far more conscious in your initial viewpoint</p>
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	<p>over a younger person. When you put in them in a difficult situation, then you probably would want a more senior older guy, but that's probably a wrong way to look at it. If that makes sense. It's just because they're young, but the reality of it is, it makes no difference, it is about the person and their experiences.</p>
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This organisational generation could be either at industry or organisation level, or systemic to society (and societal norms) that organisations just embrace. It was not clear from these findings which begets the other. These ideas of generational differences and how they waver in different domains, for example, where younger is seen as inexperienced in the financial services industry, but could potentially be seen as fitter and thus more physically capable and resilient in the military, seem to build on the perceptions of generation at the organisational level. Whilst that might be true, what felt very uniform across the different generations and how they were situated in various different industries, and that there was still a 'lacking' of some description when looking to younger generations, perhaps associated to life experience or the vocalisation of envy or threat. The overarching suggestions from participants' narratives, in my mind, was that there was more loss at later life stages for both individuals and organisations and that fundamentally those at earlier life stages may not fully be able to appreciate how different things used to be and will not until such time that they are on the same rung of the ladder looking back and experiencing the same amount of change retrospectively.

My thought is that whether this be societal influence or organisational hierarchy in an attempt at regulate change and loss, it is propagated by role or job level and the preconceived opinion about who (what age or life stage) should be most successful in that role, in that type of organisation. The military, for example, is systemically structured such that the idea of generation is used organisationally and/or structurally as a container for anxiety, which seems to help people manage unease, because of the control that that structure offers. Especially when assessment is pertinent, people look at the next rank up and where they are in order, is how generation gets into role and layers of hierarchy, much the same as it does with life stages and perceptions of the various generations.

<p>Interestingly, other structured organisations such as professional services, where again the level of PQE (post, qualification, education) one has (which is directly associated to age or generation), is used as a tool to structure positionality and rank.</p>	<p>Lara “So, your PQE is what sort of establishes your place in the firm. So, as you know, you’re a first-year trainee, a second-year trainee, a newly qualified or one-year PQE, a two-year PQE, so you know exactly where you are in the ... in the strata of the firm.”</p>
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It is difficult to say that this only plays out in certain industries as my research was not exhaustive across all industries, but rather three very well established, traditional industries. With this in mind, my phantasy as to why this plays out in these traditional industries is to preserve tradition, to not upset what has gone before, but elevating what is yet to come. This felt to me as an organisational level splitting of what was

good and bad between the different organisational generations, a parallel process of sorts, another example of the fear of loss, identity and change, but at a collective level, an organisational level. Once again, it is noted as a limitation of this research that may yield a foundation for future research of a psychodynamic nature within the topic of generational differences.

4.9.7 Summary

In summary, the different life stages and subsequent influences that are associated with each life stage, both experiential and chronological, have the capacity to influence the perception of generation in the mind. Not only in the first instance, but as new experiences become available to individuals as they progress through the ages and therefore life stage.

4.10 Summary of findings

In summary, these findings are the basis of the discussion chapter that is to follow, the data that participants have shared through their narratives, and their told stories, has been deeply and systematically analysed such that the theory below could be constructed from their data. Overall, these findings suggest that there is something in how individuals perceive generation in the mind from the outset of not only their lives (formative years), but equally as they enter into work life. These findings suggest that how internal perceptions of one's own and other generations are built up in the mind, can and do influence one's thoughts and behaviours. In addition, there seems to be evidence to suggest that generation can and does act as a container for unwanted thoughts and feelings, particularly those that are unconsciously repressed in relation to generational difference, as a defence against anxieties. From these findings it

seems that this is significant within the workplace, and particularly for those who were on an upward leadership trajectory, as such potentially facing more of these dynamics. These findings also suggest that, given the aforementioned dynamics, the perception of generation in one's mind has the potential to affect organisational processes and relationships. How this unfolds, is discussed in the following chapter.

Appendix F Coding and cross-case analysis

Table 4 – Coding

Clusters /codes	Code Name for in-case analysis	Themes
1. Lateral and vertical competition	Comp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition at peer/parallel levels • Competition within different and same age brackets • Competition in vertical roles where age is a defining factor • Lateral relations • Links to family dynamics i.e sibling rivalry
2. External factors	ExFactors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interaction, and the interrelatedness, of social and technical aspects of different generations and society's complex infrastructures and substructures • Social, political, organisational, economic and or technological changes had shaped both their view of their identified generation as well as how they perceived either the generation before or after theirs. • Culture changes, movements in the world and how influences from different times impacted their positionality with regards to generation and age. • Social structures and boundaries therein (Structure of generation in institutions) • Societal projection/social constructs/paradigm shifts (include technology – socio technical aspects changing policy practices, environmental practices) younger generation having an easier time • Causality dilemma – does society influence generations or do generations influence society
3. Family dynamics	FamDyn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority and power (relationship to it and possession of it) • Family order/family dynamics siblings and parents (super imposing of family dynamics onto perceived generational differences – bring family generation into workplace generation) • Lateral relations • Oedipal complex • Generations more than one standard deviation (i.e. grandparents) are impossible to connect with (connection and disconnection) •
4. Identity	ID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intersectionality of age and another part of ones identity • Experience is a precursor – ones life experience and their experience of generations (relationship to it and possession of it)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relativity (age and relativity to context the person is in) • Preconceptions and boxing /stereotyping and how people respond to that • Reflexivity as a precursor to self and identify and therefore placement/realisation • Group cohort – sameness/difference • Cultural differences • Membership in social and generational identity
5. Competence and Creditability	CompCred	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-belief • Self-perception • Positionality of ones age in relation to role status • Self-efficacy/perceived credibility and proof thereof/ability demonstrated competence • Trust • Earn your stripes/prove you are worth the agency given in role and authority • Experience and how good one is at their jobs and demonstrated performance • Maturity and ability to reflect • Judgement and being judged – and living up to expectation of generational norms and assumptions • Responsibility and acting responsibly as a component of more maturity and thus an older type of person • Ability to influence despite age – manage up and down • Imposter syndrome • Outward impact of inward perception
6. Physicality of aging	PHofA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical performance • The physical look of age/aging – how young or how old one might look and the associated assumptions • Declining ability of physical performance in relation to aging
7. Suppression of generational narratives	Supp/Denial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declaration that age is not a factor • Avoidance of generation/suppression of the generational narratives • Declaration of other factors being more prominent than age
8. Intergenerational connectedness and separateness	ConSep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus of the other generation • Training -learning from others and becoming more qualified • Approval seeking of older generations and a nurturing of younger (role modelling) • Shared experience and what impact that has on generational assumptions and perceptions

9. Life stages and Losses	LS&Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survival Anxiety • Curtain of age – once you go through you can never come back (worry or concern often dressed up in criticisms – anxiety about future) • Losses associated to each stage of life and what perspective the mourning brings
Nature of different industries/organisational impacts		<p>This is not a theme in isolation but rather impacts all of the above findings as a small section in each finding – the organisation/system impacts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional versus new age organisations • Industry norms that impact generational norms

Table 5 – Cross case analysis

Code	Definition	P1 Callum	P2 Lara	P3 Eddy	P4 Cole	P5 Bernie	P6 Jerry	P7 Kevin
Lateral and Vertical Competition	Lateral competition - between people of same ages. Vertical competition between people of different ages. Firstly from a younger vantage point (downwards) and secondly an older vantage point (upwards) within same or different roles	I remember thinking I was younger but, but still sort of same thing. I didn't really feel any sort of age discrepancy until I started getting more towards more of a leadership role . Then maybe the more senior guys who you're sort of in parallel with would start to question why you're at that age, a lot younger to them, and then, why you're a lot younger, but in a sort of a position of authority starting	So somebody who isn't a partner might feel a bit threatened by a junior lawyer. And sometimes that leads to people not sharing work, not giving if there's somebody good coming up behind them, they may not give them work because they don't want them to shine. So there's a bit of that, but that's more about how you appear to people above you	I had quite a, a Sergeant major who didn't really like anything to do with SF, so he was sort of wouldn't let me go on any courses or sort of train for anything.	I think there are some tensions sometimes there when you're all competing, but also friends. So the motto at Accenture was the typical consulting style of work hard, play hard, and our slogan at the time was "high performance delivered" as well. So they branded everyone there. And I	I naturally, I guess, wanted to learn off who I considered the most professional or the fittest the strongest the best. That's who I always wanted to learn off....I'm super competitive and therefore, it's, you always want to be better than the person you're looking at I guess.	I should be more aware of the fact that the younger generation, how they view the older generation, like the term dinosaur gets brought out now and again in this organisation and whenever I hear the term I think ah its related to those guys that have been in this unit for 20 years and now I am thinking Fuck, I am that dude now. And	And I suppose the perhaps the way I came across to that that person was made made them immediately defensive like I was coming for their job, something like that. It was more people like me, or who had been me. It wasn't like there was this sort of dictatorship within the camp....same

		<p>started getting to that point. They didn't ever say anything, but you could definitely feel that certain people thinking "Why is he doing that job is too, too young" maybe even though the obviously didn't maybe truly feel like that way . I think it was more for maybe a natural instinct versus like, their actual thoughts of why , why is he doing that job? A lot of them didn't actually thought that. I think it was just more of a...an emotional response.</p> <p>it's not like an organisational thing or a cultural thing . I think it's more like individual people. Like certain people seem like they may be hostile towards some young people coming through maybe because I don't know what it is. Whether they</p>	<p>Below partner level, you know, it could get quite competitive with people you know, wanting to show themselves their best face to the partners. And wanting, not wanting to be eclipsed by anybody else.</p> <p>And I had to, to learn to manage upwards and downwards . And that was difficult. I there was absolutely no training around that.</p> <p>I'd forgotten about that, that was a more interesting and slightly awkward leadership experience because the woman who was in charge of learning and development who'd been quite happy reported to this very senior</p>		<p>think it's still very true insecure overachievers, which was definitely the culture and how I still feel.</p> <p>So I think there was much more competition when you can when you're working in groups at the same age. You know, you're all kind of equally ambitious and equally hungry to do well. So that's perhaps something I would also say is that when you're working in teams of the same, the same age, you can assume for the most part, you have very similar life ambitions and you're at similar life</p>	<p>(In the military) ...it paid to be a winner in training. It paid to be quicker than everyone else it paid to be fitter than everyone else because a it meant you probably didn't have to do it again. You'd be you know, so if you fucked up, it pays to be a winner first one back doesn't have to go again So there was 100% a, I guess a onus on being competitive.</p> <p>But and I think some people do hold age as a thing. Without a shadow of doubt when it's, it's wrong.</p> <p>(Leadership)... For me, it</p>	<p>an on reflection now that I don't doubt it that there are people who view me as like the dinosaur, whether that is in terms of my age, or whether that is in terms of of the way I problem solve or tackle issues in the unit.</p>	<p>experiences of people the same age.</p> <p>So but as I think about leader figures throughout my career, the role so the role that I left before, everyone was kind of probably 10 years older than me, so not a massive age difference. You know, I've considered a lot of them my friends, you know, we went out for drinks we went to a lot of events together. And I think that's probably why I held that job down other than performance, but I think that's probably why I had that job down like that I worked with an awful lot or that I spent most of my time with from a</p>
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		<p>actually mean to do it or not. It's probably a different thing. But the definitely like the and you probably do stand out a bit . Because you just different to the rest maybe</p> <p>And then a sort of fell out sort of, not from everybody, only from my couple of people.</p> <p>I went to Afghanistan the first time and then felt like as soon as I sort of broke through that line , I was fine and I felt comfortable in my environment at that level and then went to another unit did another tour I still felt like people are looking, looking down on us because, like I was a lot younger, but I sort of felt like very experienced made up for it . I remember thinking I was younger but,</p>	<p>partner found it much more difficult to report to me because she regarded herself and I think she was clever and more experienced than me.</p> <p>the most successful female partners were all quite senior by that stage. And they were quite brutal. They had no, no sympathy for people who were finding it difficult their attitude was absolutely if you can't stand the heat get out the kitchen. They just were not at all. They were perfectly nice to talk to, but they were... and they didn't, they didn't crush women in the sense of you know, the sort of pulling up the ladder after them. They just</p>		<p>stages which is bonding but also very easy for comparison.</p> <p>And I think, you know, moving on to gender slightly but it was you know, it was frustrating because I think I look younger than I am. And so be like, you're talking to this 20 year old guy rather than me So that was an interesting thing that I've kind of always struggled with. Even today, just before this, I was on a call with someone who I mean he is probably in his late 50s And we are now at the same level. But he was making</p>	<p>doesn't need to come from also it doesn't need to come from someone who is I guess your subordinate to or peer, it can come from one of your subordinates I guess advice comes from anyone and any at any time. And you've got to be willing to accept that advice.</p> <p>And I guess peer pressure peer pressure is massive on PTSD, right is the fact that you've let someone down or people are judging you when actually people don't give a fuck what you've done and they just want to</p>		<p>management perspective.</p>
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		<p>but still sort of same thing. I didn't really feel any sort of age discrepancy until I started getting more towards more of a leadership role.</p> <p>So I was really I suppose junior compared to those guys went through training I definitely felt that I was junior and people, other people who the instructors definitely sort of imposed on it onto us that I was like a lot younger.</p> <p>the military in general is when you feel like you're sort of behind and then I sort of the Eye of Mordor comes on to you . And it feels like you're just constantly under scrutiny. And that's how it sort of is it's a it's a lot of self-imposed pressure but lot of its actually people that are</p>	<p>expected women to go through the same difficult circumstances as they had had to</p>		<p>comments like oh, oh wow, such big pieces of work for such a young lady.</p> <p>but I think that's where I've always struggled, you know, at any level, especially when I was more junior in consulting and you'd have to chase very senior people for things and I remember one of my managers once said, Stop feeling like you have to apologise or things for chasing people like this is your job. Your job is to chase them. So you are just doing your job by hounding other people .</p>	<p>use it for a bit of banter and then they've got their own lives to worry about but people never think like that.</p> <p>People will only expose to you what they want to expose</p>		
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		<p>looking at you with more scrutiny.</p> <p>if you're the youngest guy is like, you can always learn from from your you always feel like you can learn something from the older guys. Not to say can't learn things from the younger guys. But yeah, you definitely as a younger guy. You can like sort of grab onto and older guys do a lot more more life experience.</p> <p>I felt like I was having to sort of maybe work a little bit harder just to ensure that those well those guys saw felt like I was still trying to learn in life, as well as trying to get in line with those guys , and then I went to Afghanistan the first time and then felt like as soon as I sort of broke</p>			<p>Those group events. Those experiences were really important and formative for me, I think, in a way it was the start of my leadership journey in terms of here, kind of peer leadership and working together.</p> <p>I think in terms of leadership, like I said, we had the peer leadership but then as I got slightly more senior at Accenture, it was leading the team but you kind of you'd all been trained together and come up together at the same speed or people that were joining the company had the same</p>			
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		<p>through that line I was fine and I felt comfortable in my environment at that level.</p> <p>Maybe someone younger being in a position of authority, but when I was like as a sergeant, like a colour sergeant the guys who I was actually leading like I never got that that feeling it was more like people in separate sort of chains of authority, so parallel chains versus like the guys who was actually working with</p> <p>So in my cohort, there was never any issues it was parallel cohorts I'd say is the only issue is when they don't really work with you then they sort of see you as a threat.</p> <p>It's more of an invisible barrier. But it's there and then that they change.</p>			<p>experiences as you in the same onboarding. So actually, when you were leading those teams there was already a kind of unified understanding of expectations, ways of working, quality, culture.</p> <p>(Leading peer/senior people)... which was very uncomfortable because I think that was I don't even know what the term is. It was kind of peer leadership. They weren't technically my peers, but I'm pretty sure they saw themselves as more</p>			
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		<p>Like they're fine with you. When when you're not in that position. As soon as you get that position alongside them, its more our peers, versus subordinates, if you're subordinate to them, that's fine. If you're subordinates to any of them is fine. It's when you come along peers, like peer level, and they'll be looking, like actual looking at you bit sideways.</p> <p>so I was at the second unit following that first Afghan stop and then felt like they had gained a lot of experience in comparison to others there, I felt like I had done enough of what I needed to do and a good level. So I felt like I could move. Move on and like go go for sort of high jobs, I</p>			<p>experienced and I did too. That was a kind of interesting dynamic to work through.</p> <p>there can be a bit of a blurred line sometimes between friendship and bonding over similar life experiences and stages and ambitions but then also needing that line in terms of there is still kind of you are still someone's manager makes it slightly difficult to deliver harder messages at times.</p> <p>I didn't I didn't necessarily feel like I earned the right to manage a team of more</p>			
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		<p>Like if you join the military late, it takes you longer to get to that rank and can be a lot older. If you join the military early it takes you less time to get to that rank when you can be clearly a lot a lot younger than that guy who maybe you only joined the military when you're hitting that rank. So yeah. It was it was definitely just individuals, again, who were in separate cohorts. So who probably looked at your cohort and especially you if you're younger, as competition</p>			<p>senior people in a way or I perceived them to be more senior and I think that's where I've tried to this year, kind of refocus. And think, actually, age doesn't equal seniority or drive or anything. But it just felt uncomfortable at the time, especially because the culture of the organisation was a bit sleepier than it is now</p>			
External Factors	<p>Factors such as technology, economics, politics, demographics, social, and cultural factors present during participants lives. The relationship</p>		<p>It was something I was really interested in. So in a way my perspective was more about the position of women in the law than about age. But when I was about two or three</p>	<p>It was the early days of Afghan so we did the ridiculous thing. Yeah, like four or five off the bat, just because there was rotations and stuff.</p>	<p>I think culture has changed now as well. But at the time, it was almost a badge of honour for how exhausted you could be how much work to</p>	<p>I guess at the time (10-15 years ago), people sort of kind of knew about it or, you know, understood, but it wasn't a thing it wasn't seemed to be</p>	<p>The links between Russia and Ethiopia were really strong. back then. They still kind of are now. Got French German Russian</p>	<p>...because nobody HAS to have an education now days to be successful in anything in my opinion. I suppose the the work life</p>

	<p>between generational differences and these external factors from differing periods that influenced participants lives, and thus worldview.</p>		<p>years, a partner, I got quite involved in the whole gender balance and so on.</p> <p>The other context, I guess, is that it was a very, very male environment. When I was made a partner in 1991, that's a long time ago well, when I was made a partner, I guess, of the I think I was partner number 210 of those 210 partners, probably 15 were women. And the rest were all men. And actually, I mean one of the depressing things that's that's not changed dramatically.</p> <p>the male female dichotomy. I was far more conscious of that than I was of seniority. And that was something I was much more</p>	<p>So I was the only sort of proper, proper, well, there's only two or three proper scrappers. The rest are sort of techie people. So I took it quite hard. And then probably in today's era, probably should have got like counselling on it and stuff like that. We have the duty "are you ok about stuff" and you know, being Macho, we were like yep, no dramas, crack on. Looking back it was as I am now completely outside looking back on that probably quite bad or worse than I thought yeah, probably should have got a lot more help than I did.</p>	<p>produce and how much you could go out and party together.</p> <p>So what I hadn't really anticipated with then moving suddenly, you've got a very diverse workforce, five generations in the workforce currently I think and there's no... everybody wants different things and everybody has different expectations, different priorities, different values. one of the challenges is that we have five generations in the workforce, and actually they're very different</p>	<p>taken seriously at all. Even though.. did we have a psych nurse on campus by then... possibly, but no one really, you know you get mental health issues you just just why would you know, just get to sleep and it'd be fine.</p> <p>Prior to that (a career) it is all school base, so your peer related anyway. And there's a hierarchy I guess within your school, which naturally follows so from my perspective... joined when I was 20, and then you join with a quite an eclectic mix of</p>	<p>background on on one side and then English and Irish on the other so I travelled extensively during my younger years lived in Hong Kong and Moscow, and then travelled to see family quite extensively.</p> <p>There's also, I realised quite young that there were Jewish people at my school and there were Palestinian people at my school. And I think that's the first time and yet they would still get on and still talk to each other. And in the background, was probably aware of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. But I suppose that I realised that you</p>	<p>balance, I wouldn't call it a movement but how work life balance is now perceived in this, in the current as we are now. It's deemed as a negative thing to have to work from 7am in the morning until 8pm At night every day, but that's what I was doing.</p> <p>Now there's always there's always another boss there's always someone else that they can go more for or there's always another company that will take them with open arms.</p> <p>On our last, the role I was working for the older bloke like, that way I felt about that was</p>
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			<p>focused on. Really, I think that's why I'm only thinking about these other things with hindsight because to me the male female dynamic was infinitely more significant, which probably says something about seniority thing.</p> <p>I guess you will probably... your generation will be horrified to learn that I was still working from home two days a week. And the way that partners were then paid was that it was by profit share and we all got depending on our seniority as partners, we got a certain number of profit points. So you know, you would get however many 1000 pounds per point. And junior partners started</p>	<p>It was just the way of the world I mean, it's, it's what is our work stuff, which like is the direction that they're going in at work, and it's almost like it's quite techy, and it's it's standoffish. But ultimately, but this is something you know, the bigger picture thing, but ultimately, you can have as much technology, in my eyes, you can have as much technology as you want but at some point, you're still going to have to have someone pull that trigger. Because that's your whole job. You can spy on people from space and all that sort of stuff but if you want someone to do</p>	<p>expectations so people who are more senior In Alsek obviously, they're kind of they've been there for 20 years. They've grown their career. They want to just get more and more senior and I think people coming in now have very different expectations for a career they expect to have what four or five different ones across different companies, loyalty, just I wouldn't say they're not loyal, but I think the loyalty means different things. Now, when you're younger, I think it's slightly strange to think I'll be</p>	<p>people from 16 year olds to 30 year olds, as a peer group.</p> <p>I just think that it doesn't matter what age you have your experience, you can still add value is probably the biggest line without a doubt and just because you've got age on your side, it doesn't necessarily mean you're gonna make the right decision. And just because you're younger side it doesn't mean your decisions are not gonna be right but yet, you know, as a society, we've probably come to look at age as a thing, and therefore</p>	<p>can engage with people at school, whilst in the background, you've got some really deep-seated divisions between peoples and cultures.</p> <p>So where I became the RSM of this unit at age 45 I know for example the RSM of the commando unit during second world war on D Day, the RSM was 25 year old.</p>	<p>just like, you know, this is this is stupid won't do this. Why? Can't We? Why can't we try something different? You know, why? Why are we doing this way when we could do it this way? We're not making as much money here because of your sort of inability to grasp technology was it was that sort of like? I just I just argued with everything and I must have been incredibly difficult to work with.</p> <p>And even talking to my son, you know about what he was doing when he grows up you know, most kids are saying want to be a YouTuber.</p>
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			<p>on 20 points. And I started on 16. And the reason I started on 16 was not because I wasn't doing client facing work. It was because I was working from home two days a week. And I was told that if I when I went back to the office full time, I would get my four points back and I never did so I never did. But you know, because because of the way it was for women in those days , I just said Oh, thank you. That's lovely. I never said Oh, my God, what do you mean? I just said, that's fine. Thank you.</p> <p>I find this age thing really interesting because to me, it was it was kind of irrelevant, because and I wonder whether</p>	<p>something to someone else, you just got to be there physically. So yeah, it's gonna go full circle, but then it we just need another conflict and then it could go, it could happen again.</p> <p>I was quite young, I was only 18 met, you know, a load of different people catching up with sort of older people as well as people my own age . So that was quite good to sort of, I thought sort of, you know, converse with because I was sort of used to school, people my own age group and then suddenly getting into the wide world. So I think travelling helped.</p>	<p>in this company from day one until I retire. It's just not the attitude anymore and the way the way people digest information, want to digest information and kind of want to think about their careers is so different as well.</p> <p>they certainly don't do anything based on age. It is meritocracy, which I really enjoy. And some of the work I'm doing is actually removing all of the age bias from any of our job descriptions and all of our kind of profiles. We're taking out</p>	<p>people will be oohh they're too young</p>	<p>I'm not, I'm not a fan of governance at all. I hate banks, you know, the majority of my assets and wealth and cryptocurrency now.</p> <p>I had a role within a family, then I had a role within education, and I had a role within a company and a role within my own business. And now I have a role I feel within life to go and do bigger things</p>
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			<p>that I mean, I became a partner doing something completely new they've never appointed well, they never appointment. It's astonishing isn't it? This was in 1991. They had never appointed a woman who already had a child to be a partner. I was the first woman to be appointed who had a child. That sounds unbelievable now, but that was the case. And I was certainly the first partner to work from home. They wouldn't let me go part time eventually the reason I I resigned as a partner was because I wanted to work part time, and they wouldn't let me do that. They will now but they wouldn't then...</p>	<p>So much to take on, you know, so much more experienced than me. But on the whole, I think, you know, that sort of generation or I was in back then he says, you know, early 2000s. It was a sort of a harder, I think, a steeper learning curve and a harder way to learn. It was always a sink or swim. There was no sort of, you know, cotton wool stuff or, you know, cuddling you if you didn't get it, you know, you're going to either get shot or you're just going to get beasted. So you have to learn, you have to learn the information quickly. You</p>	<p>years of experience needed and all that kind of stuff to kind of tackle that discrimination.</p> <p>I think the world is kind of changing now moving away from a Have you done it before to can you learn, do you have capacity, but change and a willingness to learn</p>			
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			<p>I loved my law firm management. I loved thinking about the strategy and where the firm was going and how what my team was doing But I also needed to be at home or to see my children and that was, that was the, you know, the eternal dilemma for the working woman. And I don't know that it's got any easier for your generation, frankly</p>	<p>have to apply yourself, I think a lot a lot better. And that's where I sort of, I got my baseline sort of training from there. My experience from there.</p>				
Family Dynamics	<p>The established patterns of interacting (and repetition of repressed experiences) with each other in a family setting that have the capacity to be reformulated and further acted out – specifically triggered by generational differences or from an age-</p>	<p>When you get to a sergeant level. When you get to that level, you sort of got like a lot more people who worked underneath you. And then the people next to you can be sort of, um, the standard deviation for the age can be a lot greater . So it could be someone who's quite young, which was myself, or someone's quite</p>	<p>because obviously when I was a very junior lawyer, the age of the partner did have an impact on me, you know, when they were older than my father or at least my father's age, I, you know, that there was a rule that we call everybody by their Christian names and it took me a long time to</p>	<p>My sister has mega academic brothers, practical builds houses, that sort of stuff. So I think I was a sort of last child and I needed to sort of prove myself. So that's why I went to the military.</p> <p>So you have so many experiences together. And</p>	<p>They hire straight out of university and train people up. So actually, even the leadership teams that you interact with, are still probably, you know, they're still very young, they're still in the 30s and 40s. And actually, the only people at</p>	<p>Almost like a fatherly figure which put you through induction itself... I learned a lot of not how to do things from him.</p> <p>Very quickly, I realised he was a complete knob but he was a sergeant which you had</p>	<p>(Life as the child of a diplomat...) I suppose at a young age you starting to identify or learn, learn to read people from different cultures and different backgrounds.</p> <p>I probably always found the hierarchical system in the army as something that</p>	<p>(Tumultuous relationship with father)... I think everything does kind of stem back to having to be a leader very early on in family dynamics and family situations.</p> <p>My sister's (younger) one of my employees, and she tells me what to do all the time. So the</p>

	<p>related perspective.</p>	<p>really like old or a lot older, not old but a lot older. So the gap, the discrepancy between the ages of that individual can be quite large because of sort of careers.</p> <p>So I was really suppose junior compared to those guys went through training I definitely felt that I was junior and people, other people who the instructors definitely sort of imposed on it onto us that I was like a lot younger.</p> <p>Being in a position of authority, but when I was like as a sergeant, like a colour sergeant the guys who I was actually leading like I never got that that feeling it was more like people in separate sort of chains of authority, so parallel chains versus like the guys</p>	<p>call the senior partner by his Christian name because it just seems so weird.</p> <p>You know, I was always so terrified some senior lawyer would tell me they wanted to me research something and I wouldn't have understood, but I wouldn't dare to ask. And, you know, making clear to junior lawyers that make sure you've understood what you're being asked to do. Don't leave the room thinking Oh God, I don't know what I'm doing. Make sure you do know what you're doing.</p> <p>So I learned about leadership I guess by watching people and by I was lucky in the one of the partners I worked for who</p>	<p>yeah, you you experience bad thing but then you also experience good times, you know holidays and trips, work trips and activities. So you know you easily spend you know the vast majority of your your life with these lads so is like a family.</p> <p>You know, 35 to 38 year olds, teaching me and then I sort of just threw myself into it. I wasn't the fittest. I took all this sort of instruction well, you know, I understand it's the military. You know, some people don't, don't get it, you get shouted at, but I was just it was like water off a duck's back.</p>	<p>Accenture who are older are so senior at that point that you don't actually interact with them at all. I didn't really realise they existed if I'm very honest, until I started doing an internal project where I realised all the people I thought, who were very senior, that kind of managing director level are actually really just middle management.</p> <p>my new boss is probably about four or five years older than me, and she's just fab and I quite enjoy working with her because she it</p>	<p>to appease because he had the power over the entire training team and those training team could make your life utter misery.</p> <p>The further you go up in rank and position of authority, therefore the requirements on you change, and therefore you have to adapt.</p> <p>Trying to have a mentor who is too far removed from you is quite hard because you're never, they'd never fully open up and you'd never be able to have the interaction certainly within the military that you could</p>	<p>really difficult to navigate through in that and it really hard to engage with people above a certain rank because they're so distant from you in terms of your lived experience in terms of the job, so I found that really difficult.</p> <p>I was the literally the lowest of the low and the only hierarchy that you would engage with would be corporals, sergeants, and maybe your platoon commander. Anyone above that your interactions tended to be questions around whether you know, is the mail getting through, how your boots fitting.... really</p>	<p>family dynamic is quite interesting. But occasionally, I need just someone reminding me that there's a professional way to do things not a matey one.</p> <p>Now that I think about it from an age perspective because I really resent people my dad's age.</p> <p>That a lot of that stemmed from childhood and not the dad around and been very impoverished and that sort of stuff.</p> <p>It like I was felt like I had big brothers and sisters that I kind of had to like pander to a little bit in social situations rather than having</p>
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		<p>who was actually working with</p>	<p>was inevitably a man... he wasn't particularly great at leadership, but because he was so charismatic, particularly junior lawyers who worked for him, we would all have jumped off the top of the high building if he told us to . And so we did whatever he wanted us to do because we all wanted his approval. in fact, if any partner told me I'd done a good job, I was so pleased that I went off and work three times harder for the next one</p>	<p>SF was it was just a grown-up experience. So, but I think that's yeah, it was just like that. No, one checks up on you. You just expected to do.</p>	<p>feels like you know what a really good role model because she is more experienced and slightly more senior but not so far away and ahead in her career that I cant kind of work out how to get there and follow her example and then so quite like working, and I think this has been a pattern in terms of age for me a lot of my mentors and now actually friends are there's a little different age gap but actually kind of a relatable age gap.</p> <p>I find it almost easier as well to sometimes relate to</p>	<p>have with someone which was a closer rank.</p> <p>The one which was instructing me to become the person that I am today...he was very influential in my early career in the sense that I thought he was the best thing since sliced bread before his super professional, I thought he was the epitome of a royal marine soldier. And yet when I came to work with him two, three years as a royal marine within a fighting unit, I realised that it was complete bluffer And it was all in a</p>	<p>formulaic? And really, those interactions wouldn't occur very often.</p>	<p>people who were dictating what I would do day to da it was such a camaraderie type environment.</p> <p>I've always had a problem with people of power or people in power, I should probably say. I first noticed I had a problem with power schools, I think when most children tend to relate being told often... It probably starts with a type of childhood I had, I think, being brought up in a single parent home, having a very poor and intermittent relationship with my father. He always came across as a very powerful figure, or tried to materialise</p>
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				<p>people that are similar age to my parents. So my dad is curmudgeonly and stubborn and I have found at work, we've had some really difficult stakeholders who are kind of the same age and really grumpy old man and I'm always like, I've got this guys. I have grown up with this man and I know how to influence so it's quite funny.</p> <p>It feels familiar when you find someone that I guess is the same generationally as your parents or even your siblings. So like Michelle is the same age</p>	<p>training environment, which probably was one of the most disheartening things I've ever I felt because you aspire to be like someone they are your, I guess your one motivating factor. And you realise very quickly that actually they're not what they say they are.</p> <p>(its about)... being able to look after the people which they which which are the subordinates ... My point being is that you have to think of the individual from a holistic point of view. And that's not just about leading them that's</p>	<p>himself as one. So the only time I ever really saw him growing up was when he was telling me off for something. . I think everything does kind of stem back to having to be a leader very early on in family dynamics and family situations.</p> <p>This led to teachers and authority figures telling me off a lot more than most, which kind of, I suppose compounded in this sort of cyclical, sort of perpetual cycle I should probably say a being told off a lot and and resenting it so I guess I guess deep rooted in me was this kind of like this. This really this distasteful</p>
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					<p>as my sister and she's quite similar to my sister as well. So I don't know I think perhaps it's just it feels familiar. You know, when you is probably a bit of age, but also a bit of character, these difficult people, similar to my dad in that way.</p>	<p>about managing them. Looking after them, nurturing them so that they can that they they can survive a 22 year career right?</p>	<p>nature that I had towards authority figures and I've just carried that through pretty much my entire life.</p> <p>You know, I was always sort of super passionate about about driving forward in my career, but I would always encounter someone who would try and just rain it in a little bit.</p> <p>When I was growing up, wasn't wasn't fun, didn't, didn't have a good time didn't have any authority figures that were around unless there was something bad to talk about. So the one thing I always said and and live to as</p>
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							<p>long as long as I do everything opposite to what my dad does then I'll be alright.</p> <p>I've got now you know, there's 13 employees 12 of them are younger than me. And, you know, I'm 33 and one of them is older. But he's he's a he's like a fantastic, fantastic dad, you know, maybe in another life. So I like having him around like as guidance and counsel like he's my he's my chief ops guy and talk about a lot of my decisions and a lot of my thought processes with him.</p> <p>One of my true true passions is just mentoring younger generation</p>
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								<p>people like I absolutely love it.</p> <p>I think if someone just put their arm around me one day and when you could be really good if you just sorted this out and that out and I think was eventually I learned that for myself. It were I think I probably would have got here a lot quicker. If there was just someone guiding me down a different path than the one I took particularly in my teenage years.</p> <p>When you make a big life decision, to have someone say it's the right one, like is nice.... And that's all I</p>
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								<p>needed. I just needed someone to say you're doing the right things. Go and do this. You'll have a great time. Go and learn go and live. And it was just quite Yeah, it was a it was really impactful, really, and what I needed to hear at that time.</p> <p>So from an age perspective, you know, revelation that people of an older generation kind of, I associate them I guess with with personal experiences rather than So I so I associate the older generation with just just a part of my life that I'm not really that happy with.</p>
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								know, spend loads of time with their kids and you should always look up to your dad and when he tells you you've done a good job, it's sort of like that alpha male scenario where, you know, the young one goes.
Identity	The sense of who we are as individuals and where generation or generational differences are located in one's sense of self and thus one's perception of self and others. Also membership and taking up membership.	So in my cohort, there was never any issues it was parallel cohorts I'd say is the only issue is when they don't really work with you then they sort of see you as a threat. I don't think anyone else looked at me in a different light I think it was how I sort of looked at myself. So I looked I think it was more of like a self-perspective kind of thing. That was like right now I've got a bit of operational experience, I am	So your PQE is what sort of establishes your place in the firm. So as you know, you're a first year trainee, a second year trainee, a newly qualified or one year PQE a two year PQE so you know exactly where you are in the in the strata of the firm if you like and so in a funny way. It's a little bit like being in school. You know, there are people who are two or three years senior to you and people	So I was one of four for corporals, teaching these recruits a lot of responsibility. That was probably the first time I could sort of see a change in younger people. Not only of how we had to treat them, but also how they sort of reacted. They're almost sort of quite a PlayStation generation. A lot of them haven't lived in camping was like a	Something I am experiencing at my current role which is just very different because you have so many different generations in the workforce and actually, people got different priorities. I think when I was when I was at Accenture and starting off, I didn't really didn't really understand as	I found going to Special Forces regardless is you get you get some incredible leaders I guess which you will follow for through thick through hell and high water but but you don't get good managers and I think my view changed and that that was probably a moment for me as I progressed in	because I was when I joined the Marines I was old, I was already 25. I didn't hang around for long in in the Marines and went for selection quite early in my military career. But in relative terms a little bit older than most, than some, I should say. So I came to this organisation, aged 29. So as I hit 40 was when I left	Every single time I met a person that I didn't agree with how they were managing me. And it's only I suppose very recently since I've started my own business where I've got well actually, the problem was you like the way you approach things. And, you know, I now realise in the position that I am that, that it was my issue with power figures and

		<p>happy that I like did what I needed to do on the operation. So a lot more confidence about myself</p>	<p>who are junior to you.</p>	<p>novelty for them. They'd never made their own beds. And being a corporal, you know we have to show them everything. It was an eye opener for me to see how sort of how shielded some people were, and, and not really realising what they've joined. You know, some people must surely know that they've got to do certain things in the military and it was just it was a shock initially just how these people were so clueless and not, you know, no realising what they got to join.</p> <p>The instructors a lot older, you know, someone had done the Falklands. So a lot of experience</p>	<p>well some of the people who have kind of more senior and at a different stage in life because they had different priorities and to me at the time, was thinking all I want to do is excel in my career and work hard and I don't understand why people don't care about these programmes and these milestones and thinking I never want to be like I always want to really care I'm obviously now a bit older and starting to also reassess my priorities.</p> <p>And that comes I think</p>	<p>my career is those people which you admired. You looked up to because they were leading you in battle and they were leading you in operations and you build up this piece but then you take as I've grown up, I guess, within the service and in my own career is you realise that it's not just about leading. It's about it... leading to a degree.. I use leading in terms of being very driven, you know, taking you into war, I guess. But the other piece is about is how you managed, how they bring you on and develop you and I think, for</p>	<p>the sabre squadrons to do to do a training job. And I think that's probably the time that I've first realised I'd hit 40 and I looked back at the squadron I just left with a lot of really young people in it. And since I've hit 40 and done a couple of other jobs going back to other sabre squadrons. I do realise now that I'm actually, in relative terms really, really old compared to the majority of the workforce.</p> <p>The reality being is whether you're young or whether you've just joined the organisation regardless or not you can still be seen as young. Either respect whether it be just badged</p>	<p>authority and people were in higher positions than me that caused me to feel that way towards towards having a nine to five job.</p> <p>So that sort of self awareness and reflection that allowed me to just think way more about the achieving the outcomes that I want.</p> <p>but one thing that did happen there was quite life altering at that stage was I realised that life was bigger than me.</p> <p>I'm still embarrassed to say that I'm a CEO and insurance company and it's not through like, maybe it is maybe it's a bit of imposter</p>
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				<p>on the people that sort of trained me up, you know, like 35 to 40. You know, 35 to 38 year olds, teaching me and then I sort of just threw myself into it.</p> <p>I'd known over the years and and sort of imparted my knowledge, man, they it was good to see them with the new lads and then sort of putting the same stuff that I said to them across to the junior people.</p> <p>All the instructors really old they'd all done like the Gulf in the 90s, numerous tours in Northern Ireland back then. And they were just so so experienced. So</p>	<p>there's a bit of a miniature life crisis that we probably all experience, like how to have it all and if you have children, does that fundamentally change your perspective on work? I'm sure it does. And I'm sure once you've done it, your perspective has changed so don't mind but I think standing before doing it and worrying a bit that I won't be the same person afterwards is quite a scary thing.</p> <p>a little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing to have isn't it. So I remember when I was a</p>	<p>me, the epitome of a leader now is someone which has got the balance between working and mature, nurturing an individual and also being able to lead them and you know, and that for me is a massive part of management as well as leadership.</p> <p>School was school. I mean, I was in a school about 1000 people so you had naturally a hierarchy within those of the different personalities, I guess. You know, cool kids, rugby team, football teams, that sort of thing.</p>	<p>or young is that you've always got something to offer.</p>	<p>syndrome, I guess but like I just I feel I feel incredibly embarrassed family gatherings in the worse what you do with yourself now and I'm like "mumbles under breath" I just I can't bring myself to say that I successful and it's for years of not being right</p>
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				<p>you realise everything that were teaching you is stuff that well, it's kept them alive, really</p>	<p>junior I was like, Why won't people listen to me and I remember an MD once going, I need someone who knows about benefits realisation and I was like OMG I know this I have a slide on that I know about it and he was like no, I need someone who's an expert. I know what we supposed to do but do because I didn't know what I didn't know I remember feeling really frustrated as I was more junior thinking I don't understand why people just don't know that I do know this. I've read</p>	<p>But when I reflect it's all peer related.</p> <p>you've got people from 30 years old, who've had two three careers and 16 year olds, which have literally just come out of school.</p> <p>We were, you know, even to the point we had a guy from the training team, teaching us how to wash ourselves in the shower, and he's pulling all parts of his body apart, washing them up and you're like ah man I know how to wash myself. But it was exactly that to take into account everyone from different</p>		
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					<p>something before about it. But the more I learn about things, the more I realise. I don't think this is what I said before, right? The more senior you get the more you kind of realise you've got even more to learn.</p> <p>I think I realised in consulting that nobody knows really what they're talking about but its fine, everyone's kind of making it up... we're all just kind of humans working it out.</p> <p>I just got a promotion in this role recently. To to a level which I feel like again,</p>	<p>backgrounds and different walks of lives and maturity levels to almost, I guess it is to create a baseline amongst each one</p>		
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					<p>just I feel a bit young for but it's been really good.</p> <p>I perceive that sometimes when I speak perhaps people wouldn't take me as seriously. I think that is probably me, but large part just, you know my own insecurities, but I do feel like age played a role in in that and how I how I perceived by like, stage of kind of leadership development, if that makes sense.</p> <p>when I got my offer letter, it was a manager for a career framework. And then when I joined she's</p>			
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					<p>like, Oh, that was wrong. You're actually a senior manager and I though well, that's Sr. I only just been promoted to manager at Accenture. So it was at the time in my perception, it was like a three year away, jump, which then happened immediately. And I was like, Well, this is cool. This is great. But then that combined with the context, suddenly like I don't feel ready for this.</p> <p>I was a newbie manager and then to the jump to senior manager and that was beginning of this year and</p>			
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					<p>then suddenly went to director and you look at everybody else and think you guys are a lot older and more experienced than I am.</p> <p>she had a whole team of people that were also quite a lot older than me and had been in industry and doing what they were doing for a long time. And I think I found it difficult because I realised only after I joined I'd actually been brought in into more senior level and all of them and I felt like quite an imposter because I was like, I don't</p>			
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					<p>know how I got this job anyway. And these people are all much older and more experienced and have more wisdom than I have.</p> <p>I think I'd had a safety net and like I said before, that's the first time that I was still just working in the same way that I was before, but then suddenly, like, no one to catch me for this stuff. And I think that lack of reassurance, probably brought on the imposter syndrome suddenly, because that and it was probably almost because</p>			
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					there's more trust so me and because I became a decision maker			
Competence and Credibility	One's real or perceived level of self-efficacy, self-belief, competence, and credibility that is reflected on in relation to age (which mediates for generation). That which materialised in both the inner-self as perceived by oneself and the outer as perceived by others.	I did really well on that course. At that sort of point I felt like age I started forgetting too much about age and seniority and stuff like that and more on skill and competency. You start doing really well and so start looking at age and stuff completely different I think. I did another tour I still felt like people are looking, looking down on us because, like I was a lot younger, but I sort of felt like very experienced made up for it	Again, I think it's probably only by looking back that I realised that actually it was, it was the standing of the person within the partnership, which was much more around their effectiveness as a lawyer and the kind of work that they did, then around how old they were . So there was a very strange moment of Magical Thinking when somebody became a partner that they suddenly turned into a different person.... But on the whole, your position in the partnership, and the respect that people had for you is to	He'd just done so much, had an awesome reputation. He was good at everything, and a good manner as well. he was just calm and collected. And I was like, Well, yeah, this is this is who I would want to be like. Being the junior person - you get given the biggest gun and all the stuff to carry. We've got a massive amount of information getting fed to you by from the senior person all the way down to the person who's been out three months longer than you	As I move up. In my leadership, a lot of people do say to me you are really credible, which is good. So I think I've always made sure that I know what I'm talking about where I'm at. I'm at least prepared and I've kind of thought through things before meetings because I felt like I always had to have to do that. So that my age and or my perceived age wouldn't impact you know people's perceptions of me.	I think there's a certain amount of I do think the older you get, at least you do build more of a kind of nuanced communication style and you kind of develop your ability to tailor messaging and deliver messages at different points as well. Throughout training, that was the sort of conclusion I absolutely made is that it was all about the individual's experience they had which they were trying to	I was really Junior. I was acting up one rank on that day. And again, I don't think that was predicated on on age that was predicated on I suppose, an assessment of my ability. Again, I think it boils down to ability, shared principles, rather than rather than age as a way to measure interactions. So your ability to perform was was a, is it a measurement of, of effectivity? That was the it was the realisation that age isn't a factor here. It's just on	Which was really, you know, I've grown up a lot and you know, once upon a time, that role suited me down to the tea but after, having a kid and having to have responsibilities. And to do the right thing. It kind of I've just completely lost interest (life shifts – experience). I've always felt like I have tried to prove myself to other people because of the you know, the the upbringing I had and you know, not really being that influential in on anyone's lives

			<p>determine how good you were at your job.</p>	<p>because everyone's got that extra little bit of experience.</p> <p>when I was 19. We went to Sierra Leone, and patrolling through villages and seeing little kids with their arms cut off. I think its sort of, if I wasn't gonna have a problem, then I don't think in my later life I was ever gonna have a problem because that, you know, if that's not traumatic enough. I don't think anything ever will be. So you know, unfortunate things for them, but I think that's what sort of my sounding or what I stemmed from.</p> <p>We had warfighting</p>	<p>(I was told...) Say whatever you want to say with credibility, like, just confidence. People believe you like Yeah</p>	<p>engender onto us.</p> <p>I guess I've never gone Oh, he's older than me. He must know better. He's younger than me. He must know less. I don't think that's the case at all. I think I don't think age has ever been an issue. For me. As I progressed as a leader and people have led around me, I find it more. I admire certain individuals which have come at a very early age. And again, just huge amounts of experience Super young, super talented, and you realised actually age isn't the problem here</p>	<p>being selected on merits rather than rather than experience or age.</p> <p>The amount of trust that they placed or delegated, the amount of trust they placed in subordinates, the amount of work that they delegated to subordinates, those were those were the things that that mattered rather than whether they could run distances or carry weights.</p> <p>...because I had come to those courses relatively old, a lot of the other participants were younger than I was and I wonder whether just by the fact of my background and age, whether</p>	
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				<p>experience from 2003 up to 2016, 17. So with proper rounds coming against you so you know, without that experience, it's just not, its hard to know if people are going to be how they're going to react...</p>		<p>is their experiences and what they can bring to the party So I think going to your point, leadership age, I don't think there's such a case, the only thing the benefit of age, allows you to mature and your views and then allows you to become probably a more refined leader to get the balance between what is management and leadership, I think is probably where I get to is that, you know, have you got someone who's got the aptitude to learn very</p>	<p>people... thought that that maturity was important. I wonder whether it's the combination of deferring to someone who's in Special Forces, as well as as someone who's maybe a little bit older, more mature, whether that's the thing that matters, rather than just the age.... so on that course, people would ask me to carry out tasks to to help them in their leadership roles. And on reflection, maybe they didn't do it because because I was older. Maybe they did it because I came from Special Forces. I don't know really</p>	
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						<p>quickly and then come up with that sort of conclusion earlier on? or does that take development and if that's the case, then perhaps having a bit more age does pay dividends?</p> <p>You can't undermine underestimate, whether the professional experiences within the Royal Marines wherever they've come from Army, whatever, or even their own life experiences to where they've got to and then when they open mouth, it's obvious. I pose a question, Why don't you listen to them?</p>	<p>where that line in the sand is.</p>	
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						<p>Just goes to show that actually age doesn't really... in our world... shouldn't really make a difference. And I think the only times it has ever played out sometimes is suddenly from the SF world is if you are if that maturity doesn't extend to their personal lives For that can actually happen to anyone but generally as a rule, you had more of a nightmare with the younger lads because they were still young, single, living the life with a lot of money that then that played out so for more</p>		
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						<p>responsible jobs. You would be selective who you choose. And if they were very young, you'd have to take into consideration were they in the right place from I guess emotional and personal point of view in order to be given the responsibilities where if they may, they might muck up, then they could have strategic damage to the to the service. But that said there's been just as a fuckup done by young, ah old people as there has been by young people so it's just you probably are</p>		
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						far more conscious in your initial viewpoint over a younger person. you probably would more senior older guy, but that's probably a wrong way to look at it. If that makes sense. It's just because they're young, but the reality of it is it makes no difference, it is about the person and their experiences.		
The physicality of age/ageing	How one's physical appearance is potentially a key indicator of how perception of age (and generation) is formed and thus what assumptions are made, particularly if a	felt like I was always catching up. But it was like I was physically behind mentally behind I think. And it took a while for me to develop whilst trying to maintain on the trajectory so I was probably like lower on the trajectory than most people. Try to		I believe it's still the same calibre of people coming through. But I think physical wise, I think people are injuring themselves more whether, whether or not their bodies aren't used to it. They haven't	I've always found it quite difficult to be... so I am 5 foot and look very young. And I'm quite, I just genuinely enthusiastic, quite bubbly and smiley and I think I've always worked in financial	The older people probably struggle because they're more likely to get injured is a bit harder to get up in the mornings, etc. as the unit has changed,	...there's also an element in in this in this organisation that a lot is judged on performance. So physical attributes, physical prowess is important and again, I'm I'm not sure that age isn't	

	<p>component of the job at hand.</p>	<p>maintain and then having to work harder just to stay at that level and then eventually sort of came in line with the rest of the cohort I think .</p>		<p>had a sort of almost like a harder time in the Marines. Things you know, less walking more vehicle based.</p> <p>I suppose it was just you notice when you're younger, body shape as well. But you know when you're I was 19 I wasn't the wasn't the biggest I was quite skinny.... You have 20 to 23 year old grown man who's like massive and you just like oh my god, how, how can I compete like this</p>	<p>services, which is typically very male dominated. And throughout my kind of career journey working with clients who are typically middle aged white men. I found it quite frustrating and challenging at times to... I don't know what the right word is... not assert my authority but just kind of be recognised for my expertise as well. So I managed a team in Australia for example, and they were graduates they were all male, and they just happen to be like six ft two giant Aussie blokes like</p>	<p>younger people perceive the older guys in the unit differently. Whether that's based on on on their physicality, and I'm not entirely sure?</p>	<p>necessarily the defining factor in terms of how other people view you.</p> <p>I'm relatively old now, in comparison to the rest of the workforce here I still think that the fact that I can, I was able to do physically demanding work meant that I wasn't getting judged by my age rather than my role.</p> <p>And I suppose that is the thing that made me realise it doesn't matter how old you are, it's whether you can physically perform and on the selection course, and it's whether you can perform physically will be part of it, when you get to this organisation.</p>	
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					great. But we would walk into rooms and I would introduce myself kind of leading the team or do presentation they might do sections of it, we would finish and then without fail, they would always ask questions to all the men in the room. The younger men and my team were great, they would turn around and go ah I dunno mate ask her, she's the boss but it would just frustrated me that actually even in conversations as well, people would tend to talk to the men			
Repression and suppression of	The avoidance or repression of generational	I think people are different ages is when someone	It was much more about experience than age, age			I guess I've never gone Oh, he's older	I've never in, in, in all honesty, I've never really	

<p>generational narrative</p>	<p>(age) differences as a defining factor in one's experience, particularly from a leadership/career standpoint which in turn affected perceptions of people of different generations (ages). The denial that age affects perception of others.</p>	<p>who's younger than me surpasses me. I suppose. When that day comes, maybe then at that point I'll be like oh thats what it feels like . Or I suppose that's probably what I'm getting at there. But at the moment I'm still sort of on my trajectory I'm on but I'm still a lot younger than most people still at this point. Which I don't think is a thing, I don't think it's that important – the age thing. I just think it matters what you're doing. But because there's a lot of older guys still, like from my perspective, looking at them now, there's a lot older guys who I don't know whether I could do what they're doing when they're that age</p>	<p>was was irrelevant. Really. It was about when you knew what you were doing or not.</p> <p>The whole question of age is a really interesting one for me, because the more I think about it, the less relevant it seems in a law firm. Age was only relevant to the extent that you were, that it had made somebody experienced.... So the fact that they were older, it wasn't difficult, you just kept out of their way . So age did not confer any kind of automatic respect or seniority. It was all about how good you were really, or how good you were perceived to be.</p> <p>Occasionally I would look at</p>			<p>than me. He must know better. He's younger than me. He must know less. I don't think that's the case at all. I don't think age has ever been an issue. For me So I think going to your point, leadership age, I don't think there's such a case.</p> <p>There's what you consider is almost life skills which you're learning pick up again from some very credible people, which then turns you can apply into into your own way of thinking leading once again, nothing related to age because I don't think...</p>	<p>thought about the age difference in this unit. About I've never thought about. I've never thought of age as a factor when I engage with people who are coming into the organisation or are junior in the organisation. I suppose I've always thought of the links that, well those chains that link the people in this unit aren't necessarily based on age they are based on principles. And the common principles would be mutual trust, hard work ethic, respect and so I don't see that those those principles are necessarily bounded by age.</p>	
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			<p>them and think, oh my God, you're only four years older than my son. But I tried to ignore that. They were colleagues I suppose that was how it worked. Okay.</p>			<p>very early I dismissed that as a as a point.</p> <p>You you are past out training, you're going into your job. And I think the way I reflected on that is it doesn't you know, age doesn't pay a difference. Everyone's been through the same journey. Everyone's got to the same place. The older people probably struggle because they're more likely to get injured is a bit harder to get up in the mornings, etc. The younger people had so much to learn because they didn't have the</p>	<p>And so I just been promoted to sergeant, but then I was going straight into a colour sergeants role. So just above, and I took the place of a friend of mine as he recovered. And actually that friend on reflection is younger, couple of years younger than me. Even though I was more junior than him, he'd come to this organisation quite young. I came to this organisation quite late. So that's the first time that I thought that's the first time that I thought, age isn't really a factor here.</p>	
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					<p>life skills. But nevertheless, within training you I thought you no matter what, by the end of it, you baselined and then after that the experiences gained through your own personal experiences. You've went through whatever training operational cycles you're exposed. To you develop as a person. And that didn't mean whether you are old or young, you were still developing And so I for me, I didn't take age as an issue.</p> <p>What I found really interesting, very early on</p>		
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						<p>in my career, is that how I can be on a training journey with anyone from 16 to 30. And yet, we were being instructed by people which were about 24, 25. So it kind of flipped what you're used to from a from a school children's life and sort of like a narrow view I guess to, then my first open experience with leadership and age actually didn't make any difference really, it was a position you were in at the time and very quickly, age didn't really become a thing for me.</p>		
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<p>Intergenerational separateness and connectedness</p>	<p>The commonality of experience or the lack thereof. The moments, events, milestones that have the capacity enable a sense of kinship and creates space for empathy and understanding of these generational differences. This includes the focus of the other generation.</p>			<p>it was useless, they couldn't even patch people up. So we had to sort of just turn up, get back on there. And then it just sort of highlights that maybe a different sort of mindset that some people have compared to others. And that was sort of because that was kind of late 2006 or 2005/6, that's you know, that's when the generations are starting to get in my eyes you know, bit easier, bit softer and maybe sort of a bit more touchy feely and to be being coached a bit more...</p> <p>I think it's just sort of that generation where they're sort of really technology advanced.</p>	<p>but I think there are a lot of people that have been there a long time that sit on final salaries and have no career drive, because you know, they're just quite happy, which is absolutely fine. But in our current context, we have a lot of work to do. And I think there's a lot of hunger and enthusiasm to build something fresh.</p> <p>Okay, it's a generational thing. It's a context thing from his life... And it's but it's usually I will have to know that there is similarity that makes sense. It's not just an</p>	<p>I found sometimes actually, the people which were younger, learn quicker, develop faster because they were firstly they hadn't built up a preconception of how to do stuff and almost formulate their own idea or how to form an idea, an idea already formed, they were willing to learn so their progression that speed sometimes with the younger guys was incredible compared to the older more older guys, when they're peers if you like because they're willing to learn so much</p>	<p>I should be more aware of the fact that the younger generation, how they view the older generation, like the term dinosaur gets brought out now and again in this organisation and whenever I hear the term I think ah its related to those guys that have been in this unit for 20 years and now I am thinking Fuck, I am that dude now.</p> <p>When you talk about some of the older guys in the unit, you you could you and you would refer to some of them as as dinosaurs in that, and I don't know whether that's whether there was a dinosaur in terms of their attitudes or</p>	<p>I can compare it to my brother's job like right now, you know, he works for Network Rail. They literally have to wait for someone to die or retire until they can progress like, because that's just like 60 or 70 year old blokes just sat taken up seats doing nothing.</p> <p>And I think the thing that I hated the most in that situation was the older blokes, the seedy, pervy older blokes are the ones that lead it most of the time and and that just reminds me so much of all the traits I hate in my father the oldest and wisest are -and I use air quotes for that- the</p>
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				<p>They're all over sort of technology and it's amazing to see that, you know, their computer knowledge and anything to do with tech. It is amazing and hands down better than what mine was. But on the flip side of that it's because not through their own fault, but they haven't had the things like Afghans and stuff like that. So you can train train train until you have rounds come in the other way. You don't know how people are going to react. And I think the the era that we had where everyone was in Afghan and then joining SF you've got some hardened</p>	<p>age thing, it will also be context. So if I see that there's similar contexts to either of my parents, then I find it easier to relate.</p> <p>I forgot what was learned knowledge and what was just what I had assumed everybody knew so I mean, it's been a real eye opener for me as well - that was that was a regenerator for me that actually, when you're working with people that are lot younger and completely fresh to the workforce, there will be a different level of understanding</p>		<p>dinosaur in terms of their age and/or how long they had served here</p>	<p>oldest and wisest in the room is the one leading that type of behaviour.</p> <p>I think that the thing is with with the older generation, and I'm stereotyping here, and I know this probably goes against how I've been talking prior but the older generation, particularly insurance is a broken is a broken industry. You know, you've got you've got these guys who just turn up to god on a book they're pigs. And you can you can just see the way they look at like young females and you catch them out the corner of your eye and you like just come on.</p>
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			<p>people, but now as it's gradually fading out, you're going to have no one with any experience in the first time. This obviously in my opinion, you know, the first time they got on a job and as people shooting back, you just don't know how they're going to react. Because there's so yeah, they're just that may be potentially a different mindset.</p> <p>it was just little things like the recruits instead of having sheets and blankets that were given, duvets, you know. And so that was one major turning point for us. You used to have bed blocks on a Wednesday and</p>				<p>And it's I think like I said, I think it's just that that association with the with the time that I just I just don't I just don't agree with.</p>
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				<p>change, but now it's a duvet.. how hard is it to make a duvet? You weren't allowed to give them press ups without a PTI involved. Unless you're in the field, if you're in the field, anything went. But on Camp - everything was documented. You had to write. You had to write full on reports.</p>				
<p>Life stages</p>	<p>The nature of different life stages and subsequent experiences of loss that each stage or level was associated with. The ages and stages we go through as we learn and grow, from infancy, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, mid-life to old age</p>			<p>it was just little things like the recruits instead of having sheets and blankets that were given, duvets, you know. And so that was one major turning point for us. You used to have bed blocks on a Wednesday and change, but now it's a duvet.. how hard is it to make a duvet? You weren't</p>		<p>But that won't survive unless you look after the individual at multiple levels. And I probably work that out, probably when I was about a couple of years into the service</p>	<p>I should be more aware of the fact that the younger generation, how they view the older generation, like the term dinosaur gets brought out now and again in this organisation and whenever I hear the term I think ah its related to those guys that have been in this unit for 20</p>	

	and the life experiences in each stage.			allowed to give them press ups without a PTI involved. Unless you're in the field, if you're in the field, anything went. But on Camp - everything was documented. You had to write. You had to write full on reports.			years and now I am thinking Fuck, I am that dude now. When you talk about some of the older guys in the unit, you you could you and you would refer to some of them as as dinosaurs in that, and I don't know whether that's whether there was a dinosaur in terms of their attitudes or dinosaur in terms of their age and/or how long they had served here	
Organisational impacts	NB: **Not a theme in isolation but a theme that is incorporated to the above 9 themes.		Law - very old structure. It's very hierarchical, and yet very flat, because when you're doing a job, although in management terms, it's incredibly hierarchical. In terms of the work that you deliver, it's very flat	Military - I haven't seen a change, I the only change I've seen is you don't have to treat them they are they're switched on and yeah, everyone going through selection is of that mindset, same mindset.	Financial services - So I really enjoyed starting at Accenture and working with colleagues of the same age, I think we started a group full of 67 of us all kind of fresh university	Military - It is the reality of SF. Being that you can have the youngest person ever XXXX (only 20 years old) is a prime example of this, come and join your squadron and you can still learn from	Military - in terms of leadership, courses or route there's a really or there was then a really set pathway of things that you would hit and they would be Junior command course, senior command	Financial Services - UK insurance industries, you're aware, you know, there's this sort of white male dominance and particularly in the sales roles, there's this incredibly ignorant

			<p>because you just work with whoever you work with. And everybody is kind of equal in that situation</p>	<p>So you don't have to sort of micromanage them, you know, it was nice to sort of see whereas when I was in the Marines, you had to micromanage people and things like that, whereas people going for SF are along that mindset, so it's a lot more professional and they and that's what they want to go for. because when you're in the Marines, or you know someone's always looking over your shoulder, whereas you go to SF, you do your task where you do your job you've been asked for and no one's looking. No one's asking if it's done. No</p>	<p>graduates or a couple of years work experience.</p> <p>Even consulting is very it's quite hierarchical, but when you're on a project team, you kind of all work together to just deliver what's needed for the client. So that kind of taught me how to work very, very closely with other people and that was of a similar age to get what we needed to done</p>	<p>them. Even though they only just come in to Special Forces they also had vast amount of experience externally in the Royal Marines the reality being is whether you're young or whether you've just joined the organisation regardless or not you can still be seen as young. Either respect whether it be just badged or young is that you've always got something to offer.</p> <p>(The military) environment shapes it (competition) too you know, everything is everything set for that you are you're</p>	<p>course and then a Warrant Officer command course to set you on your way.</p> <p>Special Forces - this is a classless organisation, is not a rankless organisation, but the interactions and the opportunity to engage throughout the ranks is far more, occurs more frequently, and the engagements are easier.</p>	<p>bravado that goes around where, like, you have to feel like you're within the wolf of fucking Wall Street when you were just working for some shady insurance broker in the Midlands.</p>
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				one's hounding you or badgering you and it's it's because you're expected to do it's in your own.		always graded, you know, once or whatever on the course you're always assessed you always given a annual grade of whatever it may be and you always want the a the a minus whatever it is. So I guess institutionally it cause to be... it absolutely lines you to be super competitive anyway, fact		
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