Received: 18 January 2017 | Revised: 3 August 2017 | Accepted: 22 August 2017

DOI: 10.1111/soc4.12533

WILEY

ARTICLE

Redefining generativity: Through life course and pragmatist lenses

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Abstract

Scholars in diverse disciplines have studied and used the concept of generativity, originally introduced in psychology as a midlife development task. However, a review of this multidisciplinary literature in generativity revealed several issues—the lack of a cohesive conceptual definition, incompatibility between a conceptual definition and measurements, and varying applications of the model, necessitating a new direction for further conceptual development. Interdisciplinary theoretical insight and empirical evidence collectively suggest that generativity as a targeted midlife task may no longer be sufficient for explaining a life course pattern of generative concerns, commitment, and actions. Given the current trend of population aging, it is especially important to understand better the phenomenon of generativity during the later stages of the life course. The current article offers a new definition for generativity applicable to people across the life course and develops an expanded generativity model, which considers social context and bears practical implications for well-being. Major implications for future research consist of eliminating the implicit age bias in the conception of generativity and as informed by the pragmatist philosophical perspective, linking generativity to diverse personal experiences and growth rather than mortality.

1 | INTRODUCTION

The concept of *generativity* has been used persistently across diverse disciplines including psychology, anthropology, biology, epidemiology, and sociology, although an eminent psychologist, Erik Erikson (1950), initially developed the concept. The original definition of generativity was "the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation" (Erikson, 1950, p.267), shared among middle-aged adults in their typical roles of employees, parents, and volunteers, through which they preserve social artifacts deemed "good" for the coming generations (Peterson & Stewart, 1996; Whitbourne, Sneed, & Sayer, 2009). This original definition makes generativity a normative and age-graded concept. Erik Erikson's work theorizes that generative concerns arise among adults faced with the prospect of their own mortality (McAdams, de St Aubin, & Logan, 1993). Later, however, several scholars have suggested that developmental trajectories have become increasingly heterogeneous in terms of the sequence and duration in which individuals

negotiate their developmental challenges (Elder, 1998; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; Stewart & Vandewater, 1998; Zucker, Ostrove, & Stewart, 2002). Kotre (1984) went so far as to say that "generativity appears on and off in different guises through fifty or sixty years of adult life … and only on rare occasions does it merit the term stage" (p.432). In fact, Erikson himself and colleagues came to say that the grand-generative functions in later life could help people to stay "truly alive" (Erikson, Erikson, & Kivnick, 1986) and stressed diverse expressions of generativity throughout the life course (Erikson et al., 1986; Kivnick & Wells, 2014).

In spite of these developments, however, what remains unresolved concerns a cohesive conceptual boundary of generativity that encompasses various expressions across the life course. Several scholars, including Erikson (1950), pointed out that it may be problematic to consider generativity as synonymous to productivity (Clark & Arnold, 2008; MacDermid, Heilbrun, & DeHaan, 1997; Peterson & Stewart, 1993), social and interpersonal care (McAdams, 1988; Peterson & Stewart, 1993), or creativity (Rubinstein, Girling, de Medeiros, Brazda, & Hannum, 2015; Vaillant & Vaillant, 1990). We follow Erikson's (1950) contention that generativity includes concepts such as productivity and creativity but is never meant to replace these terms (for empirical research, see Clark & Arnold, 2008; Peterson & Stewart, 1996). Given its unique yet broad applications, we seek to achieve a shared understanding of generativity that will allow for greater utility in research and practice.

In this paper, we offer a revised definition and an expanded model of generativity to explain diverse life course patterns of generativity by applying the life course perspective while incorporating classical pragmatist philosophical ideas about growth. Specifically, we argue that (a) a revised conceptual definition is necessary for explaining a life course trajectory of generativity; (b) there could be differential motives for generativity (e.g., growth and mortality) applicable at different points across the life course; and accordingly, (c) the process of generativity should be rethought. We conclude by discussing how the revised concept and model of generativity can be germane to sociological research with potential implications for policy and practice.

2 | REVISITING GENERATIVITY: AN EVOLVING CONSTRUCT

The definition of generativity has evolved over time. The early definition of generativity (Erikson, 1950) is mostly concerned with reproduction, child rearing, and parenting, as Erikson argued that it is a midlife task. His initial definition emphasizes the fundamental responsibility of adults as establishing the next generation, with failure to achieve generativity resulting in stagnation or a lack of continuous development. Though Erikson defined generativity as a focal developmental task in middle adulthood, the epigenetic chart in his later collaborative work suggests that individuals at every life stage anticipate future tasks while reexamining past focal tasks that have been less integrated (Erikson et al., 1986). Importantly, Kotre's (1984) alternate definition of generativity is "a desire to invest one's substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self" (p.10). This definition considers individual needs regardless of specific age or roles in the society (such as parenting). Kotre (1984) further suggested that there are multiple types of generativity that manifest at different times across the life course, resulting in an expansion of the definition of generativity. For example, Stewart and Vandewater (1998) described generativity as "including both an increased sense of efficacy and a vision for oneself as having made contributions to a wider community" (p.94), recognizing generative desire and actions as separate dimensions. Keyes and Ryff (1998) further argued that generativity by definition represents "the desire for an act of benefiting others" (p.230). Clark and Arnold (2008) discussed multiple varieties of the concept and raised the possibility that generativity might be an umbrella concept for "a diverse family of behaviors that… have contributions to human well-being." Thus, the concept of generativity has evolved into a much broader one that is not tied closely to middle adulthood.

Accordingly, generativity is now treated more or less as a construct with multiple dimensions, and researchers are revealing a variety of generative patterns, which call for a modification of its conceptualization while reflecting its wide relevance to the sociological literature, particularly on social roles. Kotre's (1984) definition alone includes biological, parental, technical, and cultural aspects of generativity. Biological and parental generativity is the primary

"outlet" of generativity according to Erikson (Erikson et al., 1986; Kotre, 1984; Peterson & Stewart, 1996; Snarey, 1993). Indeed, assuming roles as parents (both biological and adoptive) and grandparents significantly and positively affect generativity (Erikson et al., 1986; Snarey, 1993). Interestingly, non-parents are capable of expressing similar levels of generativity to kin and non-kin in recent studies (Rothrauff & Cooney, 2008; Rubinstein et al., 2015), and these findings make us rethink biological and parental factors as major route to generativity as parenthood becomes less prominent. Technical generativity involves learning and teaching particular skills required for furthering career, and research on career development and mentoring is particularly concerned with this dimension of generativity. Existing findings show that mentoring has long-term benefits on both mentor and mentee in terms of leadership, professional identity, and higher career satisfaction (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Busch, 1985; Clark & Arnold, 2008; Huwe & Johnson, 2003; Zacher, Rosing, Henning, & Frese, 2011), applicable across the life course.

3 | REDEFINING GENERATIVITY: USING THE LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE AND PRAGMATIST PHILOSOPHY

In the United States alone, developmental stages have become increasingly heterogeneous as the average life span increased more than a decade from 71.1 years in 1950 to 82.2 years in 2015 (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). More adults pursue education at later age, with 11% of students at public degree-granting institutions over the age of 35 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Reproduction is not a universal concern in midlife any more, particularly for women; one in five women between ages of 35 and 39 were childless in 2015 (CDC, 2015). The population shift since the 1950s has led to a much greater reservoir of healthy older adults serving as active contributors to the community. Scholars have already paid attention to the diverse expressions of generativity across the life course, whether it is religious activity (Dillon, Wink, & Fay, 2003), filial caregiving (Peterson, 2002), leadership success (Zacher et al., 2011), social involvement (Hart, McAdams, Hirsch, & Bauer, 2001), or post-traumatic growth in cancer survivors (Bellizzi, 2004). Redefining generativity appears overdue, and we believe an updated conceptualization can benefit greatly from the life course perspective because it "guides research on human lives within context," allowing more researchers to move towards a focus on heterogeneity in life transitions and determinants of individual aging experiences (Elder, 1975; Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003, p.10; O'Rand & Krecker, 1990).

The life course perspective informs the concept of generativity in significant ways. First, by addressing the lifelong processes of human development and aging (Elder et al., 2003), this view helps us to understand generativity as a lifelong endeavor and not as a stage or age-specific task. It also alerts researchers to cumulative effects and broader contextual changes for generativity. Second, the principle of timing dictates that the influence of developmental factors depends on their timing in the life course. The question remains when the initial development of generativity occurs and what life transitions or events, such as marriage, retirement, empty nest, caregiving, trigger or hinder generativity. Third, individuals have choices and actions (i.e., agency), yet within particular historical and social contexts (Elder et al., 2003, p. 11). Generativity literature focuses on individual needs and motivations of generative behaviors, although social and cultural environments operate as a critical backdrop (Elder et al., 2003). Historical and/or geographic contexts that stress the philosophy and norms of generativity would likely promote generativity. Finally, the principle of linked lives shows that generativity may result from the nature of one's social relationship and joint activities with one's family members, mentors, friends, and acquaintances (Elder et al., 2003).

Taking the life course approach, the revised definition of generativity avoids age-specific reference or implication. Some research shows that generative concerns, commitments, and behaviors increase in midlife and level off in later life with slightly different tipping points including ages 40–59 (Keyes & Ryff, 1998), 50 (Stewart, Ostrove, & Helson, 2001), 60 (Miner-Rubino, Winter, & Stewart, 2004), and 62 (Newton & Stewart, 2010). Yet others do not find such association between age and generativity (Ackerman, Zuroff, & Moskowitz, 2000). In particular, Whitbourne et al. (2009) did not find a significant change in generativity trajectory in their 34-year longitudinal study (age 17 to 57),

signifying that the age differences may actually be a cohort effect. Some scholars argue that generative motives are established (or increase) early in the life course, and actual generative concerns and behaviors are expressed through midlife and later life. Other studies find domain-specific effects such that technical (i.e., learning skills and mentoring) and cultural (i.e., contribution to the community) aspects have quite a stable trajectory until very old age, while biological and parental concerns tend to show an inverse U-shaped trajectory across the life course (Keyes & Ryff, 1998; Whitbourne et al., 2009).

Related to the principle of timing, notable is the finding that different *motives* predict generativity across the life course, including both agentic (growth, identity, power, developmental, and achievement) and communal (intimacy, social, generative, prosocial, and altruistic) motives for generativity (Ackerman et al., 2000; Hofer et al., 2016; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992; Peterson & Stewart, 1993; Peterson & Stewart, 1996; Rubinstein et al., 2015). It appears that, for younger adults, growth motives are strong (e.g., acquire skills, accumulate knowledge, and further careers; Frensch, Pratt, & Norris, 2007; Peterson & Stewart, 1993). For middle-aged adults (30–60), both growth and communal motives exert independent and additive effects on generative motivations such as leaving positive legacy and caring for others (Ackerman et al., 2000; Peterson & Stewart, 1996). Among older adults, growth motives taper off, and communal motives such as making a lasting legacy and symbolic immortality increase in predicting generativity (Rubinstein et al., 2015).

Based on socioemotional selectivity theory (SST), we contend that the aforementioned differences are not due to age, per se, but to a narrowing future time perspective and a related motivational change towards a prioritization of emotional meaningful and generative life goals. SST posits that constructing a time horizon—not calendar time, but personal lifetime—is a unique human capacity (Carstensen, 1995). SST theorizes that when time is perceived as expansive, individuals prioritize acquiring knowledge and experiences to prepare for their unforeseeable future (Charles & Carstensen, 2010). Accordingly, generativity demonstrated by volunteering and mentoring among high school and college students (Frensch et al., 2007) is associated with gaining personal growth, such as making an impact and mentoring others rather than leaving a lasting legacy.

Older adults are found to focus more on ego-transcending goals and generativity when they perceive that the future time is limited (Brandtstädter, 1999; de Medeiros, 2009; Kooij & Van de Voorde, 2011; Lang & Carstensen, 2002). Indeed, Erikson (1950); Erikson et al. (1986); and Kotre (1984) posit that the primary motivation for generativity arises when we acknowledge the inevitability of death and make an effort to leave a legacy. Snarey (1993) and Snarey & Clark, (1998) refer to "generativity chill," the kind of anxiety resulting from realization that the self is finite and threatening an individual's generativity. Alleviating existential anxiety can be a potent and instinctual imperative for human beings, and generativity is a way of transcending one's existence and achieving symbolic immortality (Maxfield et al., 2014; Thomas, 1995). It is important to note, however, that age is not a perfect proxy for future time perspective. This is because individuals have adaptive capability for aging and general (gradual) decline in health (Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999; Kooij & Van de Voorde, 2011). This proposition explains why people who experienced cancer (Bellizzi, 2004), HIV (Carstensen et al., 1999), and social suffering (de Medeiros, 2009; de Medeiros, Rubinstein, & Ermoshkina, 2015) had similar generative motives as very old adults, compared to their healthy, more normatively aging counterparts.

Studying generativity in the context of time perspective instead of age has three important implications. First, it opens up new avenues for research on differing motives for the same generative actions and social roles. For example, a person may volunteer as pro bono legal services to low-income immigrants because of desire to accumulate experiences and knowledge or because helping others provides the person with purpose in life. The identical social roles may have different implications on well-being and future generativity depending on a person's time horizon rather than age.

Second, it sheds light on growth as an important motive for generativity across the life course. Classical pragmatism posits that growth is an age-independent process of adapting to environmental stressors or problems. According to pragmatist philosopher, John Dewey (2008), our actions are usually habitual: growth occurs, however, when we creatively engage the problems, which requires the use of our evaluative capacities. We must evaluate the affective

and cognitive dimensions of our own experience in order to continue to live in a meaningful way. Pragmatism's normative ideal is to live so that time's passage is characterized by individual growth and transformation as we address problems. Age per se is not what gives life meaning; it is the activity *in* time that provides meaning. Indeed, older individuals can lead a life characterized by personal growth just as younger individuals.

If we identify this continuous adaptation or growth as a component of generativity, being generative represents individual goals that could be expressed at any point throughout the life course. In the poignant essay of 60 older adults and their life stories, Kaufman (1986) has demonstrated that being old is neither a problem with development nor a source of meaning. Older adults are able to continue participating in the society and, more importantly, continue to interpret their participation in the social world (Kaufman, 1986). Furthermore, Meika Loe (2011) in her book *Aging Our Way: Lessons for Living from 85 and Beyond* describes older adults' activities such as reading, gardening, creative activities, and meditation, signifying their continuous development throughout life, rather than aging (p. 18). These experiences among the oldest-old appear to correspond to the indicators of personal growth as per the psychological well-being index formulated by Ryff and Keyes (1995).

Finally, studying time perspective recognizes individual trajectories of generativity, consistent with the life course perspective. Research on age and generativity predicts the average effects of age on generative concerns and actions. Indubitably, there is an incredible amount of individual heterogeneity in the timing of major life transitions (e.g., parenthood, employment, retirement, illness, and widowhood) as well as generative capacity. More importantly, age is not a *cause* of generativity. Personal time horizon may better explain why certain people of identical age decide to engage in generative behaviors while others do not.

Drawing on the aforementioned theoretical frameworks, we revise the definition of *generativity* as "the human experience of contributing to and promoting lives of others and oneself." This revised definition of generativity contributes to the psychological, sociological, and life course literature by allowing researchers to pose and answer additional theoretical and empirical questions. First, this conceptualization can explain generativity across the life course (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992) regardless of marital or parental status (Rothrauff & Cooney, 2008). More research can also reveal various expressions of generativity among young children and older adults and factors associated with them. Second, the revised definition can enrich the literature on generative patterns concerning prior generations, such as filial caregiving. One study examined midlife women and found that generativity at age 43 predicted greater involvement in intergenerational roles 10 years later (Peterson, 2002). Moreover, generative women reported less subjective burden caring for parents and more knowledge about community elder care programs. There are only few studies on generativity and filial caregiving partly due to the fact that the earlier definition of generativity focused on the subsequent generations, not prior ones. The new definition will shed light on the interpretation of these findings and the conceptualization of future research on multiple generative activities carried out by individuals from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

4 | EXPANDING THE GENERATIVITY MODEL

Concerning antecedents and contexts of generativity, McAdams and de St. Aubin's (1992) original, comprehensive model comprises seven psychosocial features that are ultimately linked with generative outcomes. The model is graphically represented in Figure 1 along with our proposed expansion and modifications.

Generativity does not occur simply within the individual, but also within the context of social environments. Cultural demands (e.g., opportunities and cultural expectations) and inner desire serve as major external and internal motivational sources, respectively, promoting generative concerns for the current or next generation, according to McAdams and de St. Aubin's (1992) model. Motivated by cultural demand and both types of inner desire (growth and communal), generative concern in the original model represents the extent to which individuals are willing to invest their selves to provide generative contributions (i.e., generative commitment). Commitment is demonstrated by individual goals and decisions to take the responsibility for the next generation. The original model included "belief

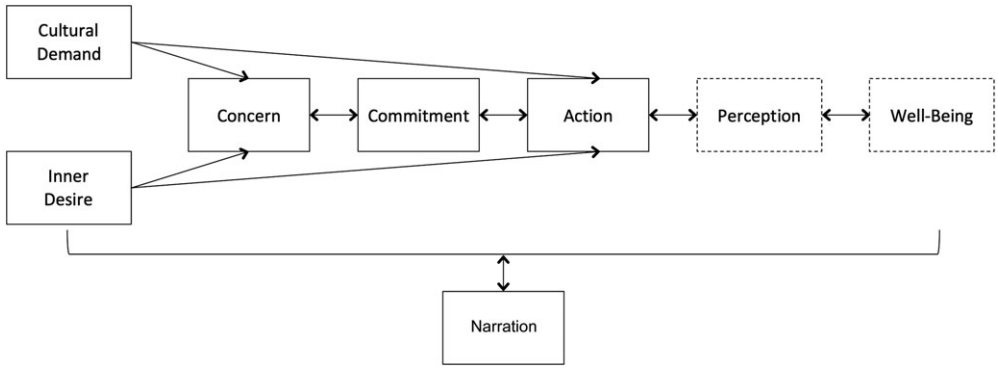

FIGURE 1 Revised generativity model. Adapted from McAdams and de St. Aubin (1992) and modified (indicated by dashed line) [Correction added on 16 October 2017, after first online publication: Figure 1 has been corrected in this version.]

in species" influencing generative commitment, but it was eliminated from our current version due to the lack of empirical research (Rubinstein et al., 2015; Vandewater & McAdams, 1989). All of the aforementioned features are thought to ultimately facilitate generative actions expressed by creating, maintaining, and offering tangible products or behaviors to others. Finally, individual narration in the model reflects generative concerns, commitments, and behaviors situated within the social world. These narratives provide individuals with a sense of purpose and unity while explaining how generativity fits into their life stories (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992). This model is deemed suitable for studying multiple age groups since there are no preconceived assumptions regarding age-specific expectations and actions.

Missing in McAdams and de St. Aubin's (1992) model is the construct of *well-being* which has been studied in the generativity literature and may represent a pragmatic end. The relationship between generative behaviors and well-being is not always apparent (Grossbaum & Bates, 2002; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992). Some scholars have shown that the effects of generative actions on well-being are contingent upon the aspects of generativity concerned (Clark & Arnold, 2008; Hofer et al., 2016; Stewart & Vandewater, 1998). We contend that the link between generative behaviors and well-being operates through the *perception* of generativity. Though generative concerns are mainly individual/psychological, behaviors are inherently social (Kotre, 1984; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992). Thus, the association between generative behaviors and well-being appears to operate indirectly through some forms of *perception* such as perceived respect (Cheng, 2009), rejection (Tabuchi, Nakagawa, Miura, & Gondo, 2015), satisfaction with past generativity (Peterson & Stewart, 1993), or feelings of benefiting others (Ehlman, Ligon, & Moriello, 2014; Hofer et al., 2016; Matz-Costa, Carr, McNamara, & James, 2015).

Identity theory informs us that this process can be seen as a social evaluation. Identity is essentially a story one constructs (and reconstructs) from evaluating the past, present, and future within a particular context. Similarly, pragmatists such as William James think of the self as a process of past and present events. According to James (1997), the past, present, and future are fundamentally interconnected within an individual's stream of consciousness. Gross (2009), in his essay of pragmatism in sociology, argued that according to pragmatism, meanings are not always given prior to the action, but are often emergent from actions. The individual interprets the present and the past according to the needs and actions of the present context. Thus, the feedback we gain from the self and others will eventually shift the significance of a given identity (Burke, 2004). In a cultural or familial context that devalues generativity, prioritization of generative identity is unlikely. Generativity operates on a bidirectional feedback process, whereby generative actors provide knowledge, experiences, skills, or material resources to the recipient then the object of generativity provides positive or negative feedback that shapes the experience and identity. Indeed, Peterson and Duncan (2007) recognized identity as a "prerequisite for successful negotiation of the generativity stage" (p.43).

Because generative effort involves recipients and is a type of self-evaluation process, perception of generativity has significant implications for future generative actions and thereby an important component of the generativity model.

The discussion of perception also leads to a quintessential question of whether one can be generative towards oneself (Bradley & Marcia, 1998; Vaillant, 1977). From the identity perspective, generative self and identity are socially reinforced and maintained (Blumer, 1969). Individuals continuously evaluate who they are and what they are capable of through social interactions, but through observations they also see how good or bad the experiences are generally. Generativity in a sense involves a process of self-evaluation or a view of the self. Not only are we imparting our own values, we also acquire values *through* our interactions, as suggested by research findings that helping others can enhance a breadth of well-being outcomes such as autonomy, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and life satisfaction (Arnold & Clark, 2015; Cheng, 2009; Grossbaum & Bates, 2002; Keyes & Ryff, 1998). Thus, the perception of generativity importantly links tangible actions and their outcomes with psychological/physical well-being, which, we argue, is a measurable, pragmatic aspect of the generativity model. Improved well-being may, in turn, motivate continued generative concerns, commitments, and actions by boosting inner desire.

What may particularly interest sociologists is how resources shape certain generative actions. Though McAdams and de St. Aubin suggest that "cultural demand" influences generative concerns and behaviors, external social structures, or inequalities also influence the capacity to be generative. In this regard, generativity can be understood in the context of available resources. A strand of research investigates education as a major antecedent of generativity (Keyes & Ryff, 1998; Miner-Rubino et al., 2004). Education is not a mere predictor but rather a cultural context within which individuals are motivated to be generative. Indeed, Durkheim (1925/1961) asserts that education teaches students "how to act on behalf of the collective interests" (p.59) and to think critically about social issues. Highly educated individuals are more aware and capable of creating and maintaining generative objects. If resourceful individuals are more generative, and healthier as a result, generativity will be yet another mechanism through which inequality manifests (Abramson & Portacolone, 2017). There remains much room for sociological inquiry to reveal inequalities in life course trajectories concerning generativity and well-being.

5 | CONCLUSION: WHY GENERATIVITY IS RELEVANT IN THE SOCIOLOGICAL LITERATURE

The canonical generativity scholars emphasize that it is crucial to consider lifelong efforts of generativity (Erikson et al., 1986; Kivnick & Wells, 2014), but the dominant framework on human development tends to presume age-appropriateness despite contrary empirical evidence while paying insufficient attention to changes in social, demographic, and cultural contexts that have occurred for the last half a century. Contrary to Burgess' (1960) description of older age as notably "roleless," the majority of individuals continue to make contributions to the family, community, and society well beyond their traditional "retirement age" as volunteers, workers, grandparents, and mentors (Fisher, Day, & Collier, 1992). We therefore argue that discourse and research on generativity would benefit from life course perspective and pragmatism. More specifically, we redefine generativity to underscore its diverse manifestations extending well into older ages and propose an expanded generativity model in order to highlight the social processes involved and pragmatic benefits of generative acts and suggest ways in which sociology contributes to the generativity literature.

We define generativity as "the human experience of contributing to and promoting lives of others and oneself." This definition represents improvement over existing ones for several reasons. First, it accounts for all developmental stages, multiple age groups and cohorts, and diverse experiences of generativity. The object of generativity in the revised definition is not simply the future generations. Second, our proposed definition assumes the possibility of continuous development and growth over the life course. According to pragmatism as well as Kotre's (1984) agentic motives, generativity should be characterized by growth rather than an attempt to remedy the fading self. Third, the pragmatic and symbolic interactionist approach informs that generativity is an evolving social construct, ultimately

left up to the personal interpretation of experiences as influenced by social environments. With this definition, we also expanded the existing generativity model (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992) by including two important elements, namely, the perception of generativity and well-being. Perception signifies that generative concerns and actions involve social relationships (i.e., the objects or recipients) and provides feedback for future generative concerns and actions through well-being which can be anything from an augmented sense of self to physical health.

Our proposed definition can accommodate diverse interests and actions and opens doors to more sociological research on these topics. Studies may employ both quantitative and qualitative methods to demonstrate generativity as a rich, multifaceted concept that is also context-sensitive. Generativity as redefined here requires the development of age-integrated measurements that can be used across the life course. The age-integrated, constructionist approach adopted in the definition would help researchers to explore and identify additional types and objects of generativity, contributing to the improvement of research instruments. In the context of population aging, it would be particularly fruitful to examine how generativity manifests among people in later life and to understand important antecedent variables and well-being/quality of life outcomes associated with different types of generativity in various contexts. Moreover, there can be more research on generativity from a life course perspective identifying how different dimensions of generativity are expressed across the life course and how these interact with each other. A few studies have examined generativity among working mothers (i.e., parental and technical; MacDermid et al., 1997) and preretired volunteers (i.e., technical and cultural; Kleiber & Nimrod, 2008), but far less is known about whether different types of generativity might compete with or complement each other.

In light of the new definition, researchers may examine more closely the "growth" dimension of generativity from the sociological perspective imbued with pragmatism. Although researchers have already developed a scale to measure personal growth as a part of psychological well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), subsequent studies may identify various types of personal growth experiences among adolescents, middle-aged adults, and older adults from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and cultural contexts. Some, such as Simone de Beauvoir (1996) in her *The Coming of Age*, have expressed concerns that growth is the privilege of people who have adequate health and income in later life and is not possible for everyone. There is no doubt that social and political critiques of the experience of old age as Beauvoir's offer important insight on how generative experiences are shaped by class, generational power struggle, and other cultural factors. At the same time, it is crucial to note that growth is a possibility that transcends class and politics. According to the pragmatist tradition, growth occurs through a reconstruction of experience, which is available to everyone. People rework the conceptual apparatus that makes sense of their lives so that life is then experienced in a more meaningful way. Growth is not simply measured by the number of activities in which individuals are engaged; growth instead is a matter of the significance people draw from the activities in which they are already engaged. Continued growth across the life course has actually been suggested by a study of men in their mid/late careers that found generativity was compatible with agentic motives for personal growth (Arnold & Clark, 2015). Future research could focus on growth patterns among the oldest-old, elucidating further the roles of human agency and social influence in later life, and longitudinal studies can identify clearer pathways on how contributing to others will also contribute to oneself through improvement in well-being or quality of life over time.

In addition to implications for research, this paper points to several social implications contingent upon additional research to ascertain empirical support for the proposed conceptualization and theoretical model for generativity. Generativity conceptualized as a focus in a particular life stage may hamper the creation and the maintenance of a generative society, as it perpetuates age segregation (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2006; Riley & Riley, 1994). Hagestad and Uhlenberg (2006) stressed that the temporal categorization of human life is reinforced institutionally, spatially, and culturally, hindering opportunities for multiple age groups to interact with one another. The age-integrated definition and model of generativity could ultimately facilitate cross-age interactions and activities while expanding age-integrated opportunities. We contend that discoveries from using our new conceptualization may eventually help dispel ageism and age stratification in social structures that currently lag behind in reflecting the older segment of the population as active contributors or lifelong learners. Knowing the beneficial and detrimental influence of positive and negative age stereotypes held by older adults on their health outcomes (Levy, 2009), we think it crucial for researchers

to be mindful of potentially beneficial and detrimental effects of their own implicit age biases in the conceptualization and design of their studies. Increased scholarship without implicit ageism will subsequently help us understand better the magnitude of tangible and intangible contributions or achievements of people in later life. More importantly, generativity at the personal level becomes a moral obligation to both examine and improve our own lives as well as the lives of others. Generativity is no longer something that may happen to us as we enter a certain stage of our lives. Rather, it is a process in which we are agents called upon to take control of time to promote human well-being and humanity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We appreciate valuable comments from Nathan W. Pino, Rebecca Deason, Robert W. Fischer and anonymous peer reviewers on early versions of this manuscript. S. Kim conceived and initiated the manuscript, and all authors helped writing and discussing the manuscript.

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How to cite this article: Kim S, Chee KH, Gerhart O. Redefining generativity: Through life course and pragmatist lenses. *Sociology Compass*. 2017;11:e12533. https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12533