

The World of Work in the 21st Century: Older Workers, New Work Roles, and Age-Diverse Workplaces

Ruth Kanfer
Georgia Institute of Technology

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Contributions to the Management of an Aging
and Age-Diverse Workforce”*

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rk64@prism.gatech.edu

Overview

- The Practical Problem
- Scientific Contributions
- Research directions

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The Root of the Practical Problem in the U.S.: Aging population/Aging workforce

	% of population 55 yrs +	Median Age of Workforce
2005:	28.8%	40.8
2020:	36.7%	42.0
2050:	39.4%	41.6

From Toossi, M. (2006) A new look at longer term labor force projections. *Monthly Labor Review*.

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2020: The Demographic Perfect Storm

Young Adults: (16-24 yrs)

- ▶ Declining participation rates
- ▶ Approx. 12% of total workforce

Prime Age: (25-54 yrs)

- ▶ Near ceiling participation rates
- ▶ Approx. 63.7% of total workforce

Third Age: (Boomers, 56–78 years old)

- ▶ Increasing participation rates
- ▶ Approx. 23.8% of total workforce

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In the aggregate, what does it mean?

- More older workers in workforce
- More older workers needed to grow the workforce

Organizational Ramifications

- Increased global competition for young talent; spot shortages of skilled workers
- Increased turbulence in personnel planning
- Increased demand for Third Age training and development
- Increased opportunity for knowledge transfer
- Market advantage for workforce and business growth

Individual Ramifications

- More work-life conflicts
- Increased demand on learning
- Increased demand for building new relational contracts
- Increased opportunity for professional engagement

Changing Work Roles, Job Demands, and Occupational Sectors

Professional, mgmt & related

Longer training, higher wages
Large Boomer population

Service, sales, food service & related

Shorter training, lower wages
Large Young Adult population

Implication:

**Redeployment rather than occupational shift to avoid
deskilling, pay and status losses**

The Practical Problem

For organizations:

One size doesn't fit all; building science-informed, evidence-based best practices for older worker deployment and management

For individuals:

When and how to manage the workforce withdrawal/transition process?

Engagement - how much effort/personal resources should be allocated to work?

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What Scientific Research Can Contribute

- **Age-related changes/Adult Development**
 - * Development is selective and comprehensive
 - * Development is both "positive" and "negative" vis á vis jobs
 - * Development is job sensitive and malleable

- **Age-diversity**
 - * Determinants and consequences of intergenerational synergies and conflicts
 - * Pathways for critical knowledge transfer

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Age-Related Changes: Maturation Patterns in Adult Development

Intellectual Development

- ❑ Loss/Decline
- ❑ Growth

Development of the Self

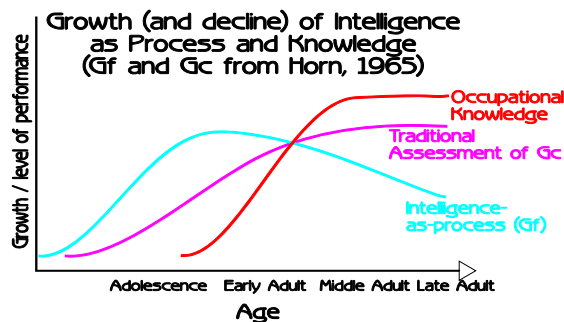
- ❑ Reorganization in motive structure
- ❑ Exchange in work centrality and person characteristics

From Kanfer & Ackerman (2004). Aging, adult development, and work motivation. *Academy of Management Review*.

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Intellectual Development and Knowledge

- Age-related loss/decline in Gf
- Age-related growth in Gc



From Ackerman, 1996

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Intellectual Patterns of Adult Development and Job Demands

High Gc Job Demands:

Young Adult — Improving Performance — High Performance — 3rd Age

High Gf Job Demands:

Young Adult — Sustained Performance — Declining Performance — 3rd Age

Performance Motivation Consequences

High Gc Job Demands:

Young Adult — Challenge — Boredom Stress — 3rd Age

High Gf Job Demands:

Young Adult — Engagement — Decreased Self-Efficacy — 3rd Age

Implications for Older Worker Motivation, Training, and Performance

- Two types of age-related deficits:
 - High Gf** jobs → Declining performance
Rx: *Work role redeployment*
 - High Gc** jobs → Declining motivation
Rx: *Work role redesign*
- Motivation/learning strongest in training and job redesigns that capitalize on previously acquired knowledge and skills

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Adult Development: Motive and Incentive Structures

Age-related changes in the salience of motives

Decreased salience and utility for instrumental motives

Increased salience and utility for experiential and self-protective motives

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Implications for Older Worker Participation and Engagement

Greater emphasis on experiential/intrinsic, work
arrangement, and health-related incentives

Flexible hours, work locations
Generative task assignments
Skill utilization
Healthy workplaces

Adult Development: Work Centrality and Personality

*Age-related changes in the attractiveness of work
engagement and behavioral propensities*

Decreased salience of work goals vs. non-work goals

Increased salience of non-work effort expenditures

Increase in Conscientiousness (reliability)

Increased development and use of emotion regulation skills

Implications for Older Worker Participation and Engagement

- ❑ Redeploy into roles that demand reliability, accuracy, communication skills

- ❑ Redeploy into roles that facilitate transfer of hard-to-train job/firm specific knowledge and skills

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Summary

Chronological age per se does not explain or predict job performance or engagement

Job Performance is Dynamic

- *Changes as function of the individual and the job

Job Performance jointly determined by:

- *Adult development (person)
- *Task Demands (job)
- *Motivation (alignment of person motives and work rewards)

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Future Research Directions

- Participation

Non-work, organizational, and transactional influences on job search and withdrawal decisions

- Engagement

Influence of motive/incentive match, job age-proofing, and status change on performance

- Development

Participative and collaborative strategies for learning

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For related work, see:
<http://www.psychology.gatech.edu/KanferAckerman/index.html>

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