Increasing Productive Engagement in Later Life

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Age as Asset

Capacity of older adults is increasing
- Increasing number of healthy years after age 60
- Increasing level of education
- Older adults desire to use their later years in meaningful ways and to make contributions

This capacity is part of a solution to the press of an older population and to increasing inequality across life course.
Productive Aging

Any activity by an older individual that contributes to the production of goods or services, whether paid for or not.

## Potential Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Family</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• physical health/function</td>
<td>• engaged grandparents and caregivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• mental health</td>
<td>• transfer of income and assets from older to younger</td>
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<tr>
<td>• self-efficacy</td>
<td>• healthier/happier older relatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>• purpose in life</td>
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<tr>
<td>• economic well-being</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Organizations + Community</th>
<th>Society</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• experienced workers/volunteers</td>
<td>• less reliance on public pensions and savings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• loyal/dependable workers/volunteers</td>
<td>• more intergenerational exchange</td>
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<td>• age/generational diversity</td>
<td>• less demand for long-term care due to postponement of disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>• mentors for younger workers</td>
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Productive Engagement in Later Life: Cross-Cultural Framework

- **Socio-Demographic**
  - Physical Environment
  - Economic Environment
    - Programs

- **Individual Capacity**
- **Institutional Capacity**

- **Productive Behaviors**

- **Outcomes**

**Sociocultural Context**
Strategies to promote productive engagement

Develop programs, policies and environments to maximize engagement of the older adults

Facilitate this engagement to maximize positive outcomes for older adults

Volunteering

- Institutional capacity: outreach, training and on-going supervisory and peer-led learning, rewards and recognition
- Flexibility, Choice
- Inclusive work environments (physically and psychologically)
More strategies

Employment
- Inclusive, age-neutral hiring and training practices
- Creating flexible and part-time arrangements
- Facilitating involvement in non-paid work (volunteering and caregiving)
- Inclusive work environments (physical and psychological)

Education
- Increase age-diversity at colleges/universities
- Create certificate and job-training programs
- Support Age-Friendly University Global Network

Age integration of institutions, rather than age segregation, to enable education, working, and leisure across the life course
Experience Corps

- Students read better
  - Word attack
  - Comprehension
  - Grade-specific reading skills

- Volunteers experienced improved health
  - Functional limitations
  - Depression
  - Self-rated health

96% feel better about self (somewhat or very true)
86% life was improved (somewhat or very true)

Lee, Morrow-Howell, Jonson-Reid, McCrary, & Spitznagel (2010); Hong & Morrow-Howell (2010)
Core Principles

Elitism

Inclusion

Obligation

Opportunity

Intergenerational Conflict

Intergenerational Harmony

Constraints

Choice

Morrow-Howell, Sherraden, & Hinterlong (2001); Estes & Mahakian (2001)
Cautions

- Individuals who have been marginalized across the life course will continue to be marginalized if we expect productive engagement without adequate program and policy support.

- Life course, cumulative disadvantage and multiple jeopardies

- Ageism and age segregation limits our society’s potential for productive aging