

# Parasocial Contact Hypothesis:

## Reframing Aging and Intergenerational Relationships

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Societies worldwide are becoming, and will continue to be, increasingly diverse in terms of race, age, and a confluence of intersecting identities. Yet, levels of mistrust and discrimination are at the highest in recent history. Racial injustices and intergenerational conflict are undermining a longevity opportunity: *To live a long and healthy life with a solid economic foundation; with strong social bonds with family, friends, and community; and in a diverse, loving, and peaceful society.*

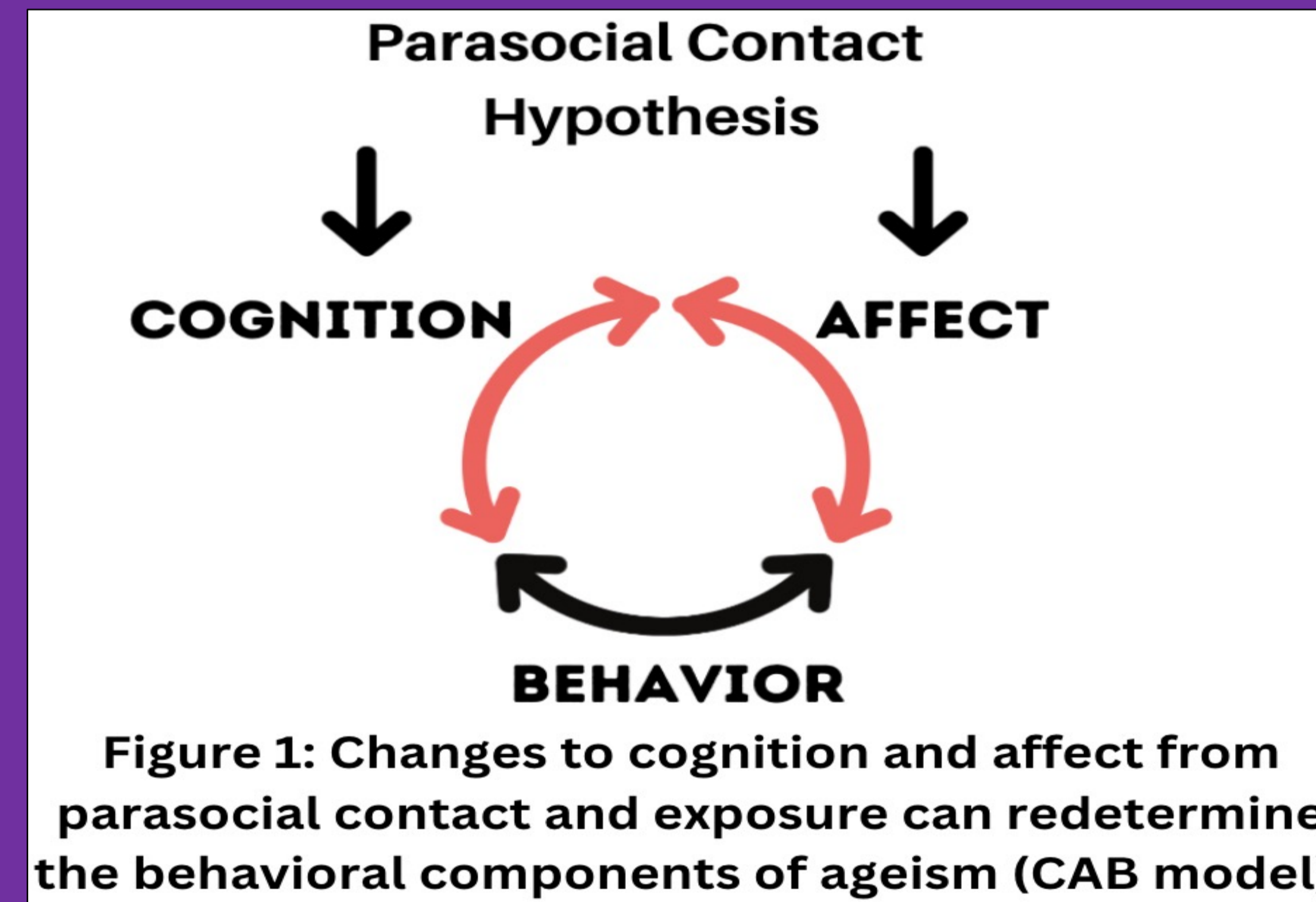
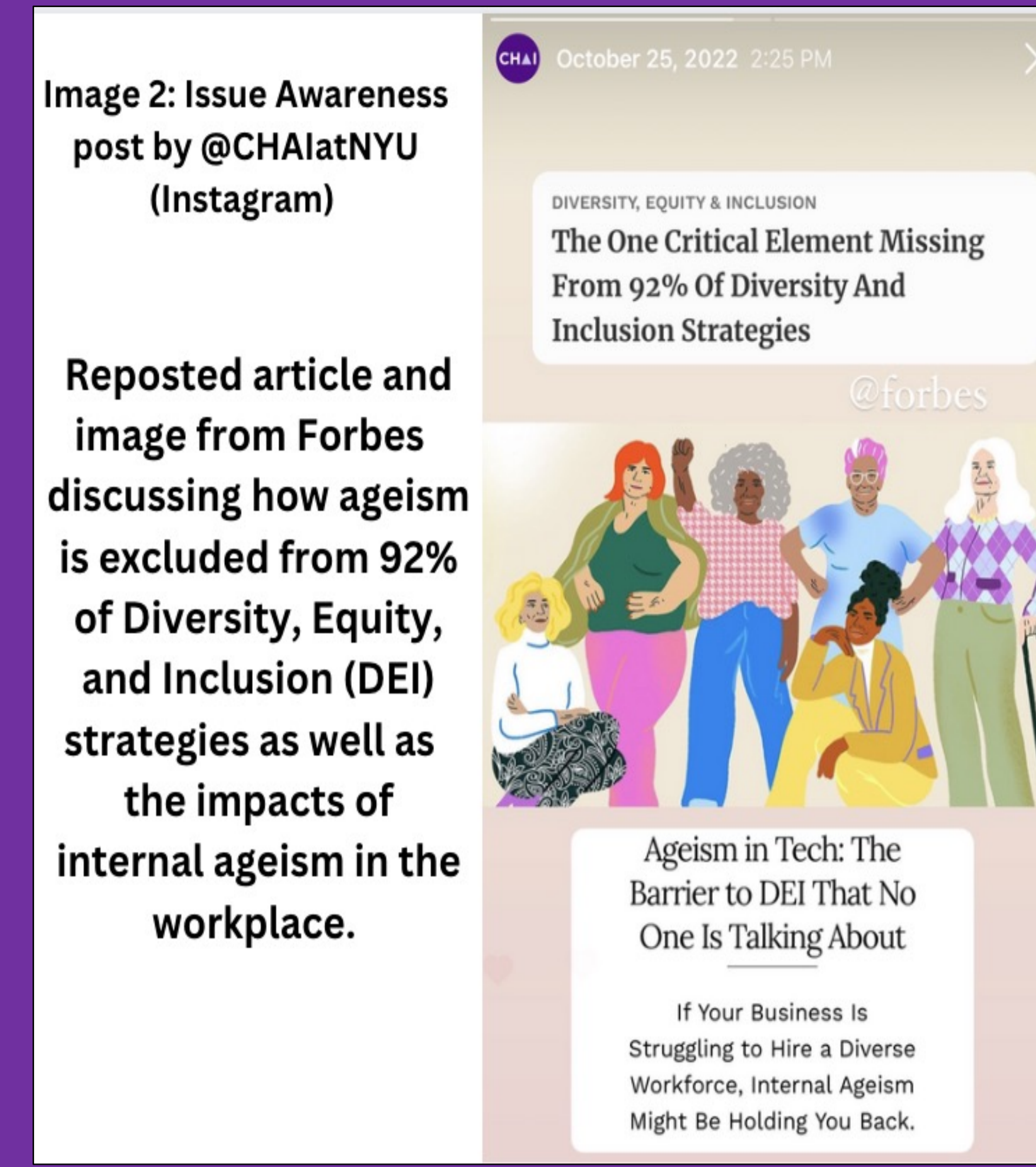
Stereotypes have three universal mechanisms (Figure 1): *cognition* (e.g., stereotyping), *affect* (e.g., negative and positive attitudes), and *behavior* (e.g., avoidance, discrimination, violence) – the CAB model (Jhangiani & Tarry, 2022).

At [New York University's Center for Health and Aging Innovation](#), we are exploring the use of social media to disrupt stereotypes towards older adults and aging. The (PCH) is an extension of Allport's Contact Hypothesis and utilizes mediums such as social media, television, advertisements, and other forms of digital content. PCH suggests positive portrayals of minoritized individuals in virtual settings and mass media can reduce prejudice (Schiappa et al., 2005).

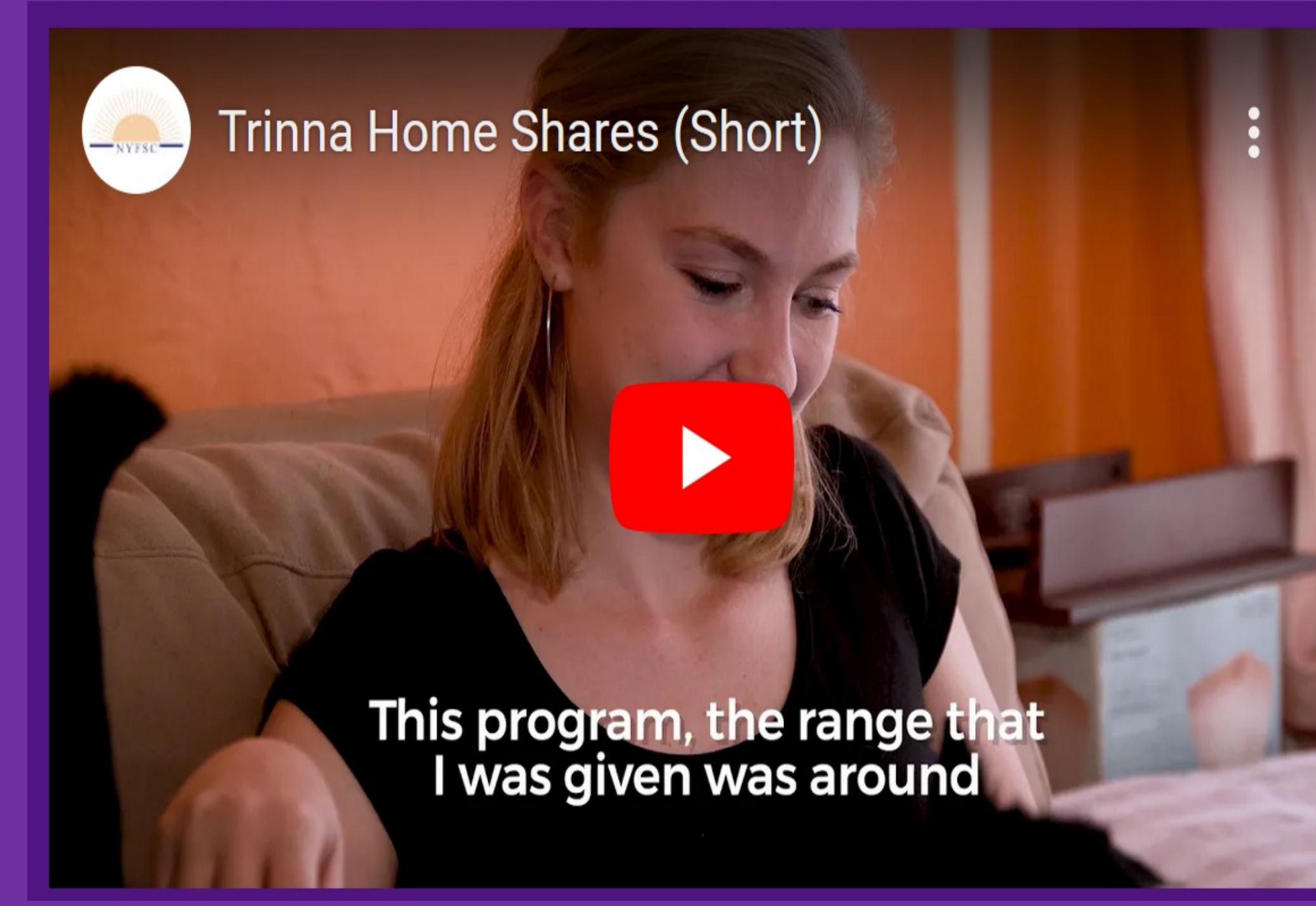
The PCH has informed CHAI's approach to social media. CHAI's [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [home website](#) create virtual contact between intergenerational organizations locally and nationally.

*Suggested Citation:* Green, N., Merz, A., & Gonzales, E. (July, 2023). Title. The Center for Health and Aging Innovation. Presentation at Generations United, Annual Conference. Washington, DC.

This work was supported by The Eisner Foundation and the James Weldon Johnson Professorship at NYU.



Elvira (Host) and Camelia (Guest): An intergenerational match



Trina, NYU Student, share about her home share with an older adult on YouTube

## CHAI's approach to social media has three components:

1. Community Shout-out
2. Diversity and Intersectionality
3. Exposure & Contact

**Community Shout-Out.** CHAI's Instagram, Facebook, and home website aims to create virtual contact between intergenerational organizations nationwide. We identify varied content across platforms and repost content from other organizations doing meaningful and interesting intergenerational programming in a weekly "shout out" to lift up their work. These posts include: tagging who they are, briefly describing what they do, and showcasing a recent element of their work from their content.

**Diversity and Intersectionality.** CHAI intentionally posts diverse and intersectional representation across sociodemographics (e.g., age, race, ethnicity, sexual and gender identification, activity portfolios). Increasing awareness of issues related to intersectional ageism+racism+sexism+isms aligns with our goal of decreasing discrimination at large (Image 2).

**Exposure and Contact.** By intentionally reposting intersectional and diverse content related to aging, health, and intergenerational cohesion, CHAI provides a new cognitive framework for audiences to imagine, thereby subtly challenging stereotypes and to new possibilities. CHAI aims to reflect the diversity of our society and audience by providing varied and nuanced portrayals of aging and social relations

## Next Steps

We need to examine how this approach to social media changes people's stereotypes and behavior with regard to aging and intergenerational relations.



**CHAI**

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