



Intergenerational Contact in Refugee Settlement Contexts: Results from a Systematic Mapping Review and Analysis

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to map research literature on intergenerational contact in refugee and international migration contexts. Using database searches on Scopus, Medline, CINAHL, PsycInfo and Education Research Complete, we identified 649 potentially relevant studies, of which 134 met the inclusion criteria and are mapped in the article by themes, date of publication, geographical distribution, study design, and targeted population. The review has been developed with input from migrant and refugee charities, and it identifies research trends in the field as well as multiple gaps in the literature. The results highlight the complex ways in which intergenerational contact impacts psycho-social wellbeing and integration, health, and education outcomes for both refugees and other migrant groups. Much of the research to date has focused on relationships within families. Studies exploring the potential tensions and benefits of intergenerational contact between refugees/migrants and members of the broader community are lacking.

Keywords Refugee · Migrant · Intergenerational contact · Mapping review

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Introduction

Throughout the migration journey, refugees and asylum seekers face a variety of challenges, amongst them the often-forced separation from families, older relatives, and other loved ones (Dubow & Kuschminder, 2022). Extensive research has shown that family separation has adverse effects on refugees' mental health and wellbeing (Liddell et al., 2022; Löbel, 2020; Miller et al., 2018), alongside other known risk factors such as pre-migration trauma and post-migration stress (Chen et al., 2017; Fazel et al., 2012). Even where families migrate together, they face unique challenges as each member of the family adjusts to the destination context at their own pace and in line with their own beliefs and aspirations.

The social contacts and relationships which emerge between refugees and members of the receiving society have also been extensively researched in the context of refugee, migration, and integration studies (recently for instance by Huysmans et al., 2021; Phillimore, 2021; Sellars, 2022), but seldom from an intergenerational perspective. Similarly, in their interventions, service delivery and training to staff, refugee support organisations often plan for potential language and cultural barriers, however intergenerational communication barriers and pitfalls and their intersection with culture, as well as the benefits of intergenerational learning for both refugees and locals, are often overlooked. The primary aim of this mapping review is therefore to identify, systematically describe and organise the evidence currently available from empirical research on intergenerational contact in refugee settlement contexts. We approach this field from a comparative perspective, drawing on data and insights from both refugee-specific studies as well as the existing body of evidence on the intergenerational contacts that people from migration background sustain with family, acquaintances, and members of the community beyond the borders of their country of origin.

In the context of this mapping review, intergenerational contact refers to any contact between older and younger individuals, be they family or unrelated individuals. We will primarily consider studies that have explored ways in which intergenerational contact influences either social attitudes and values (with regard to care, education, consumption, gender norms, transmission of intangible cultural heritage, political participation, etc.) or the integration-, health- and wellbeing outcomes of migrant and refugee populations, or both. Studies assessing how the second- or third-generation migrants fare in terms of socioeconomic outcomes such as wealth or social class compared to the first-generation migrants and native populations, without providing insights into interpersonal and social relationships across two or more generations, will not be discussed. This topic has been extensively covered elsewhere (e.g., Agius Vallejo & Keister, 2020).

The questions guiding this mapping review are as follows:

Q1: What is the state-of-the-art in research on intergenerational contact in refugee and international migration contexts?

Q2: What are the main themes and topics investigated in connection to people in refugee-like situations as compared to other migrant groups¹ in the intergenerational (contact) literature?

Q3: What are the key gaps that should direct future research in this field?

Method

Systematic Mapping Review

A systematic mapping review provides the means to broadly map an area of research and to produce a range of descriptive data to highlight temporal, geographical, and thematic trends. Employing established methodological approaches from systematic reviews, mapping reviews are effective in uncovering research gaps, pinpointing areas with substantial evidence, and laying the groundwork for meta-analysis and meta-synthesis (Essex et al., 2022; Soaita et al., 2020). The comprehensive overview generated by this mapping review will serve as a valuable resource for migration scholars who wish to enter the field of intergenerational research as well as for those aiming to deepen their understanding of intergenerational dynamics in migration contexts. Additionally, the review will aid researchers and practitioners in swiftly navigating the existing literature landscape, identifying pivotal studies, and fostering potential interdisciplinary collaborations.

Search Strategy

To identify relevant literature, five databases (Scopus, Medline, CINAHL, PsycInfo and Education Research Complete) were searched from inception to 22 February 2022. The key search terms within titles, keywords and abstracts were *intergenerational* or *multi-generational* and *migration* or *migrant* or *immigrant* or *refugee* or *forced migrant* or *asylum seeker*. These search terms were combined with concepts and terms referring to community focussed initiatives. Table S1 of the Supplement A shows the complete search strategy used on Scopus. After removing duplicates ($n=176$), 473 records were retained for eligibility assessment. The screening and study selection process has been documented using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Page et al., 2021) (see Fig. 1).

¹ The notions of “refugee” and “international migrant” are complex and multifaceted, subject to varying interpretations influenced by political, social, and disciplinary perspectives. In this review, we adhere to the categorisations employed by the authors of the original studies, where refugees are generally considered as individuals fleeing persecution or violence, and international migrants as those who move across borders primarily for purposes such as education, employment, or family reunification.

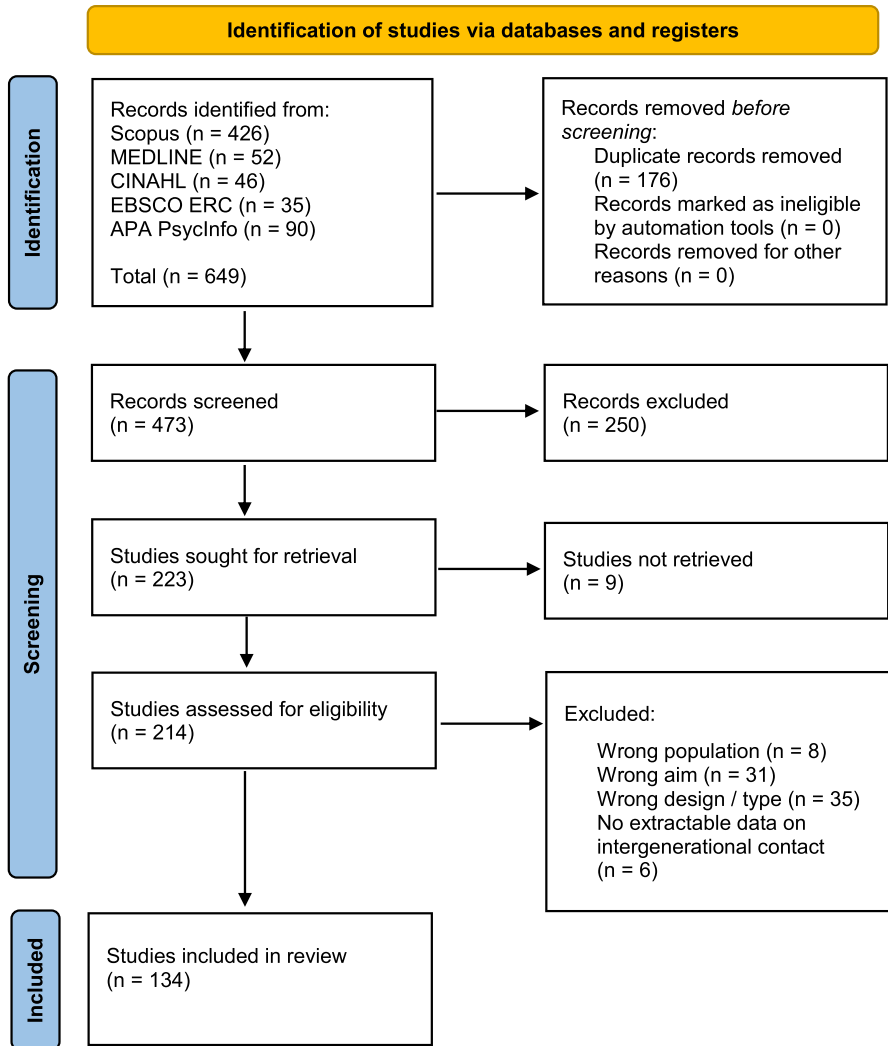


Fig. 1 PRISMA flow diagram

Eligibility Criteria

Peer-reviewed articles reporting on quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies involving refugees, asylum applicants, or first-, second-, or third generation migrants as participants were considered eligible. The study aims and outcomes had to be related to intergenerational contact and/or the article had to report on interventions, activities or contexts which involved individuals belonging to at least two different age cohorts where one or more cohorts were from migration background. Studies were excluded based on the following criteria: wrong population (e.g.,

research with non-migrants, internally displaced people, returnees, or participants in rural–urban migration within the same country), wrong aim (studies without an intergenerational component or contact between two age groups), wrong design (reviews, commentaries, books, letters, dissertations, perspective pieces or articles not reporting empirical data) or where full-text was not available.

Screening Process

The first level of screening was completed using Rayyan QCRI (<https://www.rayyan.ai/>), a web-based reference manager system for collaborative reviews. Titles and abstracts were screened independently against the eligibility criteria²; disagreements and references marked as undecided ($n=93$) were resolved by discussion involving a third assessor. Studies that were considered potentially relevant were moved to the next stage during which the review team assessed 223 full-text articles and identified 134 studies for inclusion.³

Stakeholder Workshop

We held a stakeholder engagement workshop on June 7th, 2022, with the participation of five refugee and migrant charities from London and Southeast England.⁴ During the workshop, early observations from the review were discussed to identify potential topics, questions and comparisons for further exploration based on the screened body of literature.⁵

Data Extraction and Coding

The data extraction form was developed by the review team and piloted on ten eligible studies. The data extraction was completed by four researchers with a random 25 percent also assessed independently by the lead author. There was 85 percent or higher agreement for each data extractor. The following data were extracted: background information (author, country, year), study design and method used, sample (size, age and other demographics, country of origin, type of migration and migrant groups

² Titles and abstracts were screened by EK and RH; full text articles were assessed by EK, RH, EH and MM.

³ The complete list of assessed studies (including reasons for exclusion) and the full data extraction table underpinning the manuscript are available from the corresponding author on request.

⁴ Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network, Diversity House, Somali Integration and Development Association, Metro, and Medway Plus.

⁵ Topics and questions examined during the workshop included: How do different generations within refugee/migrant communities perceive and experience intergenerational contact? In what ways do (cultural) differences within families/communities affect intergenerational relationships? How do traditional parental/carer roles and expectations evolve in the context of migration? How does intergenerational contact contribute to (or hinder) the integration of refugee and migrant families? How can education and community programmes better facilitate positive interactions between different age groups? What community-based initiatives have been successful in promoting positive intergenerational relationships?

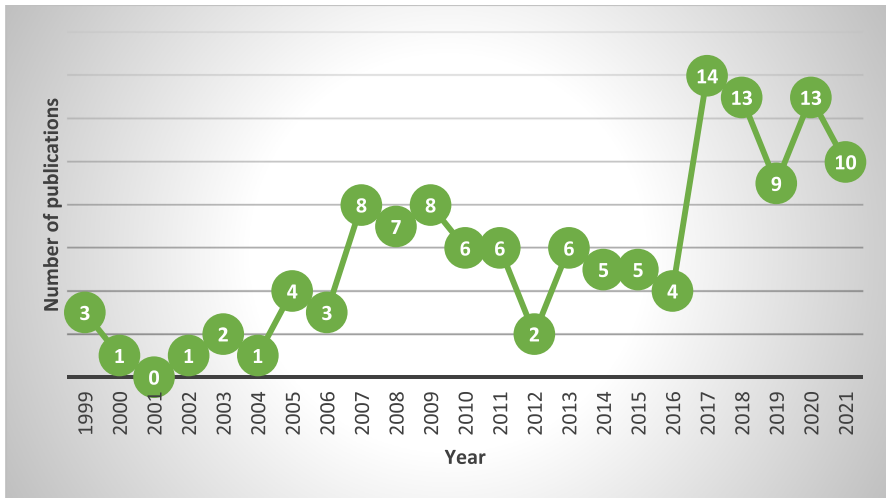


Fig. 2 Distribution of studies by year of publication (The studies published since January 2022 to date have not been included in Fig. 1.)

involved), and the main outcomes assessed. Following data extraction, the studies were further coded and categorised according to the age groups involved and the main topics researched in relation to intergenerational contact (e.g., intergenerational conflict, family cohesion, acculturation, care, transmission of trauma, psychological problems, and educational expectations). The final list of categories for data extraction and coding, which was established in line with our preliminary results and the input collected during the stakeholder workshop, is shown in Table S2 of Supplement A.

Data Analysis

The data extracted from the studies were first analysed using descriptive statistics with temporal and geographical data represented in visual graphs to illustrate trends. Next, we explored the distribution of studies by population (refugees vs non-refugees) and context and ranked the main themes investigated. Spearman's correlation assessments were also conducted to explore whether a connection exists between the themes. Correlation tests are common in review articles as they seek to explore whether a relationship exists between two dichotomous variables. The coefficients are then used to indicate the direction and strength of the relationship.

Results

Descriptive Results

Our searches yielded 649 references, of which 134 studies met the inclusion criteria. The number of papers published per year (Fig. 2) suggests a substantive

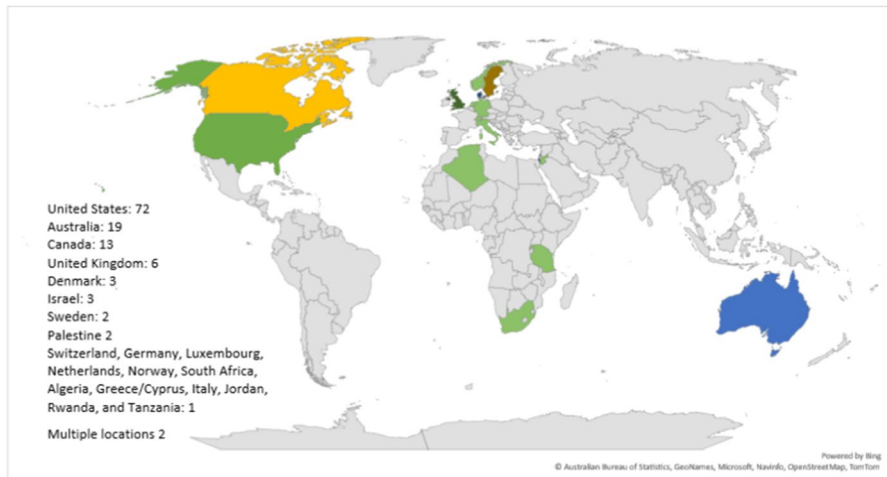


Fig. 3 Distribution of studies by country

growth of interest in the topic over the past decades, with 35 studies published in the period from 2000 to 2009, 70 publications in 2010–2020, and a further 26 studies already published since 2020. The majority of these studies were carried out in the United States ($n=72$), followed by Australia ($n=19$), Canada ($n=10$) and the United Kingdom ($n=6$). The geographical distribution of the remaining studies is shown in Fig. 3.

The examined studies included participants of various age groups. Amongst the papers that reported this data, when only one group was included in the study the mean age of participants was 34 years, with a range of 10–75 years. When a comparison was made between a younger and older group, the mean age of the younger group was 18 years, with a range of 1–47 years, whilst the mean age of the older group was 44 years, with a range of 12–75 years. Around 37 percent of the reviewed literature discussed intergenerational contact or relationships involving people in refugee-like situation, mostly individuals who or whose family members fled from Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (e.g., Vietnam, Cambodia, and Myanmar) and Sub-Saharan Africa. Likewise, the most common region of origin for the other migrant groups studied was Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, along with Latin America and the Caribbean, and Central and Southern Asia (Fig. 4). As to different generations of immigrants involved in intergenerational research, the studies to date have mainly focussed on the views and experiences of first (settled) and second-generation migrants (Fig. 5). Much less attention has been paid to the role of intergenerational contact in the lives of newly arrived international migrants, those recently seeking asylum or living in refugee camps or those navigating complex transnational relationships. Similarly, the majority of studies have scrutinised intergenerational contact inside the family, although research has also been expanding into nonfamilial relationships between older

Fig. 4 Distribution of studies by the research participants' region of origin and status. **ESEA:** Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, **SSA:** Sub-Saharan Africa, **NAWA:** Northern Africa and Western Asia, **LAC:** Latin America and the Caribbean, **CSA:** Central and Southern Asia, **EUR:** Europe, **UNK:** unknown, **MULTI:** multiple (two or more of the aforementioned regions) (Our classification of countries into regions of origin was guided by the UN International Migration report (https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/documents/2020/Feb/un_2019_internationalmigration_wallchart.pdf))



ESEA - Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, **SSA** - Sub-Saharan Africa, **NAWA** - Northern Africa and Western Asia, **LAC** - Latin America and the Caribbean, **CSA** - Central and Southern Asia, **EUR** - Europe, **UNK** - unknown, **MULTI** - multiple (two or more of the aforementioned regions)⁷

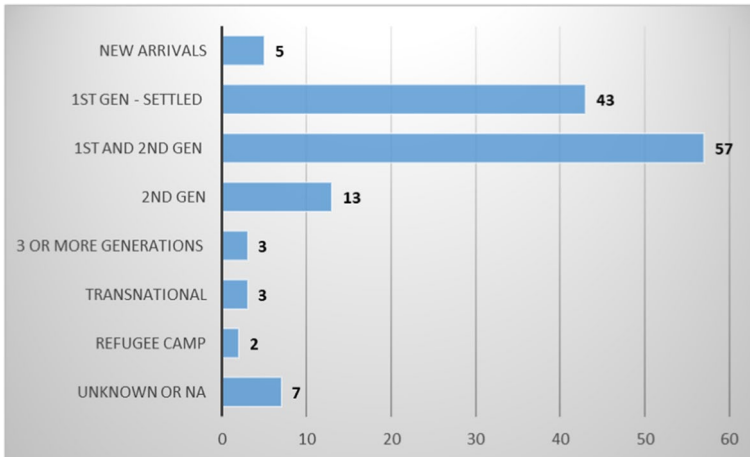


Fig. 5 Distribution of studies by immigrant generations

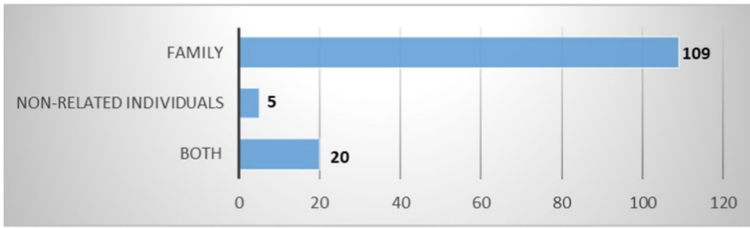


Fig. 6 Distribution of studies by the context of intergenerational contact

Fig. 7 Methodology employed by included studies



and younger people (Fig. 6). Only a few studies in this latter group ($n=5$), however, engaged people from both migrant and non-migrant backgrounds.

The principal analytical perspectives which informed the studies making up the corpus included cultural identity and acculturation (exploring how different generations navigate and adapt to a new environment), psychosocial wellbeing (investigating psychological and emotional effects as well as coping mechanism), social integration and networks, generational power dynamics and gender studies (exploring gender roles, caring responsibilities and power structures within families), communication, and education, social work and healthcare perspectives. From a methodological perspective, the reviewed studies relied primarily on qualitative data (53 percent, mostly obtained from interviews and focus groups with one or more age cohorts); 40 percent used a quantitative approach (34 cross-sectional studies, 17 studies with cohort- or similar longitudinal study design and six intervention studies) and a further 7 percent reported mixed methods studies (Fig. 7). No temporal trend in the employed methods was apparent.

Themes

The most common themes in the mapped literature—for both studies involving people in refugee-like situations and those conducted with other migrant groups—are acculturation and conflict. The latter have been described as arising from different levels of adjustment to the destination context by children and their parents/caretakers, and it has been discussed in the literature under multiple labels, amongst them, intergenerational cultural conflict (Chung, 2006; Y. Li, 2014; Mwanri et al., 2018; Wu & Chao, 2005), intergenerational acculturation gap (Lim et al., 2009; Merali, 2004; Renzaho et al., 2017; Y.-W. Ying & Han, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c), intergenerational cultural dissonance (Choi et al., 2008; Kane et al., 2016), generation gap and assimilation disparity (Merali, 2002). In the refugee-specific literature, other common topics included psychological problems (e.g., depression, alcohol and drug abuse, anxiety, distress and suicidal ideation) which often accompanied intergenerational conflicts within families (Kane et al., 2016; Mwanri et al., 2018; Ying & Han, 2007a, b, c, 2008b) and/or were considered the result of the intergenerational transmission of (pre)migration trauma and war/conflict exposure (Back Nielsen et al., 2019; Bager et al., 2020; East et al., 2018; Hoffman et al., 2020; Mak et al., 2021; Rizkalla et al., 2020; Sangalang et al., 2017; Sim et al., 2018).

Another overarching theme that we have identified in the refugee-specific literature is communication, which has been studied in relation to intergenerational conflicts and broader parent–child relational contexts⁶ (Atwell et al., 2009; Greenfield et al., 2020; McCleary et al., 2020; Mulholland et al., 2021), acculturation (Merali, 2005), trauma (Krahn, 2013; Lin et al., 2009; Sangalang et al., 2017) and trust and disclosure (Bermudez et al., 2018; Douglass et al., 2021). Family cohesion (Ayika et al., 2018; Tippens, 2020; Ying & Han, 2007a), care for relatives and parenting (including parental control and uses of physical discipline practices in families with migration background) have been other themes explored in the refugee-specific literature, with the latter ones, care and parenting, being mainly investigated in tandem with the effects of trauma and war exposure (Anakwenze & Rasmussen, 2021; Cho Kim et al., 2019; Sim et al., 2018), acculturation and heritage culture (Hatoss, 2022; Tajima & Harachi, 2010; Tsai et al., 2017), sexual and reproductive health (Dean et al., 2017), and gender expectations (Kallis et al., 2020; Mulholland et al., 2021). Post-migration stressors (Atwell et al., 2009; McCleary et al., 2020; Rizkalla et al., 2020; Sim et al., 2018), social exclusion and life on the margins of society (Douglass et al., 2021; East et al., 2018; Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2019; Mwanri et al., 2018) and the negative impact of these on intergenerational relationships, and *inter alia* on acculturation, health and wellbeing outcomes for different generations of migrants have also been investigated in the refugee-specific literature, although to a lesser extent than the other themes listed earlier. A complete list of themes is provided in Table 1 which also shows the frequency distribution for research involving people in refugee-like situation versus research conducted with

⁶ For example, family separation and reunification, parental control, and communication about sexuality.

Table 1 Cross-tabulation of themes by research population (people in refugee-like situation versus other migrant groups)

Code	Themes	Refugee-like situation						Other migrant groups						Total	
		Yes		No		%	Yes		No		%	Yes		No	
		obs	%	obs	%		obs	%	obs	%		obs	%		
a	Conflict	20	40	30	60	27	32	57	68	47	35	87	65		
b	Family cohesion (incl. studies of affect and support)	8	16	42	84	23	27	61	73	31	23	103	77		
c	Acculturation and heritage culture	22	44	28	56	47	56	37	44	69	51	65	49		
d	Care for relatives (incl. studies of family obligations and filial piety)	5	10	45	90	20	24	64	76	25	19	109	81		
e	Parenting (incl. parental control, parenting styles and physical discipline practices)	8	16	42	84	16	19	68	81	24	18	110	82		
f	(Pre-)migration trauma	16	32	34	68	4	5	80	95	20	15	114	85		
g	Post-migration (daily) stressors	6	12	44	88	4	5	80	95	10	7	124	93		
h	Psychological problems (e.g., depression, alcohol and drug abuse, anxiety)	18	36	32	64	16	19	68	81	34	25	100	75		
i	Social exclusion and discrimination	4	8	46	92	8	10	76	90	12	9	122	91		
j	Other negative outcomes (problematic or anti-social behaviour, violence, criminality)	2	4	48	96	4	5	80	95	6	4	128	96		
k	Education (expectations, involvement, and attainment)	4	8	46	92	10	12	74	88	14	10	120	90		
l	Gender (experiences, expectations, and roles)	5	10	45	90	7	8	77	92	12	9	122	91		
m	Communication	10	20	40	80	14	17	70	83	24	18	110	82		
n	Food, nutrition, and obesity	3	6	47	94	3	4	81	96	6	4	128	96		
o	Sexual and reproductive health	3	6	47	94	6	7	78	93	9	7	125	93		
p	Other lifestyle (e.g., fashion, friends, ethnic media, and entertainment)	3	6	47	94	4	5	80	95	7	5	127	95		
q	Health (general, health promotion and healthcare provision)	5	10	45	90	7	8	77	92	12	9	122	91		
r	Church and religious spaces	2	4	48	96	2	2	82	98	4	3	130	97		
s	Political participation (incl. studies of belonging and citizenship)	0	0	50	100	5	6	79	94	5	4	129	96		
t	Skills development (e.g., ICT, language, and sports)	1	2	49	98	5	6	79	94	6	4	128	96		

Table 2 Theme correlation analysis for the refugee-specific literature

Themes ¹	c (n=22) ²	a (n=20)	h (n=18)	f (n=16)	m (n=10)	b (n=8)	e (n=8)	d (n=6)	g (n=6)	i (n=5)
c	1									
a	0.3454*	1								
h	-0.2451	0.068	1							
f	-0.4353*	-0.2976*	0.2894*	1						
m	-0.141	0.1021	-0.0625	0.1929	1					
b	0.1627	-0.0223	0.0136	-0.1824	-0.0818	1				
e	0.1627	-0.0223	-0.2137	0.0515	-0.2182	-0.1905	1			
d	-0.2033	-0.1759	0.1077	0.1425	0.1231	-0.1612	0.0067	1		
g	-0.0269	-0.1361	0.0278	-0.2287	-0.1667	0.0364	-0.1455	0.0821	1	
i	0.1074	0.2722	-0.25	-0.0857	0.1667	0.0364	0.2182	-0.1231	-0.1111	1
q	-0.2955*	-0.1361	0.3056*	0.0572	0	-0.1455	-0.1455	0.0821	0.1111	-0.1111
i	-0.1129	-0.0903	0.2396	-0.0443	0.0369	-0.1287	-0.1287	0.118	-0.0983	-0.0983
k	0.0356	0.0602	0.086	-0.0443	0.0369	0.0724	-0.1287	-0.1089	-0.0983	-0.0983
n	-0.0543	-0.0344	-0.1895	-0.1733	-0.1263	-0.1103	-0.1103	-0.0933	-0.0842	-0.0842
o	0.1154	0.1375	-0.1895	-0.1733	0.0842	-0.1103	0.1195	0.1659	-0.0842	-0.0842
p	0.2850*	0.1375	-0.1895	-0.1733	-0.1263	0.1195	-0.1103	-0.0933	-0.0842	-0.0842
j	-0.1809	0.0417	0.0595	0.2976*	0.1531	-0.0891	0.1893	-0.0754	-0.068	-0.068
r	-0.1809	-0.1667	-0.1531	-0.14	-0.1021	0.1893	-0.0891	-0.0754	-0.068	-0.068
t	0.1612	-0.1166	-0.1071	-0.098	-0.0714	-0.0623	-0.0623	-0.0528	-0.0476	-0.0476
Themes ¹	q	i	k	n	o	p	j	r	t	
	(n=5)	(n=4)	(n=4)	(n=3)	(n=3)	(n=3)	(n=2)	(n=2)	(n=1)	
c										
a										
h										
f										

Table 2 (continued)

Themes ¹	q (n=5)	i (n=4)	k (n=4)	n (n=3)	o (n=3)	p (n=3)	j (n=2)	r (n=2)	t (n=1)
m									
b									
c									
d									
g									
l									
q	1								
i	0.1474	1							
k	-0.0983	-0.087	1						
n	-0.0842	-0.0745	-0.0745	1					
o	-0.0842	0.2359	-0.0745	-0.0638	1				
p	-0.0842	-0.0745	-0.0745	-0.0638	-0.0638	1			
j	-0.068	-0.0602	-0.0602	-0.0516	-0.0516	-0.0516	1		
r	-0.068	-0.0602	-0.0602	-0.0516	-0.0516	-0.0516	-0.0417	1	
t	-0.0476	-0.0421	0.4845*	-0.0361	-0.0361	-0.0361	-0.0292	-0.0292	1

¹c—Acculturation and heritage culture; a—conflict; h—psychological problems (e.g., depression, alcohol and drug abuse, and anxiety); f—(pre-)migration trauma; m—communication; b—family cohesion (incl. studies of affect and support); e—parenting (incl.—parental control, parenting styles and physical discipline practices); d—care for relatives (incl. studies of family obligations and filial piety); g—post-migration (daily) stressors; l—gender (experiences, expectations, and roles); q—health (general, health promotion and healthcare provision); i—social exclusion and discrimination; k—education (expectations, involvement, and attainment); n—food, nutrition, and obesity; o—sexual and reproductive health; p—other lifestyle (e.g., fashion, friends, ethnic media, and entertainment); j—other negative outcomes (problematic or anti-social behaviour, violence, criminality); r—church and religious spaces; t—skills development (e.g., ICT, language, sports); s—political participation was omitted due to obs = 0

²Number of articles found for each theme

*Values in bold indicate statistical significance at the $p < 0.05$ level

other migrant groups. Table 2 ranks the themes according to their frequency in the refugee-specific literature and shows the result of the theme correlation analysis.

Results for the correlation coefficients⁷ show *Acculturation and heritage culture* is positively correlated with *Conflict* at 0.3454 and *Other lifestyles* at 0.2850. A negative coefficient is found with *(Pre-)migration trauma* at -0.4353 and with *Health* at -0.2955.⁸ Interestingly, *(Pre-)migration trauma* is also negatively correlated with *Conflict* at -0.2976 but is positively correlated with *Psychological problems* at 0.2894 and *Other negative outcomes* at 0.2976. *Health* is also positively correlated with *Psychological problems* at 0.3056. *Gender* is positively correlated with *Sexual and reproductive health* at 0.4772. As expected, *Education* is positively correlated with *Skills development* at 0.4845.

Intergenerational conflicts stemming from different levels of parent–child acculturation were also a major focus for research conducted with other populations from migration-background, that is those who did not identify as refugees and/or were not labelled as such by researchers (Choi et al., 2008; Chung, 2006; Goitom, 2018; J. Li, 2009; Li, 2014; Lim et al., 2009; Liu et al., 2017; Phinney et al., 2000). The topic of intergenerational (acculturation) conflict in this segment of the literature has mainly emerged in studies also concerned with parenting dynamics (Deepak, 2005; Lim et al., 2009; Marcus et al., 2019; Wu & Chao, 2005), care for relatives (Li et al., 2019; Tezcan, 2018), and mental health problems in older/younger generations such as depression, anxiety and alcohol abuse (Hwang et al., 2010; Li, 2014; Lim et al., 2009; Nguyen et al., 2018; Park, 2003; Weaver & Kim, 2008; Yasui et al., 2018; Ying & Han, 2007b, 2008a). Certain themes—e.g., family cohesion (Flores, 2018; Garcia et al., 2013; Howes et al., 2011; Kao & An, 2012; Merz et al., 2009; Willgerodt & Thompson, 2005), care particularly for older relatives (Amin & Ingman, 2014; Flores, 2018; Guo et al., 2019; Kalavar et al., 2020; Lai, 2007; Laidlaw et al., 2010; Mao et al., 2018; Spira & Wall, 2009; Sudha, 2014) and education (Blanchet-Cohen & Reilly, 2017; Ginn et al., 2018; Herzig van Wees et al., 2021; Mendez, 2015; Sime & Pietka-Nykaza, 2015; Warburton & McLaughlin, 2007)—were far more prominent in intergenerational research involving (other) migrant groups than in the refugee-specific literature. The ranked list of all themes in this second group along with the correlation analysis is shown in Table 3.

Results show a negative correlation between *Acculturation and heritage culture* and *Skills development* at -0.2835. *Conflict* showed the highest number of coefficients that are statistically significant. A positive correlation was found between *Conflict and Family cohesion* at 0.2634, *Parenting* at 0.2504, *Psychological problems* at 0.3153 and *Other negative outcomes* at 0.3249. A negative coefficient was also found between *Conflict* and *Care for relatives* at -0.2650. *Family cohesion* and *Other negative outcomes* shows a positive result at 0.2388. *Care for relatives*

⁷ A higher positive correlation coefficient represents a greater increase in co-occurrence of themes. A lower positive coefficient suggests a tendency for such themes to occur less frequently together.

⁸ In the context of co-occurrence of themes, a higher negative correlation coefficient implies that an increase in the expression of one variable (theme) correlates with a decrease in the other.

Table 3 Theme correlation analysis for research involving other migrant groups

Themes ¹	c (n=47) ²	a (n=27)	b (n=23)	d (n=20)	e (n=16)	h (n=16)	m (n=14)	k (n=10)	i (n=8)	l (n=7)
c	1									
a	0.1999	1								
b	0.1146	0.2634*	1							
d	-0.1233	-0.2650*		1						
e	0.1861	0.2504*	-0.0939	-0.2712*	1					
h	0.064	0.3153*	0.1781	-0.1288	0.0735	1				
m	-0.0536	0.0342	-0.0597	-0.0597	-0.0542	-0.0542	1			
k	0.03	-0.0956	-0.1433	-0.1192	-0.0847	-0.0847	0.0329	1		
i	-0.0389	0.1241	-0.1083	-0.0862	0.0492	0.0492	-0.0363	0.006	1	
l	-0.0795	-0.0231	-0.1851	0.0337	0.0731	-0.1463	-0.0193	-0.1108	0.1956	1
q	-0.0795	-0.0231	-0.0885	0.1348	-0.1463	0.0731	-0.0193	-0.1108	-0.0978	0.0649
o	-0.1264	-0.0919	-0.1703	-0.155	-0.0168	-0.1345	0.124	0.1835	-0.09	-0.0836
s	-0.0808	-0.0654	-0.1545	-0.1406	-0.122	-0.122	0.1575	-0.0925	-0.0816	0.1062
t	-0.2835*	-0.1731	-0.0416	-0.1406	-0.122	-0.122	0.0225	0.0629	-0.0816	-0.0759
f	-0.1394	-0.0342	-0.0119	-0.125	0.0339	-0.1085	0.3500*	-0.0822	-0.0725	-0.0674
g	-0.1394	0.0855	0.1134	0.1375	0.0339	0.0339	-0.1	-0.0822	-0.0725	-0.0674
j	0.0858	0.3249*	0.2388*	-0.125	-0.1085	0.1763	-0.1	-0.0822	0.1179	-0.0674
p	0.0858	-0.0342	-0.1373	-0.125	0.0339	-0.1085	0.05	-0.0822	-0.0725	-0.0674
n	0.0415	0.0049	-0.1182	-0.1076	-0.0934	-0.0934	-0.0861	-0.0707	0.1561	0.1741
r	-0.176	-0.1075	-0.0959	-0.0873	-0.0758	0.1231	0.1397	-0.0574	-0.0507	-0.0471
Themes ¹	q (n=7)	o (n=6)	s (n=5)	t (n=5)	f (n=4)	g (n=4)	j (n=4)	p (n=4)	n (n=3)	r (n=2)
c										
a										
b										

Table 3 (continued)

Themes ¹	q (n=7)	o (n=6)	s (n=5)	t (n=5)	f (n=4)	g (n=4)	j (n=4)	p (n=4)	n (n=3)	r (n=2)
d										
e										
h										
m										
k										
i										
l										
q	1									
o	-0.0836	1								
s	-0.0759	-0.0698	1							
t	-0.0759	-0.0698	-0.0633	1						
f	-0.0674	-0.062	0.18	-0.0563	1					
g	-0.0674	-0.062	-0.0563	-0.0563	-0.05	1				
j	-0.0674	-0.062	-0.0563	-0.0563	-0.05	0.2125	1			
p	-0.0674	-0.062	0.18	-0.0563	-0.05	-0.05	-0.05	1		
n	0.1741	-0.0534	-0.0484	-0.0484	-0.043	-0.043	-0.043	0.2582*	1	
r	0.2354*	-0.0433	0.2907*	-0.0393	-0.0349	-0.0349	-0.0349	0.3318*	-0.0301	1

¹c—Acculturation and heritage culture; a—conflict; b—family cohesion (incl. studies of affect and support); d—care for relatives (incl. studies of family obligations and filial piety); e—parenting (incl. parental control, parenting styles and physical discipline practices); h—psychological problems (e.g. depression, alcohol and drug abuse, anxiety); m—communication; k—education (expectations, involvement, and attainment); i—social exclusion and discrimination; l—gender (experiences, expectations, and roles); q—health (general, health promotion and healthcare provision); o—sexual and reproductive health; s—political participation (incl. studies of belonging and citizenship); t—skills development (e.g., ICT, language, and sports); f—(pre-)migration trauma; g—post-migration (daily) stressors; j—other negative outcomes (problematic or anti-social behaviour, violence, and criminality); p—other lifestyle (e.g., fashion, friends, ethnic media, and entertainment); n—food, nutrition, and obesity; r—church and religious spaces

²Number of articles found for each theme

*Values in bold indicate statistical significance at the $p < 0.05$ level

showed two negative results with studies on *Parenting* at -0.2712 and *Communication* at -0.25 . This indicates an increase in *Care for relatives* results to a decline in both variables. *Communication* and *(Pre-)migration trauma* showed a positive outcome at 0.35 . *Church and religious spaces* showed three positive outcomes with *Health* at 0.2354 , *Political participation* at 0.2907 , and *Other lifestyle* at 0.3318 . *Other lifestyle* positively correlated with *Food, nutrition, and obesity* at 0.2582 . All mentioned results are statistically significant at a p value < 0.05 .

Discussion: Knowledge Gaps and Future Research Avenues

Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that intergenerational contact in refugee settlement contexts is a small but growing field of research. The majority of publication included in this review have been published in the last fifteen years and they have focused primarily on intergenerational contact between related individuals. By comparison, very little was found in the literature about intergenerational contact which emerge between individuals in refugee-like situation (or migrants in general) and members of the broader community. Research from non-migration contexts introduce reasons for both optimism and pessimism concerning intergenerational relationships outside family contexts. Several lines of evidence (North & Fiske, 2012) point to potential tensions stemming from prescriptive stereotypes, ageism, and intergenerational competition over societal resources (e.g., work, housing, and government benefits), all of which are likely to be amplified if the contact involves immigrants, amongst them refugees, who continue to be perceived by parts of the society as a treat and/or drain on scarce national resources (Klein, 2021; Onraet et al., 2021). At the same time, research from across different fields has also shown that strong, consistent relationship between old(er) and young(er) generations can debunk intergroup prejudice and stereotypes, reduce isolation, contribute to subjective wellbeing, and improve economic, educational, as well as societal participation (Bryer, 2019; Hunter et al., 2018; Kahlbaugh & Budnick, 2021; North & Fiske, 2012). Much of the current literature is focussed on the negatives (conflict, mental health problems and to a lesser extent problematic and antisocial behaviour), whilst studies delving into the potential benefits of intergenerational contact for refugee populations are largely missing.

The reviewed literature has highlighted the complex and multifaced ways in which intergenerational relationships—particularly within refugee-background families—impact younger generation's psycho-social wellbeing and outcomes. There is also an extent literature dedicated to the intergenerational transmission of trauma and the effects of pre-migration experiences on parenting and children's mental health outcomes. Furthermore, an important part of the literature also focuses on the exploration of the dynamics and consequences of intergenerational conflicts stemming from different levels of adjustment to the context of reception. The majority of these intergenerational conflict studies—in both the refugee-specific and broader migrant literature—attempted to classify research participants and their children/parents as high or low on receiving-culture acquisition and on heritage-culture retention in line with earlier conceptualisations of acculturation (Schwartz et al., 2010), which however

also meant that the context of settlement, along with the extent of social exclusion, discrimination and other post-migration stressors that older/younger generations of migrants possibly experienced were often not considered.

Beyond tracing the above discussed themes in the current refugee-specific and broader migration literature, the review has also pinpointed new areas of inquiry for strengthening the practical and policy-value of intergenerational research with refugee populations. These included major public health concerns (e.g., childhood overweight and obesity (Halliday et al., 2014; Vue et al., 2011; Wilson et al., 2010; Zulfiqar et al., 2021), and sexual and reproductive health and rights (Alcalde & Quelopana, 2013; Dean et al., 2017; Mulholland et al., 2021; Rogers & Earnest, 2014; Herzig van Wees et al., 2021; Villani & Bodenmann, 2017), as well as other themes of significance—for instance, education (Blanchet-Cohen & Reilly, 2017; Mendez, 2015; Singh et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2022), skills exchange and development (Ginn et al., 2018; Hébert et al., 2020; Leek, 2021; Leek & Rojek, 2021) and political participation and belonging (Bloemraad & Trost, 2008; Reynolds et al., 2018; Terriquez & Kwon, 2015)—which have been extensively studied in relation to migrant populations, but are still under-explored from an intergenerational perspective, particularly when it comes to the challenges and benefits of intergenerational contact outside family contexts (North & Fiske, 2012). The few studies that did connect unrelated individuals were almost exclusively set in educational contexts and focussed on a narrow set of skills (e.g., literacy and digital skills) rather than on positive social interactions and relationship-building between the younger and older in community settings. The nature of this latter process, and how and why it does (not) occur, should be a priority for future research. Considering the breadth of the reviewed literature, studies applying a gender lens and/or recounting gendered experiences⁹ have also been scarce.

When looking more closely at the type of the research conducted, this varied substantially in terms of research participants, aims, methods and as shown above themes. The breadth of methodologies utilised by researchers was widespread and the studies managed to recruit participants from different ethnic minorities (amongst them refugees from all major conflict areas in the past fifteen years), age-cohorts and migrant generations, which is encouraging. There were however relatively few studies involving new arrivals. There is also a lack of translational research and/or co-production involving practitioners, community organisations and/or individuals with lived experience (with some notable exceptions: e.g., Reynolds et al., 2018). As public involvement in research is being strengthened and systematically embedded through institutional policies and funding regulations, future research into intergenerational contacts will need to involve practitioners, community organisations, and representatives of different age cohorts from amongst refugee (migrant) populations and other members of the public in determining research questions and priorities, ethics, and implementation.

⁹ (e.g., Brotman et al., 2021; Goitom 2018; Maher et al., 2020; Renzaho et al., 2011; Reynolds et al., 2018).

As to the broader implications of this review, feedback from charities/associations¹⁰ representing sub-groups of refugee and migrant populations in Southeast England confirmed the role of generations working together in improving social cohesions and understanding between communities. Delegates from these stakeholder organisations have also seen a great value in tackling some of the major societal and public health concerns involving refugee populations from an intergenerational perspective, amongst them those highlighted in this discussion earlier (psycho-social wellbeing, tackling isolation and discrimination, and educational success). A research priority for this group of stakeholders is the identification of different delivery models and good practice guidelines for the integration of intergenerational work in their day-to-day activities to ensure young and older people equally engage with and benefit from their support services as well as their broader interventions aimed at creating social connections between refugees, their families, and members of the receiving community.

With the above in mind, we suggest the following directions for future research:

- Development of interdisciplinary and practitioner-oriented research topics in collaboration with community organisations, practitioners, and people with lived experience
- More empirical research focused on compounding factors such as gender, race, and the context of settlement in the investigation of intergenerational contact and its effects
- More empirical research focused on the impact of intergenerational programmes and other support activities connecting refugees with members of the broader community
- Investigation into the enablers and barriers to such programmes and their benefits for psycho-social wellbeing, intergenerational learning, and family and community cohesion

The above should also be accompanied with the documentation of practical lessons that could feed into future guidance for setting up intergenerational programmes involving individuals in refugee-like situation and/or other migrants.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to review intergenerational research involving refugees and other migrant groups to map the themes addressed and identify directions for future research. The review looked at a large body of material (data extracted from 134 publications), which varied substantially in terms of research participants, aims, topics and methods used. The mapping has provided an overview of major themes and the relationships between them, which provides an important first step in delineating what is already known to provide a strong basis for further exploration.

¹⁰ See Stakeholder workshop in the “[Method](#)” section.

The increasing focus on intergenerational research within migration studies reflects a recognition of the profound impact that such research can have on understanding the (re)settlement and integration experiences of migrant and refugee communities. The review allows migration scholars to situate their work within the broader landscape of intergenerational research, and it offers a reference point for them to identify gaps in knowledge, emerging trends, and areas that warrant further exploration. Beyond academia, non-academic stakeholders, including practitioners, non-governmental organisations and charities dedicated to supporting migrants, can also derive substantial benefits from this work. It serves as both a resource and an overview of pivotal studies, equipping these stakeholders with insights that can inform their advocacy efforts and interventions, ultimately contributing to an enhancement in the quality of life for refugee and migrant communities. To our knowledge, this is one of the few systematic mapping reviews in refugee studies, and the first one to include stakeholder consultation and input, which add further value to the study. We have also identified several key directions for future research and practice; it is hoped these will allow for capitalising on the opportunities for exchange, learning and mutual support brought by successful intergenerational programmes and the integration of intergenerational work in refugee support organisations day-to-day activities.

There are also some limitations that warrant consideration, most notably the exclusion of grey literature along with the geographical distribution of the reviewed studies. Grey literature often encapsulates valuable insights from various stakeholders, and neglecting this type of information may result in overlooking community-driven perspectives on intergenerational relationships. The stakeholder engagement workshop that we conducted partially mitigated the impact of this by harnessing the diverse experiences and knowledge of local migrant and refugee charities. Likewise, the workshop provided an opportunity for dialogue and collaboration on the suggested research agenda, ensuring that it resonates with the community's concerns and priorities.

The geographical distribution of the reviewed studies also raises concerns about the generalisability of the findings. This is skewed towards English-speaking countries, with the overwhelming majority of publications coming from just four countries (United States, Australia, Canada, and United Kingdom). This Western-centric bias limits for instance the applicability of the proposed research agenda to a more global context, given that significant refugee populations and diverse migration experiences exist in regions where English is not the primary language of research and academic publishing. A comprehensive multilingual search strategy would have been more inclusive, enabling a more extensive representation of global research on intergenerational contact in contexts related to refugees and international migration. Going forward, a more nuanced examination is needed to understand how the suggested research agenda might require adjustments or expansions to encompass diverse regional, cultural, and linguistic settings.

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Declarations

Competing Interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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