



**Applying an Anti-Racist and Anti-Ageist Lens to Intergenerational Volunteer
Opportunities: Centering the Social Construction of Race and Age to Promote Equity**

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Abstract

Societies around the world are rapidly aging and becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. It is essential that social researchers develop and refine theories that inform programs and policies advancing population health, economic and social equity, and social cohesion. In this essay, we identify intergenerational programming, a form of productive aging, as a powerful method to unite generations and address pressing societal issues. We begin with infusing an anti-racist and anti-ageist lens to help inform theory development. In doing so, we review and define key concepts of productive aging and critical race theory, contextualizing them within the Civil Rights movement in the United States. We then refine conceptual frameworks centering anti-ageist and anti-racist principles. Drawing from the latest national survey conducted by Generations United, we reveal the diversity of intergenerational programs across the country, thoroughly examining age, race, and ethnicity of staff, youth, and older participants in these programs and their programmatic foci. We juxtapose these data with data from the Current Population Survey, illustrating how intergenerational programs nationwide are intentionally recruiting diverse populations into their programs – and more can be done. As anti-racism and anti-ageism are relatively novel concepts with a limited evidence-base, we introduce two programs to illustrate these concepts in action, as well as critical questions for researchers and practitioners to answer themselves. We believe that centering the social construction of race and age in the productive aging literature sharpens focus on inclusion, diversity, and equity, while bringing generations together to improve societal wellbeing.

Keywords: anti-racist, anti-ageist, intergenerational programming, productive aging

INTRODUCTION

Intergenerational programs, which intentionally bring skipped, non-adjacent generations together for mutual benefit, are often characterized as cute, fun, and photogenic. More often than not, they facilitate a unique chemistry between generations where laughter and smiles are the telltale signs of good programming. These programs can be, and often are, much more than sweet photo opportunities. Many programs tackle the most challenging issues facing society today – education achievement inequities, economic insecurity, housing instability, health inequities, social isolation, depression, and Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, among others (Freedman & Stamp, 2021; Generations United, 2022). The evidence-base of intergenerational approaches to these important issues has expanded with compelling results for young and old alike: improved mental health (e.g., Kamei et al. 2011), enhanced physical functioning (Yasunaga et al., 2016), bolstered social wellbeing (Jarrott et al., 2021a), dismantled stereotypes of older adults (Gonzales et al., 2010; Burns, 2019), and stronger community capacity (Jarrott et al., 2021b) and economic security (Frick et al., 2004). Difficult and challenging circumstances improve among older and younger participants as a result of participation in such programs. Yet, critical gaps remain in participation and inclusion of minoritized populations, whether young or old, which is a root to maintaining inequity (Gonzales, Matz-Costa, & Morrow-Howell, 2015).

In this essay, we adopt and apply an anti-racist and anti-ageist lens to expand civic engagement opportunities for everyone, particularly among minoritized populations, into intergenerational programs to achieve equity. Grounded in our American experiences developing, delivering, evaluating, and studying intergenerational programs, readers may find

our perspective relevant particularly to non-familial intergenerational programs, which are mostly found in developed countries.

We organize this chapter into five parts. First, we define productive aging, anti-racism, and anti-ageism and situate these constructs within the Civil Rights Movement. Second, we summarize more than two decades of conceptual frameworks and key principles of civic engagement in later life that are salient to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Third, we characterize the diversity of intergenerational programs from a recent national survey conducted by Generations United. We then provide an overview of who volunteers in later life by age, race, and gender from national data. Fourth, we analyze two emerging intergenerational programs, New York University's Intergenerational Home Sharing Program and BRIDGE2Health, with an anti-racist and anti-ageist lens. We conclude with questions that have helped us to advance anti-racist and anti-ageist research and programming, questions we hope will be useful for our readers.

DEFINITIONS AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

Older adults engage in a variety of dynamic and important roles, but the productive aging framework is squarely focused on volunteering (formal and informal), employment, caregiving, and education. Bass and Caro (2001) define productive aging as any activity by an older adult that contributes goods and services to society, whether paid for or not. This definition makes the case that the activities older adults engage in have outcomes beyond the self and family, reaching communities and society at large. Take for instance, formal volunteering. It has been estimated that formal volunteering by older adults yields US\$77 billion annually (AmeriCorps, 2016). The production of goods and services by older adults within the workplace contributed US\$8.3 trillion to the US Gross Domestic Product in 2018 (AARP, 2020). In

addition to contributing financial value to society, older adults who engage in these activities often experience personal health and economic benefits, which has implications for them, their families, and for society.

Anti-racism

The definition of anti-racism is the practice of actively identifying and opposing racism (Boston University, Community Service Center, n.d.; Kendi, 2019). This definition is similar to that offered by Merriam-Webster (2022): opposed to racism. Applying an anti-racist lens to aging shifts our attention to history, social policies, politics, and legal frameworks that set the stage for inequitable aging across the lifespan and across generations (Kendi, 2019). This perspective is squarely situated in critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) and unpacks unequal distribution and access to resources (e.g., education, housing, employment) ranging from intrapersonal notions and social constructions of race to the institutional norms that have developed over time. When applied to organizational settings, anti-racism can be defined as the “active work to oppose racism and to produce racial equity – so that racial identity is no longer a factor in determining how anyone fares in life. An anti-racist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial equity between racial groups” (Wellcome, n.d.). These anti-oppressive perspectives resonate very well with Pablo Freire’s concept of *praxis* (2000), in which critical reflection and knowledge are turned into action directed at systems to be transformed, typically in policy and practice settings. In the current chapter we apply an anti-racist lens to consider how intergenerational programs can produce or sustain equity between racial groups.

Anti-ageism

The gerontological and popular literature have clearly defined ageism: stereotyping and/or discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of their age (Butler, 1969). However, there is not a clear definition of anti-ageism. We can draw from The Leaders of Aging Organizations “Reframing Aging” initiative, which resonates with the anti-racism movement by promoting public awareness of what aging involves and how older adults contribute to society (Morrow-Howell, Galucia, & Swinford, 2020; Morrow-Howell & Gonzales, 2020). By reframing aging, we critically assess the social structures that shape and constrain opportunities for individuals in an aging society (FrameWorks Institute, 2017). Reframing Aging shifts attention away from individual characteristics and responsibilities onto larger social structures as they relate to one’s choice and ability to embody healthy, productive aging within historical, economic, social, and political contexts. This broader understanding enables social scientists and policymakers to identify key factors across the micro to macro continuum of influence to optimize healthy and productive aging. Thus, we conceptualize an anti-ageist perspective as one that challenges age-based stereotypes and encourages social, structural, and political framing that supports equity among all groups, including the opportunity for productive aging. For the purpose of this chapter, we address an anti-ageist perspective in which intergenerational programs adopt measures to include older adults without discrimination based on age.

Historical Context

Productive aging, anti-racism, and anti-ageism are complex concepts for the 21st century that have their roots in the civil rights movement and population aging. While Congress was squarely focused on the women’s movement and racial equity in the early to mid-1900s, little scholarly and empirical attention was given to older adults and the divergent pathways of aging

among a heterogeneous population. In fact, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) of 1967 was adopted by Congress *after* the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which focused on discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Age was not included in the Civil Rights Act at the time because there was a lack of evidence of age discrimination, specifically at the workplace. These origins of legal protection highlight how age was considered separate from, or was neglected as compared to other identity characteristics; today, axes of oppression continue to silo and partition individuals into legal boxes with an uneven distribution of protection.

From the 1900s to 1960s, society's perception of older adults shifted from an attitude of benevolence and protection to one of exclusion in which older persons ought to willfully withdraw and disengage from society due to their age (Cumming & Henry, 1961). The concept of productive aging was juxtaposed to disengagement theory (Cumming & Henry, 1961) and fundamentally shifted a deficit perspective on aging and older adults (e.g., disengaged, dying, declining health and dementia, and increasing national deficits) to an assets perspective – older adults as essential members of society with tremendous talents, experience, and passion to transform themselves and the world around them (Atchley, 1989; Bass & Caro, 2001; Havighurst, 1961). The productive aging perspective views aging as an opportunity for individuals, families, communities, and society.

To illustrate this shift with an intergenerational example, Foster Grandparents is the earliest formal, intergenerational volunteer program known in the United States. It was established in 1965 and continues today as part of the federal agency Corporation for National and Community Services (AmeriCorps, no date). Designed to connect low-income older adults with their communities in order to provide material and social supports, qualified persons ages

55 years and older receive extensive training, an annual physical, reimbursement of transportation costs, and liability insurance. Foster Grandparents may be eligible to receive a stipend for their efforts if they meet income requirements. In return, Foster Grandparents commit to a weekly service of working with children, often in a school setting. They typically provide one-on-one assistance to children with below grade-level academic and socio-emotional skills. The Foster Grandparents program illustrates how intergenerational programs qualify as productive aging with older adults contributing needed services to support children's personal and academic development while gaining access to meaningful roles and resources. Recently the program was piloted with older Chinese immigrants (Xu et al., 2022), a population that may experience exclusion from volunteer opportunities due to language barriers and isolation (Dong & Chang, 2017). Foster Grandparents in this study experienced improved mastery, perceived social support, and life satisfaction after working weekly across eight weeks with children with individualized needs or those receiving accommodations. In such scenarios, benefits to young and older participants likely extend to other stakeholders, such as the students' families and school communities (e.g., Gigliotti et al., 2005).

In addition to Foster Grandparents, many other U.S. programs support productive aging by engaging youth and older persons in service to each other and/or the larger community. As with Foster Grandparents, many engage older adults and youth less likely to participate in formal volunteer programs due to barriers such as limited education, health concerns, caregiving demands, limited social ties, transportation, and other neighborhood barriers (Cao et al., 2021; Gonzales & Nowell, 2017; McNamara & Gonzales, 2011). The most rigorously studied intergenerational program, Experience Corps, was developed to support productive aging among low-income older adults (Fried et al., 2004; Hong & Morrow-Howell, 2010); qualified older

adults supported grade-level reading of kindergarten to third grade students attending schools in the older adults' communities. In exchange for a 2-year commitment of 20-hours per week support to the schools during the school year, income-eligible volunteers received a stipend equivalent to less than \$4.00 per hour. This form of productive activity involving time-intensive volunteering has been linked with significantly greater gains in reading skills for the participating students, with a dose response noted for those attending more sessions with Experience Corps volunteers (Morrow-Howell et al., 2009; McBride et al., 2011). Compared to a control group, older adult Experience Corps volunteers demonstrated fewer symptoms of depression, lower functional limitations (Hong & Morrow-Howell, 2010), and enhanced generative achievement (Gruenewald et al., 2015).

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN LATER LIFE:

A FOCUS ON INCLUSION

With a renewed and fresh perspective on longevity, aging, and older adults, Morrow-Howell and colleagues provided one of the first conceptual frameworks to identify antecedents, mediators, moderators, and outcomes to productive engagement (Morrow-Howell, et al., 2001). This person-in-environment perspective outlines intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural factors that shape who, when, and how individuals engage in productive activities, and expected outcomes for individuals, families, communities, and society. The model complements the perspectives of anti-racism and anti-ageism as the focus is on the person-in-environment with an emphasis on cultural norms, social policies, and institutional characteristics rather than a myopic focus on individual characteristics and personal choices.

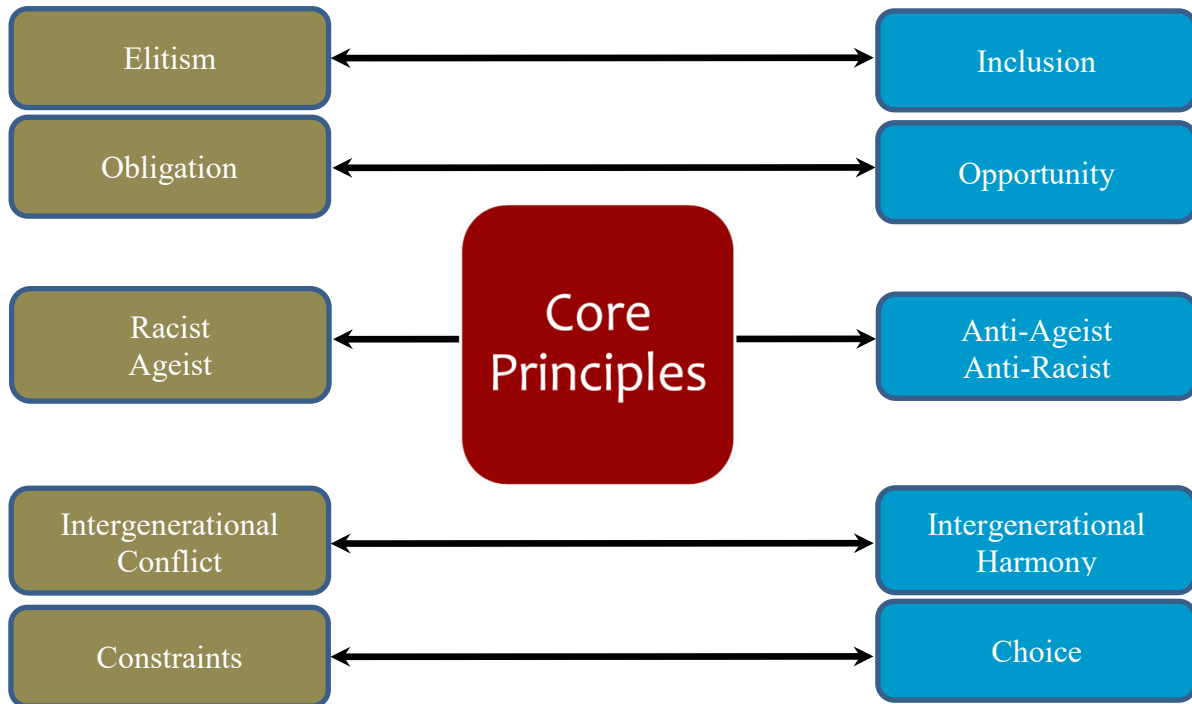
Over the years, Morrow-Howell and colleagues' (2001) model has been problematized with systems dynamics, acknowledging that these constructs are recursive (Morrow-Howell,

Halvorsen, Hovmand, Lee, & Ballard, 2017). The model has been adapted to reflect influences of the built and social environment with a focus on neighborhoods and well-defined regions (Gonzales, Shen, Wang, Sprague Martinez, & Norstrand, 2016; Wang, Gonzales, & Morrow-Howell, 2017; Gonzales, Lee, & Marchiondo, 2021), and a health equity perspective (Gonzales et al., *in press*; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2022; Gonzales, Whetung, Lee, & Kruchten, 2022; Gonzales, Gordon, Whetung, Connaught, Collazo & Hilton, 2021).

In addition to providing a conceptual framework to develop and test hypotheses for scientific inquiry, Morrow-Howell and colleagues (2001) articulated a tension between key principles that should guide research to inform social policies and practices. These competing principles include (Figure 1): elitism vs. inclusion; obligation vs. opportunity; constraints vs. choice; and intergenerational conflict vs. intergenerational harmony. There is ample evidence in the civic engagement literature that well-resourced individuals and families (elitism) have more choices and fewer constraints than less well-resourced persons to volunteer in later life and subsequently gain the economic, social, physical, emotional and mental benefits. Moreover, scholars have cautioned against objectifying individuals as widgets in our economy to be used for the production of goods and services (obligation), especially when individuals with low levels of education have fewer options to volunteer and are less likely to be asked to volunteer. With regards to constraints, social policies and organizations more often than not silo generations (e.g., ADEA only protects individuals 40+, leaving younger workers unprotected even as younger workers report similar levels of incivility and age discrimination) (Marchiondo, Gonzales, & Ran, 2015). Intergenerational conflict results when policymakers and practitioners depict the allocation of resources to one generation as a loss of resources to another; this tension

spikes during economic recessions and during pandemics when discussing protections to health and employment. Gonzales and colleagues added tension between racism and anti-racism (2021), we add ageist and anti-ageist as competing principles to the scholarship.

Figure 1. Competing Core Principles



Applying the key principles framework to the focus of this book, evidence reveals that social policies and institutional structures influence who, when, where, and how individuals engage in productive aging roles. For example, older adults engaged in formal volunteering are less likely to be persons of color or have low incomes (Tang et al., 2009). Such findings are replicated in studies of older adults’ representation in the workforce (AARP, 2020). The graphic depiction of the tension between principles alludes to their dynamic nature; social structures and norms are fluid, meaning that policies and practices can be modified to achieve equity in engagement and outcomes across diverse populations. For example, the US Department of Labor

created the Senior Community Service Employee Program ([SCEP](#)) for low-income older adults who provide community service and gain job training at non-profit and public facilities. Supports for family caregivers through the [National Family Caregiver Support Act](#) have expanded to reach kinship caregivers, who are more likely to be members of minoritized groups (Generations United, 2021). Turning to productive aging through volunteerism, stipends have been used, as in Foster Grandparents, to recruit populations of color and low-income older adults into civic engagement roles (McBride et al., 2011). Evaluations of these programs indicate that the initiatives multiply benefits; for example, stipended volunteers tend to commit more hours per year than non-stipended volunteers, which has been associated with significantly greater health, social, and economic benefits compared to non-stipended volunteers (McBride et al., 2011). While other chapters in this volume address familial caregiving (*please see* Lucantoni et al., 2023), employment (*please see* Grunwald, Damman, & Henkens), and civic engagement (*please see* Serrat & Villar), we narrow our focus to intergenerational programs under the umbrella of formal volunteering involving unrelated young people (infants through young adults) and older persons (usually 50 years of age and older) who share in programming intended to benefit each participant group and that may benefit other groups. Policies and practices can be implemented to facilitate inclusion of diverse populations in this approach to productive aging.

DIVERSITY

OF INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS AND VOLUNTEERS

To our knowledge, there is not a representative sample of intergenerational programs in the United States to assess volunteer demographics, intensity and duration of civic engagement, nor the wide range of activities participants engage in, which are supervised by diverse staff. However, in 2022, Generations United conducted a “Survey of Programs Engaging

Older and Younger People” to ascertain the diversity of small to large intergenerational programs across the United States. The survey had a wide range of topics with quantitative and qualitative questions to assess organizational structure, funding streams, vision and mission statements, demographic composition of staff and populations served, and unique goals and challenges. Altogether, 189 individuals completed the survey and shared how they are collectively reaching tens of thousands of youth and older adults. Among the many interesting findings, we learned that while the majority of staff were White (80%), the foci for including minoritized population was high with organizations recruiting populations of color (48%), low-income individuals (42%), sexual and gender minorities (27%), immigrants (25%), and non-English speakers (23%) as participants. These percentages likely underestimate the diversity of participants.

We examined the racial and ethnic diversity of staff, youth, and older adults to unpack heterogeneity. A summary of racial and ethnic composition follows:

- Organizations reported the *racial and ethnic diversity of their staff* as predominantly White (80%) as well as Hispanic/Latino/a/x/Spanish origin (36%), Black or African American (32%), Asian or Asian American (20%), American Indian or Alaska Native, Middle Eastern or North African (approximately 10%), and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (7%, and 6% respectively). Staff were also characterized as mixed or multiple races, Portuguese, East Indian, Marshallese, and Hondurans. *Note, the total exceeds 100% because respondents were not forced to provide answers totaling 100%.
- Organizations reported the *racial and ethnic diversity of youth* participants as White (42%), Black or African American (14%), Hispanic/Latino/a/x/Spanish origin (12%), Asian or Asian American (7%), American Indian or Alaska Native (3%), Middle Eastern

or North African (1%), and other (21%) characterized as mix, “Black, White, Asian,” “White, Black, Asian,” Middle Eastern, Ashkenazi Jewish, and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI).

- Finally, organizations reported primary *racial and ethnic diversity of older adults* as White (56%), Black or African American (15%), Asian or Asian American (4%), Hispanic/Latino/a/x/Spanish origin (3%), American Indian or Alaska Native (2%), and other with 20% characterized as mixed or multiple races and ethnicities, White and Black, Ashkenazi Jewish.

This survey by Generations United adds nuanced information to the intergenerational field and confirm previous findings by Shannon and Lee (2022), in which ageism, social isolation, health and community cohesion were overarching goals to shared sites. Across these programs, the racial and ethnic diversity characteristics across staff, youth, and older adults reveal a higher level of diversity than has ever been known prior. These diverse groups share common goals through their programming, including building a strong sense of community, combating social isolation, and improving academic achievement through education, health and wellness programs, the arts (visual, theater, music, storytelling, oral history), and mentoring.

The answer to the question “*who volunteers?*” becomes a bit more complicated with nationally representative data. Analyses of the Volunteering Supplement to the Current Population Survey (“CPS,” 2017) reveal differential civic engagement rates among individuals 65 years of age or older in the United States (Gonzales, et al., 2022). Specifically, White men and women are more likely to formally volunteer in later life than Black, Asian, or Latinx men and women in the United States. Interestingly, however, Black, Asian, and Latinx men are more

likely to volunteer 200 hours or more than White Men. A similar pattern emerges among women: Black and Latinx women are more likely to volunteer 200+ hours per year when compared to White or Asian women. These data suggest that although racial and ethnic older adults are less likely to volunteer in organizations, when they are involved, they tend to devote more hours to their civic engagement than their White counterparts. These patterns have remained stable across the past two decades (Musick & Wilson, 2008).

The data from Generations United and CPS tell a different story, however. Practitioners engaged in intergenerational programming may be overwhelmingly white but are intentionally focused on recruiting diverse participants across generations, races, ethnicities, nativity, sexual and gender minority status, and socio-economic status, findings echoed in a 2017 survey of shared site intergenerational providers (Jarrott & Lee, 2022). Although it is far too early to discern, more research is needed to identify how these intergenerational practitioners are infusing principles of anti-racism and anti-ageism in the recruitment, facilitation, retention, and maximization of benefits between the generations. What is clear is that they are far more diverse than who engages from the CPS data.

WHO BENEFITS FROM INTERGENERATIONAL VOLUNTEERING?

NEARLY EVERYONE.

The evidence-base to intergenerational programs has increased significantly over the past two decades (e.g., Canedo Garcia, 2017; Gerritzen et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2020; Jarrott et al., 2021). Recently, Generations United partnered with New York University to review the peer-reviewed literature on the wide range of benefits and to answer the question: *who benefits from this type of programming?*

There is evidence to suggest that when programs are thoughtfully created, nearly everyone benefits (Generations United, 2022), starting in early life with babies and preschoolers to older adults in late late life. For example, there is evidence to suggest that babies and preschoolers that are partnered with older adults show higher levels of interactive play (e.g., Jarrott et al., 2022), improved abilities with cooperative play and better vocabulary and language abilities. Elementary school children mentored and tutored by an older adult showed enhanced reading and writing, improved task orientation, short-term memory, and problem solving. A few studies even showed reduced anxiety, sadness, and stress, while improving diets and nutrition and decreased screen time. Benefits to middle school children include improved academic performance, healthy family dynamics, decreased bullying and victimization, and clearer educational aspirations, occupational interests and goals. High school students demonstrated improved ego integrity, self-confidence, purpose in life, increased levels of collective efficacy, social capital, and social cohesion. Emerging adults had higher rates of civic engagement, entrepreneurial capabilities, occupational skills, self-confidence, efficacy, and sense of self. Some became interested in geriatrics and gerontology through intergenerational service learning programs. Even parents and adult children were less worried about their aged parents, happy about their civic engagement, and had better family communication. Researchers also identified that older adults benefit from their partnerships with younger generations showing decreased social isolation, improved quality of life and purpose in life, improved self-worth, self-esteem, empowerment, cognitive health improvement, and new skills, leadership proficiencies, and knowledge that they share with their families and communities.

Clearly intergenerational programming, when done well, can yield health, economic, and social benefits across the generations. Infusing an anti-racist and anti-ageist lens can help sharpen our focus on participants and inclusion.

APPLYING AN ANTI-RACIST AND ANTI-AGEIST LENS TO INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS

Below, we describe two new intergenerational programs that aim to uphold anti-racist and anti-ageist principles. Drawing from the integrated framework of productive aging (Gonzales, et al., *in print*) and best practices for intergenerational programming (Jarrott et al., 2019; Jarrott et al., 2021; Jarrott, 2022), we contextualize each program within culture, public policy, mediators (organizational, neighborhood, and individual capacity), intergenerational volunteerism, and outcomes (health, economic, and social). Each program is briefly described, with analysis on larger social structures, and how certain organizational policies and practices bolster inclusion and outcomes among diverse populations.

Intergenerational Home Sharing

Economic insecurity, housing instability, and food insecurity affect many emerging and older adults (Gonzales, Whetung, Kruchten, Levy, Connaught, & Darvishi, 2021). National student loan debt is nearly \$1.6 trillion with more than 45 million borrowers. Graduate students owe an average of \$57,600 with nearly a quarter owing more than \$100,000 and one in ten graduates owing more than \$150,000. This debt is heavier for racial and ethnic minority students, first generation students, and a growing number of older adults. Nonetheless, over 25 million adults aged 60+ are living at or below 250% of the federal poverty level. Racial/ethnic minorities, women, and sexual and gender minorities all are at higher risk of economic insecurity due to a lifetime of discriminatory practices (e.g., pay inequity, lower levels of quality education)

and caregiving demands. Homeownership, a key to retirement security, is slowly declining among older adults. Black, Hispanic, and Asian households are less likely to own a home when compared to whites (57%, 60%, 71% compared to 81%, respectively). Regardless of home ownership, many older and younger generations do not have access to food or go hungry due to poverty and other challenges.

NYU's intergenerational home share program is more than just matching young and old to be roommates (Sanchez, Garcia, Diaz, & Duaigues, 2011): it is about bolstering economic security, education and housing affordability, food security, and social trust especially among minoritized populations (racial and ethnic minorities, women, sexual and gender minorities, individuals with low-income). The reality, however, is that this program is not eligible for populations who may need it the most.

Home sharing is not accessible to everyone. In the U.S., receiving income in the form of rent can jeopardize some older adults' access to means-tested government programs including Social Security Income (SSI), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) Program ([Gonzales et al., 2021](#)). For example, if a 75-year-old woman with an annual gross income of \$8,500 collects \$900 a month from a home sharing guest over the course of one year, she would no longer qualify for SSI, SNAP, or Medicaid. Exclusion criteria do not stop there; individuals who live in public or subsidized housing cannot have roommates (Met Council on Housing, n.d.). More than 4 out of 10 households in New York City's Housing Authority are headed by a person aged 62+ ([NYCHA, 2020](#)). Public housing residents are also more likely to be Black or Hispanic ([NYU Furman Center, 2019](#)). Taken together, these federal, state, and local social policies

systematically exclude a significant percentage of older adults, the majority of whom are racial and ethnic minorities, from participation in home sharing.

Given these policy barriers, NYU's home sharing program has three potential solutions to advance equity, acknowledging that economic security is but one expected outcome. Low-income older adults quite literally have to choose to live alone and stay on public benefits or risk losing some public benefits for the social, psychological, and other health rewards associated with sharing their home with a graduate student. The first is to target older adults whose participation would not jeopardize their hard-earned public benefits. NYU's home share program has partnered with the New York Foundation for Senior Citizens precisely because their social workers and care managers can carefully calculate the impact of participation on their finances. The second solution includes market segmentation, that is outreach to older adults who do not qualify for most government programs but may benefit from the social and economic aspects of the program. The third solution is to advocate home sharing contributions as tax-exempt income; in effect, home share contributions would not be factored into public benefit program eligibility.

In sum, intergenerational home sharing is a promising intervention to benefit many generations and especially individuals and households that are at risk of economic insecurity, food scarcity, and loneliness. As the data clearly indicate, it is racial and ethnic minorities, and especially low-income racial and ethnic minorities and women, who will likely benefit the most from such a program. Yet, there are social policies that create barriers to participation. Advocacy, raising awareness, and market segmentation are all anti-racist and anti-ageist strategies to reforming social policy to enhance access to recruitment.

BRIDGE2Health

Intergenerational programs that place adult volunteers in youth service settings afford youth an opportunity to build a caring relationship with an adult they see regularly. For example, the Bridge Meadows residential communities in Oregon offer affordable housing to older adult residents in exchange for the older residents' support of adoptive families in the community. Evaluation data indicate that Bridge Meadows supports housing stability, feelings of security for youth, and substantial cost-savings to area human service agencies (New York Times, 2021). Another example is Foster Grandparents described earlier in this chapter. Foster Grandparents commit to providing 15 hours of tutoring and support weekly to children with individualized needs or accommodations in schools, hospitals, early learning centers, and shelters. Retention of Foster Grandparents is quite high, allowing youth to potentially maintain contact long-term with the volunteer.

Middle and later adulthood is often characterized by an adult's desire to leave something of one's self behind, described by Erikson as *generativity* (1982). Adults may experience this within and outside of familial relationships as they share life experiences and skills learned. Adults unable to achieve their generative desire within their families, whether due to absence of young family members, geographic separation, or lack of connection, may experience generativity through intergenerational volunteerism (Karimi & Jarrott, 2014). As described earlier in this chapter, older adult volunteers experience benefits that include improved cognitive function (Carlson et al., 2009), strength, and energy (Barron et al., 2009), and enhanced generative achievement (Gruenewald et al., 2015). Consistent with contact theory (Pettigrew, 1998), scholars have associated magnitude of impact with intensity of volunteering (e.g., Bartlett et al., 2022; Gruenewald et al., 2015); that is, those who volunteered more hours (Gruenewald et

al., 2015) and engaged more intensely in friendship building mechanisms with their intergenerational partners (Bartlett et al., 2022) experienced more positive change.

Building relationships intergenerationally during guided education (BRIDGE2Health or B2H) coordinates intergenerational mentoring with adult volunteers 50 years of age and older and teens ages 14-19. The program is conducted in partnership between county Extension and 4-H educators, who are affiliated with U.S. Land Grant Universities, and local providers of youth and adult community services. Operating in Cuyahoga county, Ohio and Amherst county, Virginia, the program includes a number of kinship caregivers and youth in foster or kinship care. Program goals center on building resilience and life skills among teens by supporting close, trusting intergenerational relationships. Mentors' contributions and time, both teens' and adults', are honored with an annual stipend for the year-long commitment to twice monthly participation in B2H programming. They are further compensated for time spent completing surveys about the program and its impact.

The two communities have distinguishing and similar qualities (U.S. Census Bureau, [2022](#)). The mentors in Ohio all identify as African American or Black, while their Virginia counterparts are predominantly White. Cuyahoga county has a poverty rate higher than the state and national averages, 20% for households with youth 5-17 in 2020. The Amherst county poverty rate in households with youth 5-17 was lower at 15% in 2020, which is comparable to the national average.

Youth benefit from the presence of caring, consistent adults in their lives (Erikson, 1982). Those in foster and kinship care often have adults move in and out of their lives as the youth seeks a healthy, permanent home. Children who have been in foster and/or kinship care often

need support dealing with trauma, grief, and behavioral issues, in addition to typical developmental needs (Generations United, 2017).

B2H adopted an anti-ageist, anti-racist approach through its community-based participatory effort (e.g., Israel et al., 2013). Youth and adult mentors inform program content. For example, during listening sessions leading up to the launch of programming, community members' identified stress and isolation as negative outcomes of the COVID pandemic. This informed the selection of mindfulness curriculum to start and end each intergenerational session. Other sessions will address job seeking and personal finance skills, which reflect other needs identified by community members. Evidence-based intergenerational practices developed by the program, including meaningful roles and opportunities for teen and adult mentors to interact with each other in consistent and small groups, guide the preparation and implementation of individual programming sessions (Jarrott et al., 2019; Jarrott et al., 2021a). As Experience Corps research demonstrated (Gruenewald et al., 2015), we expect that consistent involvement of teen and adult mentors of the community will support healthy teen and adult development. Intergenerational mentoring programs that offer stipends or other material compensation reflect an anti-racist, anti-ageist framework. They address ageist cultural norms of institutional age-segregation (Freedman & Stamp, 2021) by facilitating intergenerational connections in communities where youth and adults have resources to support each other's development. B2H is unique in its provision of a stipend to both the older adult and youth mentors. As the program continues through its first year of programming, we anticipate that stipends and supports, such as transportation, will reduce barriers to formal volunteerism that have historically limited participation by persons of color who may find the cost of unpaid volunteering greater than the benefits (Xu et al., 2020). We anticipate that this anti-racist, anti-ageist approach to youth

development and productive aging will benefit multiple stakeholder groups and provide a model for other practitioners of formal, non-familial intergenerational programs.

How these Programs Uphold Anti-Oppressive Principles

Our two examples of formal intergenerational volunteerism uphold anti-racist and anti-ageist principles in the following ways. Program leaders:

- Analyze and critique social policies and structures that set the stage for inequitable conditions (e.g., housing, social belonging, transportation) and disproportionately impact racial and ethnic minorities and women.
- Advocate for policy and practice change at multiple levels (e.g., organizational, local, state, and federal) that will benefit populations that are currently excluded or with limited access, specifically racial and ethnic minorities and women.
- Intentionally recruit and retain diverse participants along the lines of race, ethnicity, and age.
- Engage community stakeholders, including focal participants and organizational staff, from the beginning and at every stage of the program, from needs assessment to program and evaluation planning, to data collection, analysis, and dissemination.
- Provide facilitators to participation that limit formal volunteerism among minoritized groups, such as stipends, transportation costs, meals, and links to other local resources.
- Communicate findings in an accessible manner through outlets accessed by program stakeholders, such as sharing videos via social media, newsletter infographics, and presentations to community stakeholders.

Critical Questions

The evidence-base on anti-racist and anti-ageist principles in productive aging is not fully developed. As such, we asked ourselves the following questions when conceptualizing formal intergenerational volunteer programming with anti-oppressive practices in mind:

1. Who can benefit the most from this program when we examine race, age, gender and other intersecting identities?
2. What are the cultural assumptions informing our recruitment and retention methods?
3. What policy and cultural barriers limit participation, particularly among minoritized populations? Who is not able to participate in this program and why?
4. What are the driving identities among the researchers, programmatic staff, and participants? What identities are not included? Why?
5. How are we preparing members of non-minoritized populations to work as allies in support of an anti-racist, anti-ageist perspective?
6. What neighborhoods/communities are not included in our recruitment methods?
7. What messages are we sending with our intake forms, social media presence, and methods for evaluation?
8. What assumptions do we have about diverse older adults? Of emerging adults of various identities?
9. Who are our funders and what are their priorities when it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion?
10. Are we supporting the establishment and growth of partnerships and infrastructure that will sustain programming to meet community needs if and when grant funding ends?
11. What unintended consequences emerge, particularly around at-risk populations? What additional avenues of advocacy exist to reduce barriers to participation and benefits?

Another useful resource for us and potentially our readers is the “Checklist for White Allies Against Racism” by John Raible and Katheryn Russell (2001). The checklist consists of 33 self-assessed items on ally behavior. Each item is scored on a Likert scale from 0=rarely to 4=almost all of the time. Examples include: *I am present at meetings to make sure anti-racism is part of the discussion. I continually educate myself and others about racism. I can strategize and work in coalition with others to advance anti-racist work. I strive to share power with people of color. I can accept leadership from people of color. I work side-by-side with people of color on tasks, projects, and actions.* Given the findings from Generations United that most of the staff are White yet intentionally recruit diverse participants, it is important to not just recognize the values of inclusion, diversity, and equity but also the behaviors that are associated with active allyship. While the examples of home sharing and intergenerational mentoring presented here represent two applications of anti-racist and anti-ageist approaches to formal intergenerational volunteering, we expect that this same lens could be applied to other intergenerational programs involving different youth and older adult participants, pursuing different individual and community goals, and employing different program content.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we reflected on how to integrate anti-racism and anti-ageism lenses into the productive aging literature as key principles to guide intergenerational civic engagement and to bring communities together for mutual benefits and the good of society. Centering the social construction of race and age in the intergenerational literature can sharpen its focus on inclusion, diversity, and equity. Clearly there is more to conceptualize, test and evaluate in order to build an evidence-base to situate these anti-oppressive practices as ‘best practices’ for intergenerational

policies and programs. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with allies of all identities on advancing an equitable society through the practice and study of intergenerational volunteerism.

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