The Role of Social Capital in Aging Well

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“Aging well is most likely to occur when people can take advantage of all the possibilities available to them” (Adams & Blieszner, 1995, p. 213).
Aging Well

Physical and cognitive health
Aging Well

Engagement
Aging Well

Person-environment ‘fit’
Networks of older adults

- **Social network**
  - The warm bodies

- **Support network**
  - The helpful connections

- **Care network**
  - The devoted few

“The sources of social capital lie in the structure of social relations developed over time” (Policy Research Initiative, 2003b, p. 16).
Networks and Aging Well

- Physical and cognitive health
  - Social networks and positive health outcomes
  - Care networks and poor health outcome

- Engagement
  - Support networks and narrow vs. broad engagement
  - Community networks and engagement

- Person-environment ‘fit’
  - Care networks and choice
  - Support networks and bridging to resources
Social capital, however, is neither a panacea for public health nor a concept that can be easily translated into a recipe for successful aging. In fact, “building” social capital has both positive and negative aspects.

(Cannuscio, Block & Kawachi, 2003, p396)
Programs and Initiatives…
The Social Capital Lens, and Aging Well

Programs to support close ties to others

- Providing direct support to frail older adults
  - Home Care
- Supporting the networks themselves
  - Respite
  - Compassionate Care Leave
Programs and Initiatives…
The Social Capital Lens, and Aging Well

Programs that enhance engagement

- Encouraging civic participation
  - New Horizons for Seniors

- Fostering linkages to resources
  - Collaborative Seniors’ Portal
Programs and Initiatives…
The Social Capital Lens, and Aging Well

Programs that enhance connections among networks

- Linking national organizations
  - Canadian Caregivers coalition
Strategic Policy Research and Program Development

A network lens to better understand

- weak ties
- community linkages
- care networks and aging well;
- families and aging well;
- programs and aging well goals
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