HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT: HOW INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS CAN TRANSFORM OUR FUTURE

Stanford Center on Longevity

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STANFORD CENTER ON LONGEVITY

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FOREWORD

In June 2014, the Stanford Center on Longevity, Encore.org and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation joined together to convene the "Pass it On" conference of national experts, to explore how experienced adults can play critical roles in the lives of our children and youth, and to elevate generativity as a norm for the second half of life.

This monograph builds on the key recommendations that emerged from the "Pass it On" conference to propose practical strategies for engaging encore talent to meet the needs of youth. It explains what organizations and communities can do, and encourages leaders and individuals alike to support and join efforts to mobilize experienced adults to work with children and youth.

Two demographics — children in need of support and adults with the time and inclination to step into roles that provide it — fit together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Implementing the recommendations in this monograph, piloting initiatives like those being spearheaded by so many who participated in the Pass It On gathering, and working more broadly to make the most of the longevity revolution in mutually beneficial ways—promises a windfall of wellbeing for all generations, now and for years to come.

We hope reading the pages that follow will inspire you to join us, and the movement, to accomplish this essential work.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In June of 2014, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Encore.org and the Stanford Center on Longevity joined together to convene a conference entitled "*Pass it On: Mobilizing Encore Talent to Transform the Prospects of Vulnerable Children and Youth*." The insights and thoughts in this monograph have their source in that gathering, and we are grateful for the time and attention that many of the conference participants (listed on the following pages) have contributed to this monograph. We are especially indebted to Dawn Carr, Margaret Dyer-Chamberlain, Kate Jerome, Yochai Shavit, and Amy Yotopoulos for their significant contributions to the present report. This work would not have been possible without our collaborators from the Packard Foundation and Encore.org – we owe you our thanks and our deep appreciation.

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INTRODUCTION

> "Every child needs at least one adult who is irrationally crazy about him or her."
>
> *- Urie Bronfenbrenner*

Urie Bronfenbrenner, child psychologist and co-founder of the Head Start preschool program, passionately advanced the idea that children blossom not just in the embrace of parents, but also from the commitment of other adults who encourage and mentor them.

Bronfenbrenner's idea, straightforward yet profound, holds that a child's success in life is tied to meaningful relationships. And it invites one obvious and important question: Where do we find adults with the commitment, time and skill to engage with youth in these relationships that are so important to their development?

The answer is hiding in plain sight, and all around us. It is a vast human resource, flourishing in a world that is aging as never before, a resource waiting and ready to be tapped: millions of older adults. With a new generation of Americans reaching their 65th birthdays at the rate of over 11,000 each day, and with 32 years added to life expectancy since 1900, this is a resource that we can't afford to ignore.

> "Children who are now in grade school will grow up in societies filled with old people. Most children—not just a lucky few—will grow up in families in which four or five generations are alive at the same time."
>
> *- Laura Carstensen, Professor and Founding Director of the Stanford Center on Longevity* [1]

The "New" Older Generation – An Overlooked Resource

Today's older people are healthier, mentally and physically, than older generations before them.[2] They are far removed from the dependency, disability and decline that are yesterday's stereotype of what it means to age. They are capable and experienced. In fact, if measured by life expectancy, many classified as old today would be classified as middle aged. Each successive cohort over the last century has entered later life with progressively better physical and cognitive health. Stanford psychologist Laura Carstensen's research has found that as we age, our brains actually improve in many ways, including in complex problem solving and emotional skills.[3] Even more importantly, our aging population has distinctive qualities to meet the needs of youth. Older adults are exceptionally suited to meet these needs in part because they welcome meaningful, productive activity and engagement. They seek – and need – purpose in their lives.

Today's aging population, the largest senior cohort the world has known, offers a potent synergy for society, and for youth specifically. The very attributes that older people possess – the often-overlooked gains that come with aging – are ideally attuned to key needs of today's younger generation.

Simply stated, older people's qualities and their affinity for purpose and engagement position them to make critical contributions to the lives of youth who need help the most. At the same time, such engagement fulfills older people's desire for a sense of meaning and purpose, which in turn promotes well-being. Mutually meaningful relationships develop for both old and young.

Younger Generation at a Crossroads

Socioeconomic and educational gaps have never been larger among young people in the United States, spotlighting a critical imperative to reshape the trajectories of our most vulnerable young men and women.[4] A large proportion of youth lack the resources needed for success, their educational pathways and well-being impeded by poverty, perpetuating an ever deeper gulf between those who succeed in life and those who struggle.

But the challenges extend beyond those faced by vulnerable youth. All young adults increasingly require so-called non-cognitive emotional skills, which are the crucial attitudes, behaviors and strategies required to maneuver in a complex and technical world. These skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving and social interaction influence social connections and sense of purpose. They are key to success in school and work, and they enable people to contribute meaningfully to society.

Non-cognitive skills such as teamwork, confidence and organizational competence also are linked to success in academic pursuits. Emphasizing non-cognitive development has been shown to improve concrete performance in reading, writing and mathematics. Unfortunately, the deficit in non-cognitive skills is most acute among socio-economically disadvantaged youth. [5]

An Answer: Meaningful Relationships Between Old and Young

Increasingly, research has aligned with Bronfenbrenner's premise that a key ingredient for success in life is the commitment of a non-parental adult to a youth's well-being.[6 7 8 9 10 11] Youth are more likely to thrive when their passions and ideas are championed, especially when their champions help them cultivate a sense of purpose. In turn, that purposeful attitude and action paves the way to a productive and meaningful adulthood,[12] and to strong social relationships that are so important to adult stability.

Older people are well positioned to step into the role of champion and mentor, either complementing family relationships or providing important support where family structures are weak. They offer the emotional stability that improves with age, and the wisdom that grows as experience deepens. They have strategic communication skills and are motivated to contribute to the lives of future generations.

Older adults can help young people develop their talents and knowledge, and can advise on relationships and daily life conflicts.[13] Importantly, their years of living give them an almost intangible ability to communicate and model non-cognitive skills and to help young people develop those key traits. The perspective that comes with age, and their focus on what matters, helps older adults to nurture development of social skills and sense of purpose among young people with whom they form meaningful relationships.

> "The key is pairing great potential with great experience."
>
> *Susan Curnan, Brandeis professor and Executive Director, Center for Youth and Communities* [14]

And the benefits are not one-directional. Research shows that pairing young and older people has positive consequences for each. In promoting the well-being of the next generation, older adults experience fulfillment and purpose in their own lives. This mutual benefit is perhaps the most compelling reason for programs that connect young and old.

Conclusion

There is scant public discussion about how our increasing longevity, fueled for decades by advances in science and public health, can offer greater opportunities for individuals and for society. Although many existing programs promote intergenerational activity, others can be encouraged to orient their activities toward young-old pairings. Still others might pioneer ways that older adults can help young people by building community resources or advising non-profit organizations. Reaping the benefits of intergenerational, purposeful relationships requires institutional and cultural change, a reorientation that recognizes the capabilities of this vast human resource, aging adults, and the value that intergenerational matches can instill in the lives of both young and old.

Recognizing this unique fit and its mutually beneficial synchronicity holds untapped promise for the good of current and future generations and society at large.

The Stanford Center on Longevity and Encore.org offer this monograph to underscore the unlimited possibilities that intergenerational relationships hold for our future. To fulfill the potential of older people will require a change in thinking, policy and cultural attitudes. To match this potential with the critical needs of our youth will require creativity and intentionality. This monograph is intended to provide an underpinning for policymakers and institutions as they begin to support this movement.

"In the coming decades, there will be many more older people in the United States at precisely the moment it is imperative that we do everything possible to nurture and develop the next generation. Why not match talent with need, tap experience for youth, connect supply with demand? Why not activate this solution hidden in plain sight?"

- Marc Freedman, Founder and CEO of Encore.org [15]

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

- **Unique abilities** and motivations of a growing cohort of older people have the potential to fundamentally benefit youth.
- **Societal challenges and inadequate adult connections** jeopardize young people's ability to thrive even while non-parental, older adults are increasingly positioned to help them profoundly.
- **Meaningful relationships** between old and young create a secret sauce that benefits both generations.
- **"Making the match"** between old and young would allow both to thrive and grow.

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CHAPTER 1
The Aging Population: A Transformative Resource

> "Older people in an aging society are a dividend. It will require great imagination to envision roles and responsibilities that capitalize on the capabilities of mature minds and match their aspirations to give back and leave the future better than the present. This feels like a Sputnik moment!"
>
> *Linda Fried, Dean of Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University* [1,2]

It is no secret that aging invariably entails some level of mental and physical decline. But that simplistic profile doesn't begin to describe what it means to age in today's world. As a new generation of older Americans emerges, research is providing new insights into this population and revealing the many advantages that also accompany our years of living. For our younger generations, and for society more broadly, these assets of aging hold nothing less than a transformative potential.

What are the pluses? Clearly, with age we tend to slow down in various ways; but we also accumulate valuable knowledge and assimilate life experiences. Our ability to reflect on the past gives us more strategic tools for good decision-making, especially in highly-charged and complex situations. We also have greater ability to focus on positive emotions and on regulating our emotional responses. At the same time, age brings with it a growing concern for the well-being of future generations.

Taken as a package that defines growing older, these assets are particularly beneficial to our ability to see the big picture. They help us create more harmonious relationships and work through difficult problems.

Importantly, these age-related attributes also align with the very skills and abilities that greatly enhance young people's ability to thrive. It is this synchronicity that holds untapped promise at a time when our youth grapple with the realities of an ever-more complex and integrated world, one that demands emotional stability and strategic thinking as the basic building blocks for success in life.

Assets of Aging

Scholars long have focused on development as primarily a childhood process. We now have evidence that humans continue to grow and develop well into later life; that our bodies, brains and personalities evolve as our chronological age advances. And as life spans have dramatically increased over the past century, a growing literature has described the critical phases of adult development and the positive aspects of later life.

Not least among these assets is wisdom. With age, our understanding of our roles in the lives of others changes. Our goals shift. This evolution typically is associated with becoming "wise," a process generally viewed as the highest form of human development, directly linked to relationships and successful navigation of social life.[3]

The linkage between aging and wisdom is a logical one. Accumulation of life experiences offers more opportunity to become "expert" on different subjects. Life experience also increases the chances of encountering complex problems for which we can develop solutions and strategies based on situations we have faced in the past. Aging also involves the ability to maximize success, leading older people to be more strategic in their interactions with others. In short, as we age we develop more ability to control our environment and navigate our lives within it.

Knowing how and when to activate personal skills compensates for decline in other resources – most notably physical health losses that come with aging.[4] [5] [6] Research shows that people tend to recognize the limitations of their physical abilities as they age and they maximize new strategies that allow them to succeed in their environments. This ability to adapt helps people to thrive in the later years of life as they choose how and where to employ their skills. When adaptation leads to success, people have feelings of resilience and capability and an increased sense of well-being. [7]

Emotional Abilities

As older adults accumulate a wide base of knowledge and experience, they hone the ability to activate these skills in meaningful ways. The extent to which they draw on their experiences is strongly correlated with their emotions, their short- and long-term goals, and their drive to "give back."

Older people's focus is distinct from that of early adulthood, a time when our goals necessarily center on the future. As young adults, we seek out new information and skills to provide for our current and future needs, including the well-being of our families. But as we age, we become increasingly aware of the finite timeline – one that we see growing shorter – where our remaining years are logged. As a result, our focus changes. Our emphasis shifts from the future to a more immediate time frame, and to honing emotionally meaningful experiences within that closer horizon.

This shortening of "time horizons" concentrates our attention on behaviors and thoughts that improve emotional balance. In this way, age generates more stable and positive emotional experiences.[8]

As we focus on positive emotions, we are better able to center our lives on what is important and meaningful, and to remain calm and controlled during difficulties. We can sort through complex and emotionally charged conflicts, such as handling cultural or economic disputes, and we are able to better weigh the multiple perspectives that lead to compromises and solutions. [9] [10] [11] [12]

> "For most older people, simple pleasures expand in importance. Sticky interpersonal situations don't seem worth the trouble. Good times are cherished and there is a greater recognition that bad times will pass. People are more likely to forgive when time horizons are limited. Even the very experience of emotion changes with age. Feelings grow richer and more complex."
>
> *Laura Carstensen, Professor and Founding Director of the Stanford Center on Longevity* [13]

Not Sweating the Small Stuff

Emotional abilities and a reorientation of goals and focus appear to explain why older people are more adept than their younger counterparts at weeding out what is inconsequential in life. In colloquial terms, they know how to avoid "sweating the small stuff." The adaptive aspect of aging affects how we evaluate our lives and use our knowledge to form these re-appraisals.[14] Our experience allows us to sort out how we should spend our time and energy, prioritizing what we consider important and letting go of minor annoyances or situations that may have occupied our emotions at a younger age. This strategic sorting also focuses attention on the positive over the negative in life.

An Ideal Match

Emotional stability and willingness to forgive make older adults especially well-suited to mentor younger counterparts on complex interpersonal problems. Older people are "excellent candidates to serve as facilitators who can help different members of a group see the bigger picture," Stanford psychologist Laura Carstensen writes. [15]

Not only are older people well-positioned to help young people develop talents, skills and knowledge, they are also in a good position to advise them on relationships and daily life conflicts. [16] They can assist youth in both practical knowledge, such as seeing tasks through to completion, and general wisdom, like how to navigate social situations.

The Drive to Give Back

In addition to the experience and emotional qualities that contribute to the well-being of youth, aging adults also share another key attribute – they are motivated to get involved. Giving of ourselves to younger generations is a component of maturation. [17] [18] [19] This drive develops as we age and is fulfilled through mentorship, leadership and the creation of positive legacies.

In 1950, Erik Erikson was the first to describe this aspect of aging, suggesting that human development extended beyond childhood and into adulthood. Among the developmental phases that unfold across the life span, Erikson said, is "generativity." He defined this phase as "an interest in establishing and guiding the next generation." The impulse begins in mid-life when people, not surprisingly, feel a strong desire to shower their children with time, love, information, and resources. [20]

More recent research shows that the generative impulse manifests beyond the family network that Erikson described. This psycho-social mindset is focused on leaving a positive legacy by more broadly addressing the needs and successes of coming generations.[21] In sharing their wisdom, older adults seek to promote the positive functioning of society in the future. They prioritize helping others, and especially guiding future generations, and as people age, they are motivated by meaningful legacy.

Younger Than Ever

What was "old age" at the time Erickson introduced the concept of generativity now is a new life stage of extended vitality. With the maturation of the Baby Boom generation, nearly one in five Americans will be at least 65 by 2030. Thanks to the added years of life and health resulting largely from 20th-century advances in science and public health, this is a group that does not feel old; people in their sixties and

> "Generativity is a human universal. All societies count on the generative inclinations of adults to make a caring world for children and to assure societal continuity and progress."
>
> *Dan McAdams, Northwestern psychologist* [22]

seventies today have greater capacity to be productive and engaged than did seniors of prior generations. Stanford economist John Shoven shows that mortality risk in adulthood is being pushed out such that older ages are "younger" when measured in years remaining as opposed to years since birth.[23] In fact, the typical Boomer believes that old age does not begin until age 72, according to a Pew Research survey. Nearly 61 percent say they feel spryer than their age would imply. [24]

Absent brain disease, most of today's adults can expect to live in their homes, work and volunteer, and participate in their communities until they reach old age. Not until the final year or so of life, when health typically becomes a barrier, does the instinct to engage with the broader community narrow.

Positive Returns

As people navigate the aging years, there's an upside to their evolving intergenerational focus that redounds to older adults themselves. Researchers propose that using one's wisdom and abilities in a meaningful way is critical to well-being in later life. [25] More specifically, fulfilling the urge for intergenerational impact can mean the difference in overall well-being, as giving to others involves a sense of social belonging and value.

Older people reap benefits from setting and meeting positive, realistic emotionally meaningful goals. In using their abilities to achieve those goals and to divert negative situations, they experience fewer mental health problems and improved well-being. Alternatively, well-being suffers when they face social isolation or other situations that impede the ability to achieve life goals. [26]

Feeling socially integrated, needed, and purposeful – the core of "successful aging" – is intrinsic to the feedback loop when aging adults fulfill their generative drive by linking their goals to the needs of future generations.

Mutual Benefits

Older people's skills and intergenerational impulses thus form a natural coupling with young peoples' need for knowledge and mentoring. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, these social relationships and connections improve the emotional resources of young people as they transition from childhood to adolescence and into adulthood. Meaningful social interactions with older adults help young people develop a sense of purpose and an understanding of why their lives matter. Research shows that when youth are on the receiving end of support and mentoring from caring adults, they develop motivation to "pay it forward" and give back to others.[27] Conversely, youth who lack meaningful social connections face poorer life trajectories as adults.[28 29]

Conclusion

Meaningful, purposeful relationships between young and old result in a dual win: they help youth develop their own sense of self-worth and meaning while enriching the lives of older adults who contribute to the well-being of upcoming generations.

As discussed in the next chapter, this mutual benefit must be fulfilled to sustain successful intergenerational relationships. To help young people thrive, the relationships must address young people's socio-emotional needs. And, they must fulfill the older population's impulse to have a positive impact on the next generation – a synergistic win-win for society as a whole.

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

- "It's surprising to people when you say something like the **number of older people in the world is the only natural resource that's actually growing**," Laura L. Carstensen, Stanford psychologist.[30]
- Age-related assets are often not recognized, but they are important to note: **Wisdom from life experience, emotional intelligence, generativity and the drive to "give back."**
- The skills and attributes of aging adults **align** with the skills and abilities that enhance young people's ability to thrive.

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CHAPTER 2
American Youth at a Crossroads

> "Virtually all young people need more attention and guidance from their elders than they are currently receiving."
>
> *William Damon, Professor and Director of the Stanford Center on Adolescence* [1]

We have only to look at global academic indicators to recognize that too many of our nation's children and adolescents lack the resources they need to succeed. The world's richest nation lags behind many other countries on academic readiness measures, a trend that has increased over the past three decades in tandem with the persistent and growing gap in the success pathways for rich and poor. [2]

While a college degree is widely recognized as strongly predictive of health and financial security in life, fewer than one-third of U.S. adults possess this academic credential. [3] Signs of improvement are not readily apparent. The Institute for Research and Reform in Education finds that just two in five people are ready for college at early adulthood. Forty percent are deeply unprepared or "off-track" for the responsibilities of adulthood more generally. [4]

The United States is at a critical juncture in preparing its young people for success in life. The Search Institute, which has studied youth development for half a century, points to a society that is struggling to instill the emotional tools and skills that new generations need for the complexity of today's economy, culture and institutions. According to the America's Promise Alliance Survey, today's young people do not have the "soft skills" that are necessary for success. Not only are America's youth significantly lacking these skills, but they also lack opportunities at school, home and through real-world skill building activities to learn and practice them.[5]

Threatening to deepen the problem is the growing U.S. gap between rich and poor. Research shows a clear link between socio-economic disparities and pathways to college. Among our 75 million children and teens, more than one in five live in poverty. Of this population, 9 percent achieve a college degree, compared to 34 percent of middle class youth, and 77 percent of wealthy students, the Pell Institute has found.[6]

Socio-economic disparity creates alarming ripples: poor children have higher susceptibility to risky behaviors such as smoking, and alcohol and drug abuse. In a self-reinforcing trend that bodes ill for the future, social-class inequality is both a cause and a consequence of escalating poverty.

The Demands of Keeping Up

Beyond the particular challenges of the most at-risk youth, all young people today need updated capacity and skills for their roles in an increasingly complex, technical and multicultural world. Especially key are so-called "non-cognitive" emotional skills. These abilities influence how people connect socially and find purpose in life. They include attributes like self-control, motivation and social ease, and encompass attitudes, behaviors and strategies that underpin success in school and work environments.[9]

Experts agree that non-cognitive skills are as important, or even more critical, than cognitive intelligence when it comes to avoiding risky behaviors and finding success en-route to adulthood.[10] Teens lacking these skills significantly lag their peers in high school achievement, college graduation rates and workplace success, regardless of socio-economic status.[11]

A Vast Socioeconomic Gulf

However, the non-cognitive arsenal does correlate with socioeconomic status. A rich-poor gap of crisis proportions has emerged in cognitive abilities (e.g., reading and math scores), as well as important educational milestones (e.g., high school completion, and college enrollment and completion).[12] Importantly, mounting evidence shows that early intervention aimed at developing emotional skills can play a critical role in mitigating this worrisome achievement gap.

"There is a lot of research on the importance of skills like math and reading, but the truth is, as our economies become more service-oriented, the need for soft skills is as prevalent as ever, and those are the skills that people in poor neighborhoods often don't have access to."

Mario Small, Harvard Sociologist [13]

What Makes a Difference

Older adults can facilitate development of non-cognitive skills in young people by cultivating meaningful relationships. We highlight three key ingredients that play an important role in bolstering young people's ability to thrive – (1) an interconnected web of good mental health, (2) purpose in life, and (3) meaningful, positive relationships – all of which are related almost entirely to the relationships that young people have.[14]

Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being

It goes without saying that good mental health underpins the ability to thrive throughout life. Studies show that anxiety and psychological distress during childhood predict poor outcomes for thriving in adulthood.[15] Absent mental disorders, good mental health also entails a positive sense of self and a degree of agreeableness and control over one's emotions.[16]

Although personality does play a role in mental and emotional health, development and maintenance of mental and emotional well-being is cultivated throughout life. [17] Young people learn these skills through social interactions with people who already possess them. Such interactions help a child develop a healthy sense of purpose, independence, self-advocacy, and emotional stability, which are hallmarks of mental well-being. [18] On the other hand, youth facing mental or physical illness face serious challenges to thriving. [19] [20] Social relationships can mitigate such barriers because they facilitate positive psychological health, self-esteem and thriving.[21]

A Purposeful Life

Purpose in life is well established as key to well-being, the antidote to feelings of emptiness that cause psychological suffering (Viktor E. Frankel on Logotherapy dating back to the late 1960s and early 1970s). The importance of purpose for child development was highlighted about a decade ago by Stanford Professor of Education William Damon, who asserted that, "Purpose endows a person with joy in the good times and resilience in hard times, and this holds true all throughout life."[22]

Commitment to purpose is, in fact, one of the most potent predictors of life satisfaction among young adults.[23] Professor Damon raises concerns about a growing lack of purpose and commitment among youth. Not only are younger people postponing firm commitments to adult roles like worker, spouse, parent and citizen, only about 60 percent of youth have shown commitment to purposeful activities or developing realistic plans for pursuing their aspirations.[24] Although many young people have high ambitions, they seem to lack the plans needed to fulfill them. Damon describes such young people as motivated but directionless, increasingly frustrated, depressed, and alienated. Building and nurturing a sense of purpose is critical to motivating youth to succeed, and a key pathway is engagement in meaningful social interactions that cultivate personal meaning and a sense of autonomy beginning at early ages.[25]

It is important to consider how we can cultivate this critical sense of purpose in children and youth. A body of evidence tells us that meaningful social interaction[26] [27] is perhaps the most important ingredient; the recipe is tailor-made for relationships between young and old.

Positive relationships affect development in two ways, as conceptualized by Toni Antonucci and Hiroko Akiyama:

- Supportive, nurturing human connections embed a sense of competence and self-worth, the fertile soil in which mind and soul blossom, and
- Supportive relationships kick in during times of crisis when we lean on our social networks for help, thus offsetting negative effects on our well-being.[28]

Importantly for youth, Harvard sociologist Mario Small notes, positive social relationships open doors, most prominently in our educational and professional lives, by facilitating social mobility.

Meaningful Relationships

Close and caring relationships are undeniably linked to health and well-being at all stages of life. For youth, meaningful or "developmental relationships" are crucial to the mastery of essential skills for success. Experts consider such relationships "the most consistent and robust"[29] and "fundamental"[30] way to meet these skill needs, which cannot be learned from books.

> "Young people need people in their lives who challenge growth, provide support, share power and expand possibilities."
>
> *Search-Institute.org* [31]

For most young people, parents can serve this developmental role. But all youth, especially those lacking well-functioning, close relationships with parents, can benefit from non-parental adults, who may include instructors, mentors, advocates and role models in arenas such as sports, hobbies, and other activities away from school.[32] [33]

These relationships outside of school and family foster young people's sense of purpose, social connections, and mental health and emotional well-being.[34] They are linked to reduced levels of risk behaviors.[35] [36] [37] [38] [39] [40]

How It Works

Meaningful roles for non-parental adults generally fall into two categories: a "compensatory" function when families fail to provide the commitment and support that youth need; or a "supplementary" role to augment the support young people already receive at home. [41]

A 2009 study found that relationships with non-parental adults benefit youth regardless of parenting or background, but vulnerable youth who are disadvantaged or at-risk appear to benefit the most from compensatory relationships.[42] [43]

Older adults are well suited for these critical roles. Studies involving grandparents, for example, find that older generations can serve in a useful supportive capacity when parents and teens don't get along. Where children and parents do enjoy good relationships, grandparents complement those bonds, and the grandchildren have even greater chances to avoid adjustment difficulties, and behavioral and emotional problems.[44]

Relationships as A Pathway To Success

The benefits of non-parental relationships extend beyond the individual impact on youth. They also improve young people's relationships with families, peers, schools and the broader community. [45] These are the trickle-out impacts of social capital, stemming from youth's ability to connect with social networks that help them access resources.[46] Non-parental mentors not only provide youth with care and emotional support, but also help them forge these connections with people and organizations who enhance their chances to grow and access new opportunities. For vulnerable teens in particular, such "resource brokers" are important in facilitating resource and development opportunities, Professor Small asserts. When they receive help in leveraging social capital and ties to local organizations, youth are more likely to become involved in public service and civic work themselves. In turn, community engagement makes them feel useful and needed, and their community connections enhance their sense of purpose.

In other words, beyond the direct benefits they experience from caring and supportive relationships, young people also gain personal enrichment when they feel they are providing value to the lives of others. Thus, meaningful interaction across the generations reaps clear benefits for young people, comparably important feelings of purpose for older adults, and enrichment that extends to the broader community. All of society reaps the vitality of a new generation of community-oriented citizens, mentored by the generation that will leave the stage ahead of them. Our next chapter outlines how the institutions and organizations of our society can help to "make the match" between the generations.

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

- American youth are at a crossroads; **intervention is required** to ensure that our nation's youth will thrive in life. This involves both cognitive and non-cognitive skills.
- **Meaningful relationships are key** to helping young people to thrive and to develop purposeful lives.
- **Non-parental mentors can be formative** in providing support and can help young people to leverage social capital.

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CHAPTER 3
Making the Match: Bringing the Experience of Older Adults to America's Youth

"Most communities now have some kind of governance strategy around youth and many about older people. The mission is to connect the young and the old in powerful ways, and no matter if you are working in education or work force development or prisons or health reform, you can begin to integrate this idea as a principle in that work."

Susan Curnan, Brandeis Professor and Executive Director, Center for Youth and Communities[1]

More than 100 million Americans are over 50, while 75 million are younger than 18. Poverty impacts 16.5 million of those young people. An ideal match emerges when we align the aging population's emotional abilities, experience and urge to "give back," with young people's need for meaningful relationships. Older adults gain meaning and purpose as younger people offer their unique skills and attributes to these intergenerational relationships. It is easy to see how the interlocking of these human resources can create widespread benefits.

Intentionally fostering intergenerational relationships helps young people to develop a sense of purpose, social connections and good mental and emotional health. Although notoriously a challenging and difficult process, it flourishes more readily and sustainably when it is linked with thoughtful, intentionally designed programs and organizations.[2]

A Lack of Opportunity

Unfortunately, older people who want to give back often lack the opportunity to form meaningful relationships outside their families. And programs designed to engage them often fail to provide mutual benefit. This gap naturally deprives youth of important relationships and development opportunities, and it leaves aging adults' purposeful goals unrealized.

To create and enhance effective programs requires a national agenda, one that seeks a culture of mutually beneficial, intergenerational engagement. We interviewed leaders in intergenerational programming nationwide in order to suggest a framework that can underpin such an agenda, and to identify key success factors for programs, organizations and companies seeking to take up this challenge. Those interviews informed this chapter, which introduces a model for pairing the strengths and needs of youth and elders, and maximizing the benefits of those relationships. This model can be used for any type of programming, including working for pay or volunteering (whether unpaid or with provision of a stipend). We also introduce the notion of a toolkit of practical recommendations based on best practices.

Making it Intentional

Although older adults possess the key attributes that uniquely position them to benefit the young, the challenge remains: how can we bring these two groups together in a way that puts young people on the path to happy and productive lives while affording adults a meaningful and purposeful role? To this end, we introduce a suggested intergenerational planning approach intended to advance the conversation about how to "make the match."

Why We Need a New Model

Intergenerational programs, and facilitated interactions between young and old in general, typically have been rooted in the concept of one generation helping another. This organizing principle reflects an attitude that one can either help or be helped. This approach can promote ageism directed at older people and a paternalistic lack of respect for younger people. It hampers chances for intergenerational solidarity and impedes different generations' understanding that they need each other for stronger communities and better individual lives.

For the purposes of providing real-world examples of how this model works, in this chapter we often refer to examples that are volunteer programs; however, our model is relevant to both paid and unpaid environments. Currently, there are fewer examples of paid work opportunities designed to leverage the resources of elders to address the needs of our nation's youth. Our proposed model could help change that by offering a structure to guide intergenerational engagement. Further, given that research shows multigenerational staffing results in more productive and engaged work environments, there are many reasons why such efforts can be beneficial.

Generally, two approaches to bringing older adults and children together have prevailed. In the first, older people are a resource for the needs of vulnerable youth. For example, volunteering as a service to the young has been shown to benefit the health and well-being of older people.[3]

The second paradigm involves younger people helping older adults, especially the frail and vulnerable. In some circumstances this approach has succeeded in changing students' negative attitudes about old age,[4] but without appropriate training and awareness of mutual benefit, it can have the opposite effect. When young people interact mostly with very frail older adults who confirm some negative stereotypes of aging, the volunteers may develop inaccurate and strongly negative perceptions of older people and aging.

When one generation is either the problem or the cure, these programs not only run the risk of solidifying negative stereotypes, they also are unlikely to foster mutual benefit or intergenerational solidarity. The social structure in which members of each generation feel that they are needed by, and need, the other generations is not affirmed.[5] On the other hand, if programs are designed to intentionally facilitate mutually beneficial relationships between young and old, we can begin to create a national movement for large-scale, long-lasting positive change.

Our intergenerational planning approach focuses on intentional efforts that are needed to ensure that both age groups feel they have something to contribute and something to gain from intergenerational interaction. This requires organizations to provide a structure that facilitates mutual benefit for both young and old.

An Intergenerational Planning Approach

Our approach includes a core assumption: To feel that relationships are "meaningful," people must feel that they both contribute something important and receive something valuable. This feeling may occur naturally in some relationships – notably in family or friendships. However, more structured environments, such as volunteer programs, need an intentional, conscious effort to ensure that that these feelings of mutuality and meaning can develop.

A second assumption inherent in our approach is that programs can adapt to fit specific focus areas. We present a guiding framework, not a recipe for program planning and development.

The table of needs and resources below displays the heart of this mutual benefit model. This example presumes a one-on-one, intergenerational relationship, which tends to be the most prevalent approach in volunteer or mentoring programs.

	STRENGTHS/RESOURCES	NEEDS
Jane, Age 72	• Good with math (former accountant) • Well-traveled • Patient • Has lots of friends in the community • Has time to give	• How to use emerging social media • Staying connected with family • Heavy lifting around the house • Feeling a little bored • Wants to "give back"
Kate, age 11	• Loves music • Very active on social media • Athletic, strong • Talkative • Tech-savvy	• Improve math skills • Improve reading skills • Stay away from "bad company" • Be more committed and motivated

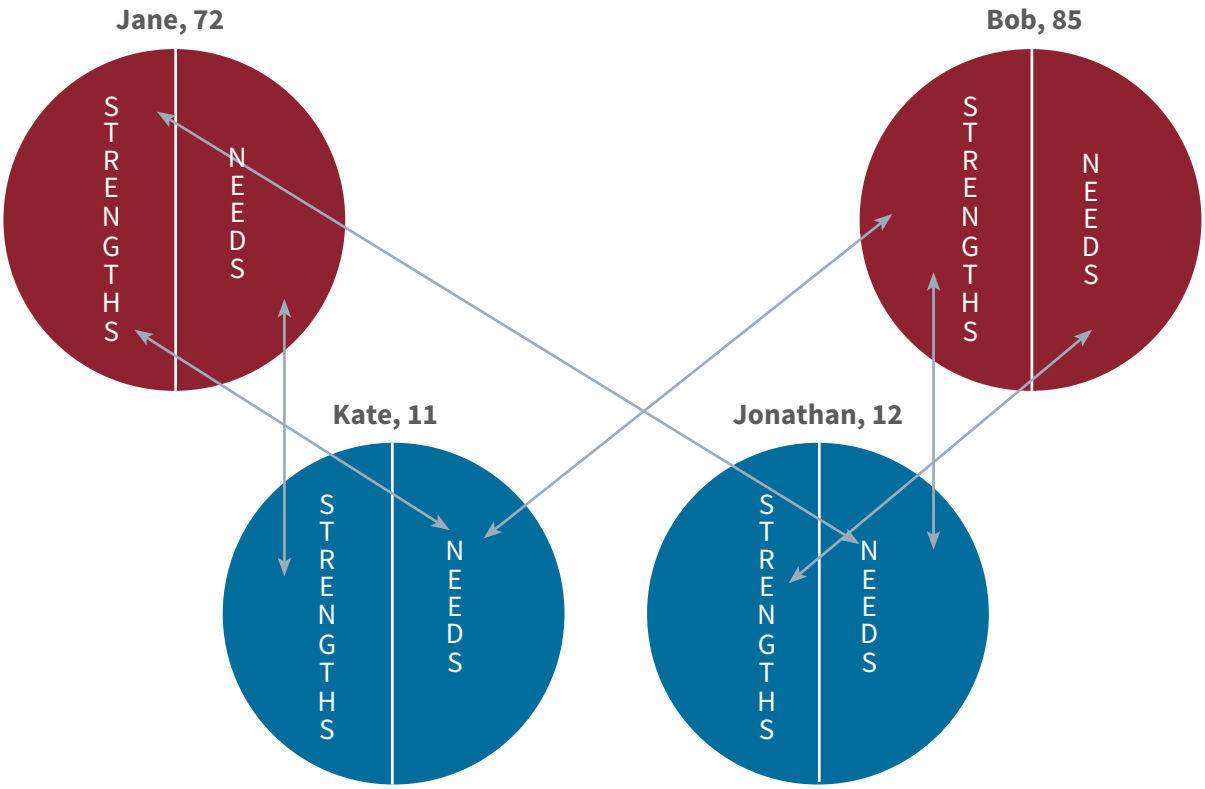
Matching Strengths and Needs

Ideally, older and younger participants describe their own strengths and needs as part of the program "intake." Strength-based developmental programs are routinely used in many situations, including youth organizations and workplaces, and we recommend taking this one step further: Both participants start by documenting their own strengths and needs. This intentional process promotes commitment to the program by allowing the participants to feel they are recognized as unique individuals, while also clarifying their role in carrying out the program goals. Any additional information that is needed can be gathered from outside resources (e.g., teachers, families) and added to the chart. Volunteer coordinators or participants themselves can add new information once the program is under way.

The goal is to match one participant's strengths with the needs of the other, and vice versa. This is not a one-way matching; and the more matches that are identified and cultivated, the greater the chances to form a meaningful relationship.

Mix and Match In-Group Relationships

This approach can be broadened to incorporate additional individuals. In our example, one of Jane's strengths is a wide network of friends in the community. But there is no companion "need" from Kate to match with that resource. But what if a second youth, Jonathan, also in the program, could benefit from Jane's network of friends? She could be a resource to help him get to know the community. It may turn out that Jonathan happens to be an avid musician. Music is not a direct match with Jane's interests, but rather does match the interests of another older adult in the community, Bob, who loves live music but can't easily get to concerts because of significant arthritis. Perhaps Jonathan could share his latest musical compositions with Bob, or practice for an upcoming recital. Beyond that, Bob happens to be a writer, so he may be able to help Kate with her need to improve her reading skills. A visualization of this concept would look like this:



Meaning and Relationships

Mutual benefit should be a guiding approach for these pairings, no matter what the purpose or goals of the program. Whether in a community garden, a neighborhood history project, or a school learning center, program leaders and staff should communicate with participants, learn about their strengths and needs, and frame the program to enable matches. One way this could be done is to include a briefing as part of the initial onboarding process that outlines the intention and purpose behind the importance of mutual benefit. Then participants simply fill out a checklist form

of strengths and needs, and a staff member or team makes the matches. Strength and need forms could be renewed annually and matches reviewed accordingly.

Mutual benefit is key to intergenerational relationships – even beyond establishing older adults and young people as important contributors to society. It is the mutually beneficial aspect of the engagement that is most likely to ensure success of such programs and enhance intergenerational solidarity. Without striving for this primary goal, the impact of other programmatic goals will be severely diminished.

A successful model of intergenerational engagement is AARP Experience Corps, which harnesses the skills of older adult volunteers by training and assigning them as tutors in elementary school classrooms, with proven results.

AARP EXPERIENCE CORPS

AARP Experience Corps provides reading intervention for thousands of struggling school children across the country. The concept was described by John Gardner, former Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, and developed as a pilot project by Linda Fried, dean of the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University, and Marc Freedman, founder and CEO of Encore.org. Initially implemented in a dozen schools in 1995, it was expanded as a nationwide organization, and in 2011 became a program of AARP.

Tutors provide a consistent (up to 15 hours/week), committed and caring presence for children. The children experience higher test scores, increased self-confidence, and measured progress in reading and academic achievement.

AARP Experience Corps empirically studies the positive effects on both the older adult volunteers and the children who are struggling in school. It makes a significant impact on students, schools, community organizations and volunteers. It helps schools by improving classroom behavior and strengthening the learning environment. Teachers and principals report high satisfaction with the program, with three out of four teachers reporting "dramatic improvements" in student behavior, readiness to learn, and respect for adults over age 50.

The volunteer tutors show significant increases in cognitive performance, physical activity and strength when compared with a control group. They achieve greater social engagement, reporting fewer hours spent watching TV and an increase in the number of people they believe they can turn to for help when needed. Brain imaging revealed that even neural structures changed in positive ways.

Retention is high – 85 percent, compared to 66 percent for all volunteers nationally, and 16 to 43 percent for older adults specifically.[6] *This can be attributed to the evidence volunteers receive that their work is making a difference in children's lives.*

A Toolkit: Five Strategies that support Mutually Beneficial Intergenerational Relationships

Research overwhelmingly shows that intergenerational programs are far more successful when they are built on a foundation of meaningful relationships. Based on interviews with national leaders in intergenerational programming and aimed both to guide existing programs and facilitate new ones, we offer the following toolkit of 5 strategies that experts agree are crucial to successfully creating the meaningful relationships that will lead to mutually beneficial engagement among youth and seniors.

1. Build bi-directional relationships

Developing strong relationships takes intentional effort to ensure that relationships are "bi-directional" – that is, each person contributes to and benefits from the program and goals. Such "mutual enhancement"[7] means that neither party is treated as stereotypically needy. Participants are recruited as assets having something both to offer and gain from each another. Experts call these resulting relationships "developmental relationships" because the individuals involved spend a lot of time getting to know each other, and are flexible in their expectations of the relationships, with older adults taking cues from the youth.[8] Programs that take a developmental approach produce longer lasting and more satisfying relationships, a critical factor for motivating young people to strive for deeper and broader knowledge, skill, experience and mastery. [9] [10]

In one successful program, YouthBuild, low-income young people learn construction skills by building affordable housing and community structures, while at the same time learning about the power of community service and altruism. In one instance, a group of low-income teens helping repair a building that housed primarily older adults began bringing mail and groceries to those who were home-bound. Then some of those older adults began teaching the young people the proper way to install a new window. In this way, the strengths and needs of both the older adults and the young people came together, creating a mutually beneficial relationship.

2. Identify mutual interests and characteristics

Relationships founded on a sense of trust, connection, encouragement and practical assistance lead to the transmission of non-cognitive skills as described in Chapter 2, including the ability to communicate appropriately with a range of people, cultures, and communities. Both youth and older adults feel more committed to these relationships when they can provide input into the match. Such input might include having a say in choosing a mentor, rather than being assigned one.

When older adults and youth come from different socioeconomic or ethnic backgrounds, they may struggle to establish trust, hindering the development of strong bonds.[11] Mutual interests, such as sports or recreational activities,[12 13] or sharing characteristics like race, neighborhood or community can help overcome other differences and generate credibility and trust.[14] Working together toward a common goal or project enhances both the relationship and the work itself.

The innovative LinkAges TimeBank, a "neighborhood service-exchange network that matches you with the unique skills, talents, and needs of those who live nearby"[15] is a free-to-join service, where individuals enter their skills and abilities into an online database (e.g.: teach guitar, provide transportation), as well as what kind of help they seek (e.g.: learn how to use eBay, plant a vegetable garden). The TimeBank also provides a platform for meeting new people with similar interests, or segmenting the exchange within an existing community or organization (i.e.: faith-based, neighborhood, etc.).

3. Define commitment

Clear expectations and firm commitments from both older adults and youth are not only vital, without them a program may prove detrimental to the very youth it was aiming to serve. Numerous studies reveal that shortened mentoring periods may have damaging effects on youth, leading to setbacks for the young people involved and leaving them worse off than before the relationship began. Relationships lasting three months or less, can actually do more harm than good.[16 17] Conversely, evidence points to numerous added benefits when youth experience longer-term relationships with mentors.[18 19 20 21 22] Commitments of at least a year, with frequent contact between the participants, reap benefit for both parties as well as the organization.[23]

Relationships characterized by warmth, closeness, connectedness, good communication, support, guidance, secure attachment and responsiveness[24] tend to ensure that young people will thrive. Simply put, young people learn better when they know that the tutor or teacher cares about *them*.[25] With frequent opportunities for intergenerational matches to participate together, stable relationships ensue. These are a key factor in program success.

Jumpstart, a cost-effective program that trains community volunteers to serve preschool-age children in low-income neighborhoods offers a strong example of a program that facilitates long-term, regular engagement with frequent interactions. Jumpstart sessions take place twice a week and include sharing, reading, and skill development. The small group interaction builds trust that in turn supports learning.

4. Encourage multiple adult role models and Teams

In an ideal world, a young person has several role models who offer a variety of perspectives, interests and skill development. Together, they comprise a "team" of adults who can collaborate, share ideas and support each other as well as the young person. For youth who have been disappointed or abandoned in the past, dependable, predictable and reliable adults are especially important.[26] Just as exposure to different people and experiences furthers individual development, the availability of multiple mentors in the context of committed, intergenerational relationships can help young people blossom in new, positive ways.

5. Train for success

Training and ongoing support for both older adults and youth is essential to the success and longevity of intergenerational projects. Mentoring relationships in which adults have significant training last longer than those lacking such training.[28] For instance, research suggests that when adults feel rejected or disrespected by youth, they experience fewer benefits from the relationship.[29] Additionally, youth may anticipate rejection and lack of respect from older adults. So a key feature of training addresses the negative stereotypes of each group, the participants' fears, and an explanation of each group's positive, beneficial qualities.

"At times we have to work hard to change the mindset about how to treat children. Our understanding of how adults should interact with children has changed from the time older people were young, so we do a lot of coaching. We're there participating in the activities with them so they can see how we engage with the children – see the strategies and the language that we use. We give them lots of tips and tricks. We don't expect them to get it right away, but we do expect them to be open to these new methods, and make an effort to try new things; and they do."

Naila Bolus, President and CEO of Jumpstart [27]

Studies indicate that an increased level of training raises the likelihood that volunteers will remain involved,[30] gaining experience that also leads to a reduction in volunteer drop-out rate. For programs that engage older people with youth, ongoing support and training help sustain the volunteers' commitment, which leads to program success.[31]

Naila Bolus, President and CEO of Jumpstart, points out that training is especially crucial given the evolution in the way adults interact with children. In the years since today's seniors were young, use of language, expectations, and reactions have changed. Older adults make better volunteers when they receive training that covers these issues. AARP Experience Corps, for example, hosts repeated trainings for its volunteer tutors. Foster Grandparents trains volunteers specifically for the programs in which they will be working.

The 2005 White House Conference on Aging[32] [33] suggested that by encouraging training, policymakers and organizations could help reduce volunteer turnover and enhance organizational outcomes. Adults can learn the delicate balance between supporting young people's exploration of new things while remaining available for reassurance or assistance should there be difficulties along the way.[34] By addressing the gap between expectation and reality, waning motivation, and the opportunity to engage special-needs volunteers, training has the potential to strengthen the mutual benefit that is a hallmark of intergenerational programs.

Leveraging the Intergenerational Approach and Toolkit for Mutually Beneficial Relationships

"For older people it is a joy to participate in the maturation of a young person. Let's face it: You don't want your resume on your tombstone. You want Friend, Father, Teacher."

Tom Ehrlich, Stanford Professor of Education [35]

By imbuing an organizational culture with both the strategy and implementation of best practices in intergenerational relationship building, staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries all will benefit by achievement of program objectives. The final chapter of this monograph will grapple with "next steps" that can encourage this intergenerational movement for the future.

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

- There are now more older Americans than younger, and the **time is right to intentionally foster intergenerational relationships** that are meaningful and mutually beneficial.
- In order for relationships to be considered meaningful, **both parties must feel they contribute something important** and receive something valuable.
- A toolkit of **five practical strategies are recommended**, based on best practices that programs can adapt and personalize to fit specific focus areas.

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CHAPTER 4
A Movement in the Making: Fostering Intergenerational Connection

"It's easy to be overwhelmed by the scale of this challenge – linking the talents of older adults with the needs of young people – and doing it across the nation. Let's think about practical and doable steps that start to accomplish this dream, and that call us to action."

John Rother, National Coalition on Health Care President and CEO [1]

Building intergenerational engagement requires new thinking and creativity at a time when longer and healthier lives already are upending our notions about what it means to grow old. As described in previous chapters, the skills older adults offer are well-suited to the needs of youth. Intergenerational engagement clearly benefits the participants, both young and old, and also benefits our communities. So why aren't intergenerational relationships the norm in our culture? How can we facilitate this collaboration and tap the vast human capital of older people for the good of all society?

Recognizing the Barriers

There are many compelling examples of intergenerational programs throughout the country, and while most are doing important work at the local level, few are able to scale nationally. In order to create momentum for a widespread movement that fosters meaningful intergenerational connections, we must confront and challenge persistent cultural misperceptions, building awareness of the great resource – the older generation—that is all around us.

Old ideas and tired stereotypes hinder intergenerational collaboration and its mutual benefit. Outdated stereotypes of later adulthood as a time of dependency and decline serve to eclipse the notion of older people as a resource. Even though the retirement age of 65 was set in 1916 in Germany, it continues to be a ubiquitous, unchallenged standard in America today. This stagnant view ignores how life has changed and fails to recognize the wisdom, experience and emotional stability that older people offer, as well as the longevity revolution that has given us more years of productive, healthy life. Changing the definition of "old" means confronting a status quo in which:

- Ageism overlooks the value of older Americans either as paid workers or as volunteers.
- Service-based programs are typically not geared to take advantage of the older generation's talents.
- Youth organizations, and young people themselves, rarely utilize intergenerational models, perhaps because they are unaware of older people's willingness and availability to contribute.
- Government programs and other institutions are mostly age-segregated, with activities and services targeting young and old separately, limiting opportunities for intergenerational interaction. [2]
- Our culture casts retirement as a phase that immediately follows full-time work, an assumption that people go from near-constant work to near-total leisure. This approach accounts neither for the economic pressures in a world of extended longevity, nor for the importance of maintaining a sense purpose in life.[3]

Many older people are ready and willing to volunteer, but their talents are overlooked and intergenerational outreach is scant. The separation of old and young makes it harder to recognize that we are part of the same multi-generational community and that all ages would benefit from better integration through caring, committed relationships.

It's time to reverse these negative trends and misperceptions. Changing cultural assumptions will involve changing minds, as well as policy changes and the creation of new opportunities that involve the business community, government at all levels, academia, and nonprofit organizations. Community incentives will help to encourage the involvement of older people in civic and nonprofit organizations, and to remove financial barriers that impede their engagement. We must encourage young people to embrace — and indeed seek out — interaction with the older generation.

Incentives: Economics and Social Good

Changing the status quo also requires consideration of the economic implications of building a movement around enhanced intergenerational connections:

- It is well-documented that poor educational attainment among our nation's youth – which is a critical area where older adults can make an important impact – is a public health issue that has significant economic costs. Those with lesser education, particularly those without a high school diploma, are much more likely to have lower wages and greater financial struggles throughout life, with a ripple effect that places future generations at risk. The effects on society are costly, including higher rates of incarceration[4] and an economic burden estimated at $4.75 trillion.[5]

- It makes economic sense to invest in supporting vulnerable children and youth. As discussed in Chapter 2, older adults have the capacity to contribute to the development of children's non-cognitive skills, particularly through committed, meaningful relationships. A society where youth possess these critical non-cognitive skills is one with greater chances of maintaining successful relationships, educational outcomes and greater productivity. Such skills can be particularly hard to cultivate in marginalized communities, and this is where older generations can be especially helpful in building a brighter future. Engaging with youth in meaningful ways benefits the individuals involved, and will pay off in the contributions young people make to society as they mature. One program called Friends of the Children employs and trains salaried, professional mentors who maintain long-term commitments to children from kindergarten through high school graduation. The Harvard Business School Association of Oregon showed that for every $1 invested in Friends of the Children, the community receives over $7 in saved social costs. In total, helping one child saves the community $900,000 through increased high school graduation rates, decreased juvenile justice system costs and decreased teen pregnancy.[6] Although Friends of the Children does not currently utilize older adults as mentors, this model could be leveraged through pairing older adults' mentorship strengths with at-risk youth.

- The value of volunteerism to our society is well documented. In the year 2000, it is estimated that the dollar value of American adults volunteering was $239 billion,[7] and from 2016 to 2035 is projected to be as much as $1.4 trillion![8] And, while fewer than 25 percent of older adults are currently volunteering,[9] older adults have more discretionary time and volunteer twice as many hours per year than younger adults, accounting for nearly half of the hours volunteered in the U.S.[10] Older adults also say they are motivated to volunteer because they want to "make a difference in the lives of others" and seek "meaning and purpose in life."[11]

- Evidence also supports the economic case for social engagement and work by older people. Such activity contributes to enhanced mental and physical health, thus reducing the burden on taxpayer-supported programs like Medicaid and Medicare. Research links volunteering later in life to reduced hypertension, delayed disability, enhanced cognition, and lower mortality.[12] Loneliness and social isolation in later life relate to poorer health and enhanced risk of earlier nursing home care[13] which impose potentially significant health care costs – often at taxpayer expense. In part because of these reasons, older adults in lower socioeconomic groups seem to benefit the most from volunteering.[14] However, across the board, meaningful engagement is critical to well-being.[15]

"We live at a time of extraordinary possibility."

- Gene Steuerle, American Economist and Fellow at the Urban Institute[16]

The Promise

How can we scale national programs that make the match between older adults and youth? The answer lies in creating opportunities and providing incentives – for both programs and individuals. Policy progress – including identifying funding options – is essential in promoting intergenerational relationships and engagement. Without it, small albeit laudable programs are unlikely to gain national traction. Many programs like AARP Experience Corps involve older people in intergenerational relationships, but a broad sweep is needed to foster such pairings on a national scale.

Below we offer some potential strategies for building a scalable intergenerational movement:

Creating a National Initiative. With tens of millions of people undergoing the transition from mid-life to later years, a national program, in many possible forms, can be the impetus to match older adults with youth services. Past national efforts along these lines have included the Peace Corps, which built a global outreach movement by Americans, and the G.I. Bill, which provided a swath of services to ease veterans' return from military service. AmeriCorps (which is open to adults of all ages), an initiative of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), oversees the Senior Corps (open to adults ages 55+). Since the program's founding in 1994, more than 900,000 volunteers have contributed more than 1.2 billion hours in service across America while tackling pressing problems and mobilizing millions of people for the organizations they serve. One Senior Corps program is the Foster Grandparents Program (FGP). It provides a program for volunteers aged 55 and older to serve children and youth in their communities. Volunteers serve thousands of local organizations that help children learn to read and provide one-on-one tutoring, mentor troubled teenagers and young mothers, care for premature infants or children with disabilities, and help children who have been abused or neglected.[17] FGP has been shown to be successful, and has

involved thousands of seniors. This program could be expanded to include volunteers from all walks of life, and could provide incentives for more organizations to participate.

Over 50 years ago, Congress established precedent for engagement by older adults: the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) provided grants to nonprofits and state governments to employ and train people age 55 and older.[18] Its roots date to the 1965 passage of the Older Americans Act. Although persistently underfunded, the program has several planks, including an initial project employing about 300 older men in rural beautification programs. Last year, SCSEP facilitated employment of more than 67,000 older women and men, mainly in public or nonprofit community service roles, including positions with senior centers and nutrition programs that serve the elderly. The SCSEP demonstrates a pathway to bring value to communities and provide modest income to older adults. It presents a thematic precedent for intergenerational engagement. Expanding its mission to focus on pairings could assist more seniors as well as the youth they would serve.

Developing a Clearinghouse. An interactive clearinghouse could provide a publicly available database of current intergenerational programs and opportunities, offer ideas for federal and community-based efforts, and provide a centralized collection of information that effectively targets vulnerable groups. At the community level, an interactive clearinghouse could provide a social platform to highlight best practices and help connect those who share programmatic goals. In addition, a clearinghouse could be linked with an intergenerational matching program, much like a job board, for seniors to find opportunities and commit to participating.

To develop such a tool, it would be beneficial to launch partnerships among governmental entities, academic institutions, and nonprofit organizations, such as the federal Corporation for National and Community Service. There have been several important efforts, with existing community-level and online resources. For example, the organization “Idealist” (www.idealist.org) connects “people who want to do good with opportunities for action and collaboration,”[19] for both paid and volunteer positions. The Points of Light Foundation (www.pointsoflight.org) and the Hands On Network (www.handsonnetwork.org) have online search tools for volunteer opportunities anywhere in the country and can be sorted by topic of interest. Generations United (www.gu.org) has a directory and map of intergenerational programs throughout the United States, as well as how-to guides, program toolkits, and guiding principles for policy development. AARP’s (www.aarp.org) Volunteer Wizard and Create the Good (www.createthegood.org) have partnered to create an interactive online tool that allows potential volunteers choose both the types of programs and location where they would like to volunteer. Such programs offer the ability to mobilize people interested in working with intergenerational programs, but few include both paid and volunteer positions, and none provide a comprehensive database. In order for a clearinghouse to have the capacity to cultivate access to opportunities, increased collaborative engagement among organizations is necessary to build a central database.

Establishing a National Communication Campaign on the Talents of Older Americans. A campaign to combat stereotypes about older adults will encourage them to seek intergenerational opportunities. As they age, older people may feel that their talents are no longer welcome or sought, and that their skills and abilities are out of date. Yet older people have a desire to leave a legacy for future generations, and public service messages could appeal to this urge, encouraging involvement. Although volunteer activity helps promote healthy aging, recruiting efforts are more successful when they appeal to the benefit for younger generations than to the potential health benefits that accrue to the volunteer.[20] Partnerships might include organizations like the Ad Council, AARP, Corporation for National Service and the Points of Light Foundation.

Establishing Intergenerational Zones. Living situations also can foster intergenerational engagement by making it convenient for older people to interact with youth. Communities can explore zoning that concentrates talent, advocacy, and philanthropy, to improve outcomes that are key to the development of children and youth -- bringing together key service organizations in a city to infuse the idea of older people working with youth in everything they do.

Many programs for older adults have been built on the notion of age segregation – in services, in housing, and even in transportation. But most Americans want to stay in their current residences as long as possible and do not want to live in communities that separate them from younger people. This requires planners to craft a common vision that recognizes the interdependence of the generations. One example is Hope Meadows in Illinois, "an innovative residential community where children adopted from foster care find permanent and loving homes, as well as grandparents, playmates and an entire neighborhood designed to help them grow up in a secure and nurturing environment." It is being duplicated in 12 sites throughout the country.[21] Other zoning modifications that would be beneficial in supporting intergenerational interaction are allowing accessory apartments in neighborhoods (so called "granny units"). These affordable housing options enable older adults to access local neighborhood schools for meals, recreation, or work/volunteer opportunities.

The idea of "co-housing" or "shared" or "joint-use sites" has been around for years, [22] but has typically lacked funding. Small federal grants could encourage co-housing, which could be built into HUD or other senior programs. The Corporation for National and Community Service may be another potential funding source.

Pledging to Create Intergenerational Cities. At the local level, it is important for political leaders to signal their commitment to this intergenerational movement, since it has the promise to improve life for all in their communities. The Milken Institute has launched a nationwide leadership effort known as the "Best Cities for Successful Aging Mayor's Pledge." Mayors spanning multiple regions of the country have signed the commitment to enhance their cities for older adults, with services ranging from transportation options to work opportunities and housing alternatives. A related, age-friendly cities campaign, spearheaded by the World Health Organization, has been extended to hundreds of cities around the world. Building on this pioneering effort, a similar campaign could commit

cities to seeking and supporting options for intergenerational connections. In 2011 Generations United and MetLife Foundation launched the "Best Intergenerational Communities Awards" creating the framework for communities to move from age-friendly to all-age-friendly. To date, seventeen communities have received the award and 6 have been named national finalists. The communities are very diverse in size, socioeconomic status and racial and ethnic composition. Building on the success of the program, Generations United developed a toolkit for communities interested in being good places to grow up and grow old.

GENERATIONS UNITED: BECAUSE WE'RE STRONGER TOGETHER

"We formed Generations United to argue for a caring society."

Jack Ossofsky, National Council on Aging

For three decades, Generations United has been the catalyst for policies and practices stimulating cooperation and collaboration among generations, evoking the vibrancy, energy and sheer productivity that result when people of all ages come together. Founded as a coalition in 1986 by the National Council on Aging and the Child Welfare League of America the founders were later expanded to include AARP and the Children's Defense Fund.

The coalition grew to over 100 national organizations that shared the belief that resources are better used when they connect generations rather than separate them. In 1997 Generations United incorporated as a not-for-profit membership organization with the mission to improve the lives of children, youth and older adults through intergenerational collaboration, public policies and programs for the enduring benefit of all.

Generations United uses an intergenerational solutions lens to elevate practices that build stronger, inclusive communities and practices. Among its broad-reaching programs is its Programs of Distinction designation which is considered the "good housekeeping seal" recognizing high quality intergenerational programs. The organization elevates quality programs throughout the country; provides toolkits, training and technical assistance; houses the National Center on Grandfamilies; and conducts the only international conference focused only on intergenerational practices and building the intergenerational field.

Generations United believes that we can only be successful in the face of our complex future if generational diversity is regarded as a national asset and fully leveraged.

Building Intergenerational Collaboration into Existing Programs. The countless government programs at all levels that interact with aging Americans and with youth can serve as vehicles to inform people of all ages about opportunities to join the intergenerational movement. For instance, Medicare officials and websites could distribute

information to enrollees about programs needing volunteers to mentor youth. Or PTAs across the country could identify and recruit senior citizens in their communities to join them as special ambassadors for intergenerational programs, or local YMCAs could inform youth and older people about intergenerational programs in their communities.

Young-Old Pairings in Public Schools. Our schools provide a ready environment for utilizing the skills and motivations of older people. In areas where AARP Experience Corps has volunteer tutors in schools, the results on reading improvement have been positive. These and similar efforts can be scaled up with greater awareness on the part of school districts, recruitment and incentive efforts, and buy-in from both schools and seniors. School districts could formalize training for older adults to work with students. For example, Save the Children utilized Foster Grandparents to tutor low-income rural children, with very strong research evidence of associated improvement in academic performance.

> "It's past time to wake up and smell the demographics. We need to change age-segregated institutions and policies in order to nurture each generation and our interdependence. Who better to lead this battle than our elders?"
>
> *Donna Butts, Executive Director, Generations United* [23]

Another avenue for schools to enhance intergenerational engagement is through Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). These plans traditionally have been developed for students with specific learning differences, providing tailored accommodations to those tested and identified as two standard deviations from the norm. Federal law requires that schools provide support for students with documented learning disabilities. Gene Steuerle, an American economist and Institute Fellow at the Urban Institute, recommends that IEPs be developed for all students, providing personalized plan for every child. Older adults could be part of this support, working as appropriate with schools and teachers to tutor and mentor students of every level, from remedial to gifted.

Conflict resolution programs also may hold opportunities for older adults to contribute to the well-being of youth. Given that emotional balance improves with age, seniors may be ideal mediators in school and community conflicts that do not necessarily rise to law-enforcement levels but are problematic for educators. Advocates have suggested mediation intervention for such conflicts among students, or between teachers and students, as a way to resolve conflicts without police involvement.[24]

Providing Incentives for Existing National, State, and Local Programs. Countless programs at all levels use government and private funds to provide a range of youth services. At the same time, many other programs enlist older Americans in volunteerism. These parallel efforts can be a starting place to create new intergenerational opportunities and activities.

Creating Local Tax Incentives. Intergenerational engagement provides short-and long-term benefits for local communities. There is substantial evidence that students benefit from tutoring, mentoring and collaborative interactions with older adults. Future benefits will spill into their communities as they mature into productive workers, family members, volunteers and leaders. Thus, local jurisdictions could be encouraged to incentivize and reward older adults' volunteer work with youth.

Tax incentives for civic volunteerism have been pioneered by some communities. For example, in 20008 Danbury, Connecticut, launched a property tax credit of up to $600 for older people who volunteer with the city or for nonprofit groups. The program continues to have a strong draw of eligible volunteers, who often volunteer more than the 100 hour/year requirement.[25] Similar tax breaks across the country could be offered to those who work with youth.

Involving the Business Community. Age diversity in the workplace is the new reality for businesses.[26] Research shows that the most productive (and therefore more profitable) businesses employ a range of ages, capitalizing on the experience and wisdom of older workers to help train, mentor and guide younger workers.[27] Companies can also serve as conduits to stimulate volunteering by offering financial incentives and/or programs to match volunteers with community service opportunities.

In addition, some companies assist in the planning of more intentional, gradual choices and options for a phased-in retirement, including transitions from full-time to part-time work; continuing education; and nonprofit activities.[28] Intel, for example, offers retirement-eligible employees a year-long stipend for shifting from employment at Intel to nonprofit work. IBM has a program that provides stipends for retirees who transition from paid employment to teaching positions in math and science.[29] Building on these precedents, companies could explore ways for older employees to help youth, and seek ways to facilitate mutually beneficial pairings.

Companies also might institutionalize mentoring programs between older and younger workers, and set up community mentoring programs for older employees. Given the experience, knowledge and dedication of older workers, moving them into positions that will allow them to mentor and train younger workers often provides a benefit to both employees and the business itself.

Providing Financial Incentives to Individuals. Most nonprofit volunteer positions are unpaid. When older adults on fixed incomes have to shoulder the expenses of commuting to the volunteer site as well as other, related costs such as meals away from home, the nonprofit sector inadvertently creates a disincentive to volunteering. Modest compensation or reimbursement may motivate higher rates of involvement.

Some existing programs may be able to expand their missions and their work to include the specific goal of matching older volunteers with young people who need services. Cost undoubtedly will be key. Given documented economic benefits to improving youth outcomes, it may make sense to develop both government and private resources to provide funding that supports an intergenerational movement.

Incentives could take the following forms:

Stipends and Benefits - Stipends of even modest amounts could greatly expand the number of older adult volunteers. Especially for the less affluent, expense is a likely deterrent to volunteerism: Even small costs for transportation or other needs can preclude participation by people who struggle to make ends meet.[30] In lieu of direct payments in the form of stipends, organizations could offer transportation reimbursement or provide meals. For example,

- ***Foster Grandparents***, which provides volunteer tutors and mentors in schools, hospitals, juvenile correctional institutions, daycare facilities and Head Start centers, provides its volunteers with supplemental accident and liability insurance and meals while on duty. Those who meet low-income criteria receive small stipends as well.

- ***RSVP***, offering a diverse range of community volunteer opportunities for older adults, may reimburse for such expenses as transportation and meals. Volunteers are covered by the agency's insurance program while they are volunteering.

- ***Michigan's Senior Companion Program***, which offers a suite of incentives to low-income people age 60 and older who volunteer as companions to seniors living at home or in institutions, provides tax-free stipends to cover the costs of volunteering, accident and liability insurance, transportation, annual physical examinations, training, and meals on service days.[31]

A caveat: even a small stipend for volunteer work can affect a senior's eligibility for government assistance such as food stamps and housing assistance. Ironically, this is the very group that could benefit the most from participation. Modifying legislation to exclude volunteer stipends from such eligibility ceilings would open the door to large numbers of older people to experience the mutual benefits of volunteering with youth. The provision of in-kind gifts of food or services may be preferred over stipends.

Training. Studies indicate that providing volunteer training increases the likelihood of long-term volunteer retention.[30] Once trained, volunteers develop experience, and research shows that older adults who gain experience are least likely to drop out of intergenerational programs. For existing and future programs that revolve around older people and youth, ongoing support and training will help sustain commitment and success.[32] Jumpstart, AARP Experience Corps, and Foster Grandparents all provide ongoing training for their volunteers, specific to the programs in which they will be working.

Certification programs also address the need for service organizations to be assured of the capability of their volunteers. They certainly merit consideration by academic, government and nonprofit organizations.

An example: Several years ago in Oregon, consultants working with Oregon Campus Compact developed a plan to recruit the recently retired to serve as college counselors in public high schools. The college counseling program at Lewis and Clark University developed a certification program that would select and train senior volunteers who

could then work under the supervision of the regular school counselor as a way of lightening a student load then approaching 1,000 students per counselor. The program addressed the needs of the community, honored the life experience skills of the older adults, and ensured quality service via volunteer certification and supervision. The costs to develop this program were significantly less than hiring more school counselors.

> "Many older adults agree that intergenerational service is the most important thing they could be doing. They just need the opportunity to do it, have someone ask them, and then train and support them...and then they love it. If we could just invite and support people to do it, I think they will come!"
>
> *- Nancy Morrow-Howell, Washington Professor and Director of the Center for Aging* [33]

Conclusion

Although there is considerable evidence that older people would welcome and seek opportunities to mentor younger generations, it may take the inception of a national movement to convince Americans of the mutual benefit of intergenerational relationships to older adults, youth, and communities. Understanding the stereotypes that older adults and youth each have about the other, dispelling them, and building partnerships of trust supported by training will go a long way toward improving community life nationwide. Attitudes can change, minds can be opened, and a more welcoming and receptive collaboration can be launched.

The intergenerational movement we describe can be a prelude to deep and multi-pronged cultural change -- a revolution, reminiscent of the Gray Panthers, which engages all aspects of society in awareness of and investment in the power of connections between young and old. The Gray Panthers slogan "Age and Youth in Action" describes their dedication to social change for old and young people alike; they "stand for age and youth working together to make the world a place where the young can look forward to growing old." [34] Their intergenerational political ties made the group unique among contemporary activist groups in the late 20th century.

A similar movement can begin to fuel a productive and equitable society, capitalizing on the unique talents and perspectives of older adults, the needs and interests of young people, and the societal need to serve both better. Harnessing the horsepower of the business, government, philanthropic and nonprofit sectors, we hope to stimulate public policy that will encourage incentives and remove obstacles to volunteering among older adults, especially in intergenerational pairings. Given their innate need to give back, the energy and motivation of youth, and sufficient support structures and policies to ensure lasting partnerships, such a vision portends a bright future.

"The encore years constitute our great national repository of generativity, a renewable resource of caring for the future...We need to accept our age and our stage and invest in those who truly are young – who represent the future"

- Marc Freedman, Founder and CEO of Encore.org [35]

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

- Building **acceptance, support and incentives for intergenerational engagement requires a national movement** that begins with challenging cultural norms and stereotypes.
- In order to create opportunities for intergenerational interaction, **policy development, including funding options,** is essential to promote intergenerational progress.
- **Providing incentives** from civic and charitable organizations and corporations to encourage involvement of older people will help **remove barriers** that impede engagement.

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"In the coming decades, there will be a lot more older people in the United States, in a period when it will also be imperative that the country continue to invest heavily in the education and development of our young people.

Why not match talent with need, connect supply with demand?

Doing so constitutes a solution hidden in plain sight."

- *Marc Freedman*
CEO and Founder, Encore.org