

NEW VOICES

Despite the prevalent misconceptions described in the previous chapter, it is a relief to see there are many new voices attempting to overturn the predominant view on old age. This chapter will introduce some of the theories and projects that inspire this project's stance.

Successful Aging Model

Rowe and Kahn (1998) described successful aging in a multidimensional way, that encompasses the avoidance of disease and disability, the maintenance of high physical and cognitive function, and sustained engagement in social and productive activities (Figure 19). This model shows a broadening and integrated perspective compared with prior biomedical models which are preoccupied with disease and disability (Seeman et al. 1994) or psychosocial models (Leonard 1981) which focus on social participation, psychological resources, etc. A few years later, an expanded version of the successful aging model complemented the original concept with a body of theoretical inquiry and empirical research at the level of society. Three main goals for scholars are identified, among which adopting a life course perspective calls for redistribution of life major activities, and focusing on human capital calls for more attention being paid to the potential upside of the aging of society (Rowe and Kahn 2015).

There are similar models such as the biopsychosocial model (Havelka et al. 2009) arguing that a more comprehensive approach should be taken to address health and disease. Yet, the successful aging model is one of the earliest and most influential models defining

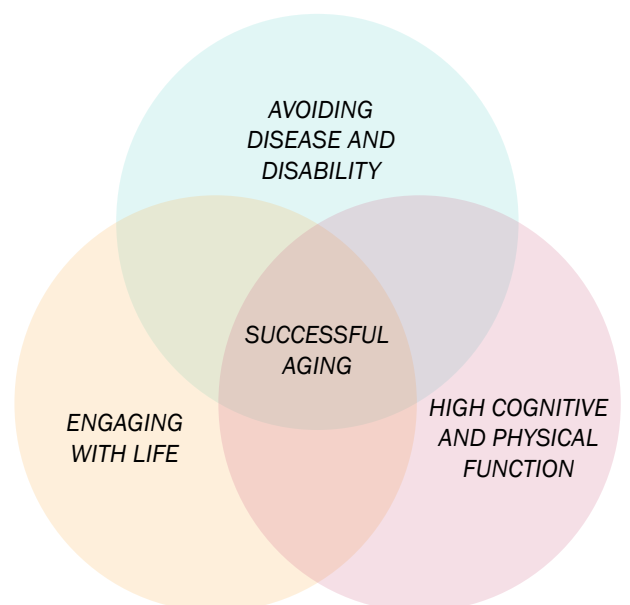


Figure 19 a model of successful aging adapted from Rowe and Kahn (1997)

aging as a multidimensional process that requires attention to more than diseases. It set the stage for later intervention studies to increase the number of people aging successfully. The expanded version provided a developmental view and inspires a positive way of looking at aging.

Personhood Turn

In the context of care, the desire for a personal relationship with care professionals instigates the development of the care models which turned from a physician-centered system to patient-centered care (Institute of Medicine Report 2001). It is then followed by an argument that patient-centered care should be supplemented by person-focused care. While patient-centered care generally revolves around disease-oriented episodes, person-focused care “is based on the accumulated knowledge of people, which provides the basis for better recognition of health problems and needs over time and facilitates appropriate care for these needs in the context of other needs” (Starfield 2011). More recent research shows more attention to relationships and argues that the formation and maintenance of relationships in health care should include the personhood of participants and positive relationships are crucial to well-being (Beach and Inui 2006). This strand of development in care models indicates the importance of taking personal experiences and values into account.

This personhood turn calls for a person-centered approach to care. It also inspires a personal view that pays attention to lived experience and embraces the deeply personal, multidimensional, and rich qualities of the aging process.

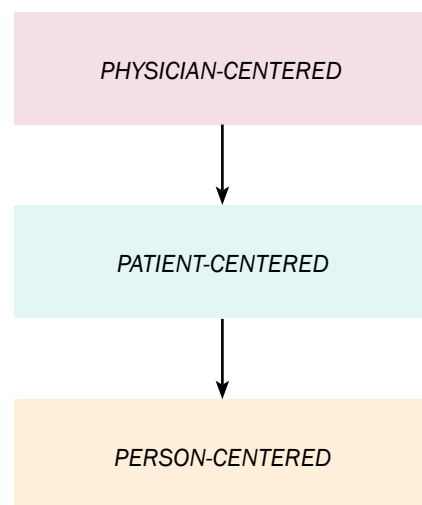


Figure 20 a personhood turn i the care model

Inspiring Projects or Cases

Apart from the inspiring theories that point out the proper way of viewing the aging process, many design cases or projects encountered during the literature research also serve as a source of inspiration for this project. A few will be briefly introduced next.

Resourceful Aging (Nicenboim et al. 2018; Kitazaki 2019) is an EU-funded project that spanned over five years. It started by questioning the negative narrative around older people and attempted to take a positive perspective on aging by focusing on what the elders are still capable of. It integrated ethnographic research results with machine-learning-enabled thing-centered research findings and yielded an in-depth understanding of older people's emerging resourcefulness in their daily life. Accordingly, its final proposal aimed at empowering older people to age resourcefully by providing a set of connected resources that can be actively used in creative ways (Figure 21).

Warm Technology (Ijsselsteijn, 2020) is a novel perspective on design for people living with dementia. It pointed out that current technological innovations are often driven by technology-centricity rather than user-centredness thereby causing the mismatch between the dominant solutions offered by technology and personal needs. To challenge conventionally impersonal and uncaring technology, it advocates Warm Technology which is predicated on (1) the focus on skills older people possess or wish to develop; (2) the purpose to support social and emotional needs and enhance feel-good moments; (3) the goal to be empowering thus increasing self-efficacy; (4) the aim to be non-stigmatizing and acknowledge

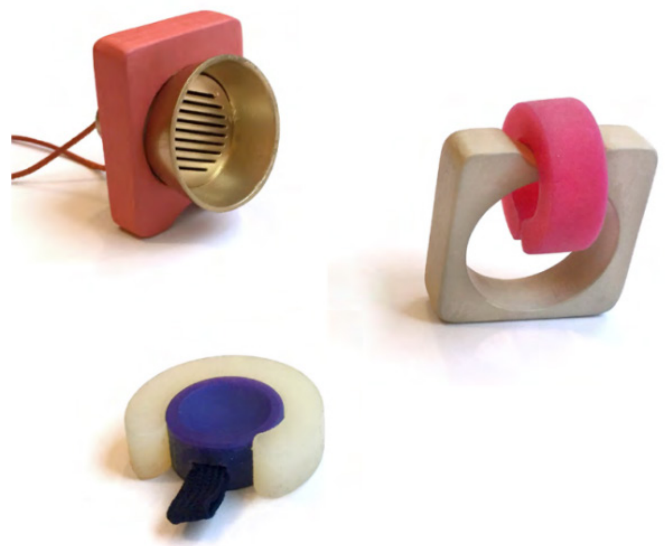


Figure 21 Connected Resources (Nicenboim et al. 2018; Kitazaki 2019)

the diversity; (5) the basis of natural sensory and motor system and personal context and history. This approach is instantiated by a series of design cases including Stay-Tuned Radio (Wintermans et al. 2017; Figure 22), Homing Compass (Brankaert and Suijkerbuijk 2019; Figure 23), and VITA Music Pillow (Houben et al. 2020; Figure 24).

Other projects or design cases including markerClock (Riche and Mackay 2010) and Walky (Nazzi et al. 2012) promoting peer support and social connectivity, eHome project supporting self-awareness and reflection (Fitzpatrick 2012), etc. all have been inspiring to this project by showing new opportunities for technology design for older people. Taking agency, adaptivity, and social reciprocity as the core values, these cases manifest different attempts of tweaking the negative rhetorics around gerontechnology and reimagining new ways of living enhanced by technology embedded in everyday life.



Figure 22 Stay-tuned radio (Wintermans et al. 2017)



Figure 23 Homing Compass (Brankaert and Suijkerbuijk 2019)



Figure 24 VITA Music Pillow (Houben et al. 2020)

Conclusion

To conclude, the theories and design cases introduced in this chapter have greatly inspired this project. The holistic approach promoted by the successful aging model together with the personal uptake inspired by personhood turn in the care model points out a promising direction to maneuver through misconceptions. Design projects and cases that share a positive view of old age exemplify the manner of affirming, exploiting, and promoting the potential and possibilities in old age. Emphasis on a contextualized understanding of lived experiences serving as the input for technology design is another recurring theme among the projects that can be assimilated. Bearing the prompt of taking a holistic and personal approach to understanding in mind and taking a positive viewpoint, we still need to go through the hands-on exploration to glean first-hand insights. Therefore, the next question would be how to truly understand older adults' life practically.

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