



# Connectedness – Understanding The Value of Bridging the Digital Divide for Older Adults

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# AGENDA



## 1. The Generational Digital Divide

- What is it?
- Contributing factors
- Addressing it to increase older adult's engagement

The NSF-funded Smart Social Connector

## 2. Strategies & ideas

- Moderated discussion

The Senior Adult Program at EPCC

## 3. Evaluation

# The Generational Digital Divide

The gap in use of technology between older and younger adults

- Limited Access
- Limited Digital Literacy
- Ex: 96% of adults aged 18-29 years owned a smartphone compared to only 61% of adults aged 65+ in 2021



Friemel, 2016

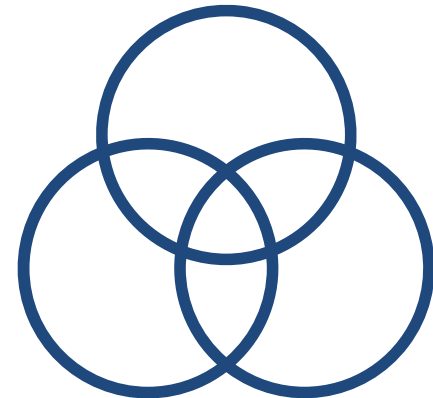
Charness and Boot, 2022

Pew Research Center, 2021

# The Generational Digital Divide

## Intersectionality

- Education
- Income
- Gender



Charness and Boot, 2022  
Pew Research Center  
Bangert et. al. (a), in press

# Digital Divide Factors

- Intrinsic Factors
  - Cognitive/sensory
  - Motivation
  - Motor issues
- Extrinsic Factors
  - Access to Infrastructure
  - Technology Design/Use - does it help with daily activities
  - Financial
  - Social Expectations
  - Privacy Concerns
  - COVID-19 pandemic

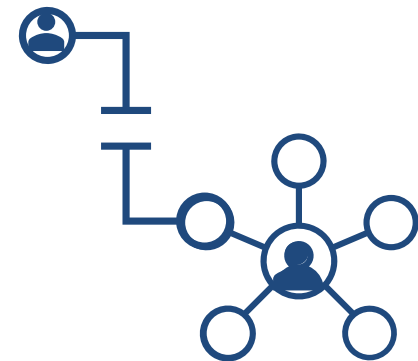


Charness and Boot, 2022  
Macedo, 2017  
Xie et al., 2020

# Addressing the Digital Divide

Addressing the divide -> increase older adult's engagement

- Use of technology by older adults
  - Socialization
  - Accessing services
  - Address isolation for those with mobility or other issues
  - Opportunities brought by transitioning services online



Charness and Boot, 2022  
Damant et al., 2016

# Smart Social Connector (SSC)

**Develop** and **sustain social connectedness** of seniors to improve their quality of life through the intersection of technology, community engagement, and social sciences.



## Strategic Collaborators:

The University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso Community College, City of El Paso



# Addressing the Generational Digital Divide

Strategies and Ideas

**Moderated Discussion**



# Possible Strategies

- Intergenerational support.
- Involve older adults in the design of technology/applications.
- Targeting vulnerable populations.
- Providing training/opportunities to engage with technology
  - E.g., moving EPCC courses online.
- Fostering communities of support

Charness and Boot, 2022  
Bangert et al. (a), in press  
Bangert et al.(b), in press





# Strategy to Bridge the Digital Divide in Your Community

- 1. Description of the strategy / idea:**
- 2. Tangible Action(s):**
- 3. Feedback (i.e., feasibility, how well it worked or not):**



# **Example: Strategy to Bridge the Digital Divide in Your Community**

## **1. Description of the strategy / idea:**

Building basic digital literacy in EPCC Senior Adult Program students for enrolling and attending online courses during COVID-19 pandemic.

## **2. Tangible Action(s):**

Creating materials with step-by-step instructions for tasks required to attend courses, e.g., registering online, access email.

Sharing these resources by many methods, e.g., phone, and hardcopies.

## **3. Feedback (i.e., feasibility, how well it worked or not):**

- + Connecting with older adults one-to-one to assist with each step.
- + Older adults more willing to register for online courses.
- Strained EPCC staff resources.
- Existing knowledge gaps were hard to bridge.



# Strategy to Bridge the Digital Divide in Your Community

1. **Description of the strategy / idea:**
2. **Tangible Action(s):**
3. **Feedback (i.e., feasibility, how well it worked or not):**

## **INSTRUCTIONS:**

You have **5 min.** to complete this template with a strategy that you have implemented, seen implemented or think is a good idea. Strategies will be shared with the group.

# Addressing the Generational Digital Divide

Strategies and Ideas

**Group sharing**



**Questions? Comments?**



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# Evaluation

