Connecting Generations: Bridging the Boomer, Gen X, and Millennial Divide

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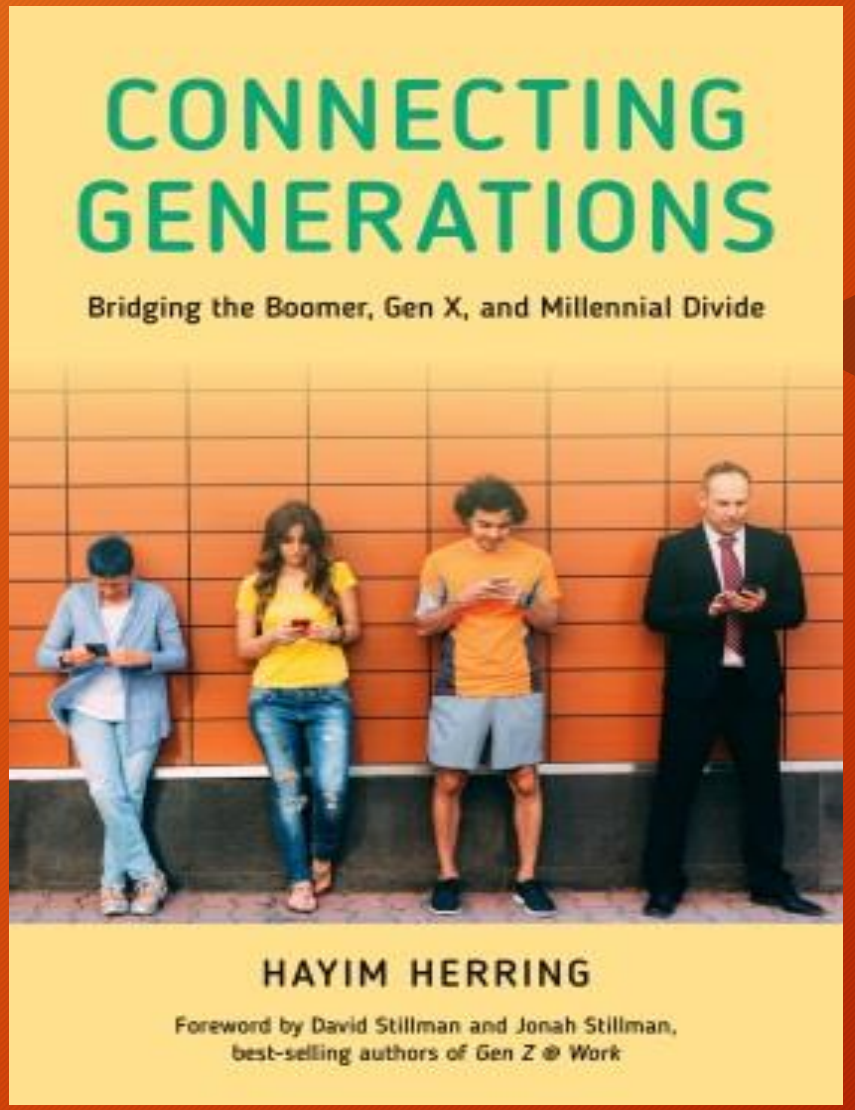

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Social Isolation, Loneliness Are Epidemic

- "…more than half of respondents [in a survey of adults nationwide]—53 percent—said that aside from family members, few of the people they regularly spend time with are much older or much younger than they are. Young adults between the ages of 18 and 34 appear to be the most isolated from other generations, with 61 percent reporting a limited number of much older or much younger acquaintances."

Generations United and The Eisner Foundation, *I Need You, You Need Me: The Young, the Old, and What We Can Achieve Together*, Executive Summary (May 2017)

Social Isolation, Loneliness Are Epidemic

- "We've known for decades that high-quality relationships are essential to young people's growth, learning, and thriving—including for those young people who face serious challenges in their lives and in the world around them. Yet, as many as 40 percent of young people feel lonely."

Eugene Roehlkepartain et al,*Relationships First: Creating Connections That Help Young People Thrive* (Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute, 2017), 2

- "…43 percent of Americans over the age of sixty reported feeling lonely."

Leland Kim,"Loneliness Linked to Serious Health Problems and Death among Elderly: UCSF Researchers Find Social Factors Play Major Role in Older Adults' Health," *University of California, San Francisco* (June 18, 2012)

Social Isolation, Loneliness Are Epidemic

- All told, loneliness is as important a risk factor for early death as obesity and smoking.

Dhruv Khullar, "How Social Isolation Is Killing Us," *The New York Times* (December 22, 2016)

"Social interaction is a critically important contributor to good health and longevity."

Jane E. Brody, "Social Interaction Is Critical for Mental and Physical Health," *The New York Times* (June 12, 2017)

The Gifts of Relationships

"…individuals who are less lonely are more likely to have regular in-person interactions, are in good overall physical and mental health, have found a balance in their daily activities, and are employed."

CIGNA and Ipsos Research, *U.S. Loneliness Index. Survey of 20,000 Americans Examining Behaviors Driving Loneliness in the United States, 2018*

Social Media: More Connected and Isolated

Courtesy Mahdiar Mahmoodi Unsplash

"Overall, it [social media] has definitely improved your outer ring of connections of friends and family but may hurt the inner core [of your relationships]."

Millennial Interview Subject, Billy Thane

"So for me [social media sites] make me second guess what is my life like. Am I making the most out of it? Do I have enough hobbies? It [a social media site] pulls on your insecurities wherever they are and it just highlights them."

Millennial Interview Subject, Angela Krintz

Social “In-app-titude™”

Courtesy NordWood Themes Unsplash

“If you have a significant other, get off of Facebook. It will ruin your relationship, and I think that it contributes to isolation.”

Boomer Interview Subject, Gary Harper

“On one hand, they’re [Millennials] isolated as far as personal contact. On the other hand, you start to understand that the world is level and they’re reaching out to everybody, but there’s no consequence to what they’re reaching out to. It is just energy that flows back and forth, but there’s no responsibility to anyone.”

Boomer Interview Subject, John Jolet

Restoring Conversation

"I think that there's a lot of power in conversation, and I think a lot of times we tend to stick [to] talking and creating friendships with the people we feel most comfortable, whether that's demographics or in a variety of ways. But I think that if people step more outside of their comfort zone and have conversations with someone that was different than their own age range, like a Millennial talking to a Baby Boomer or a Baby Boomer talking to a Millennial we can bring generations together."

Linda Archer, Millennial Interview Subject, *Connecting Generations*, pages 13-14

Which Future Appeals to You?

Multigenerational

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Intergenerational

(c) imtmphoto www.fotosearch.com

A Generational Abyss or Bridge?

"Technological progress has created bridges across borders and languages and cultures. We have yet to fully comprehend the opportunities that will continue to grow from this transformational interconnectivity. Yet transformations, however worthy, do not follow a clear path. One cannot forge connections without the prior existence of gaps, but one also cannot forge connections if those gaps are too wide. In today's world, the separation between generations is wider than the separation between nations, and it is the young who now hold the power to create greater global impact than statesmen and generals ever could."

Shimon Peres, Prime Minister, former President of the State of Israel,
and Nobel Peace Prize recipient (From *Connecting Generations*, page 115)

Visions of Intergenerational Communities

"[In an intergenerational community] all people are valued, and not only have something to contribute but are expected to contribute to the common good, and [an intergenerational community is one in] that we change the normative expectation from "retired to play golf" to "retired to move in a different role in the community and still play golf"; and also [intergenerational community] is about the idea that we're not just doing parallel play in communities, where the seniors do good stuff over here, college kids do something over here, but that there are spaces, intentional times, places, and opportunities where seniors, high school kids, and middle-aged peoplelike me, all get a chance to learn from each other, contribute to each other, and work on shared goals and priorities."

Eugene Roehlkepartain, Vice President of Research and Development,
Search Institute