

Life Extensions

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Section 2

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore, the implications, brainstorm possible solutions and understand the contributions of life extensions to the evolution of the human race.

Introduction

Life Extension is defined as the process of reversing aging and extending the maximum as well as the average lifespan of a human. Using Fukuyama's paper as a reference, we will be exploring the three of the many effects of life extension has on our society. Explore the various implications it has on our society, come up with possible ways to deal with these implications and understand their contributions to our evolution as a human race.

The three effects of life extensions that I chose to explore are,

- Effect on Social Hierarchy
- Effect on the physical body
- Effect on social demographics

Note that, according to Fukuyama's paper, old age is classified into two categories, Category-I which ranges from age 60 to 80. And Category-II which ranges from age 80 and beyond. This paper only deals with the implications on our society if the average lifestyle and the lifespan of Category-I is extended. Implications of a life extensions for people in Category-II and the technical aspects of life extension are beyond the scope of this paper.

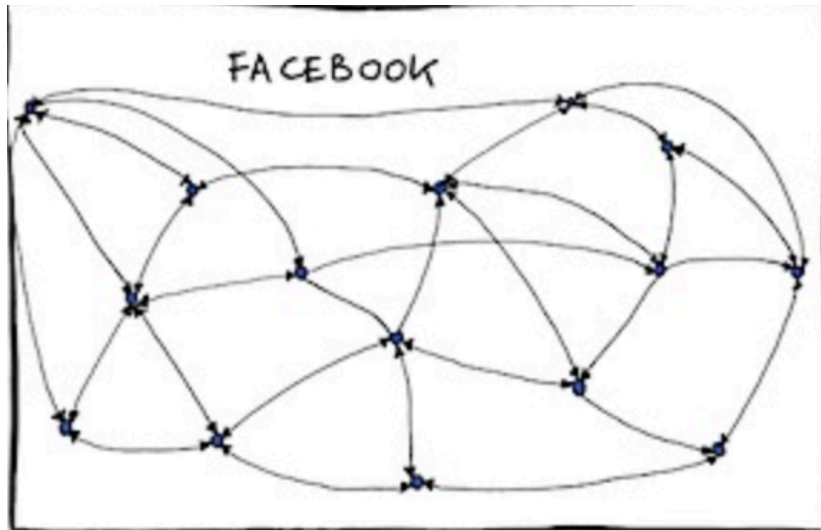
Effect on Social Hierarchy

Extended lifespans can lead to a restructuring of our social hierarchy. Traditionally and presently, the social hierarchy in organizations follow a pyramid structure where the more experienced and older people are at the top and the less experienced, young people are in the bottom and as time progresses, the older people retire to make way for the younger generation of people who have new ideas and new perspectives. But with extended lifespans, the people may stay at the top and may not make way to the younger generations. This could lead to conflicts between the two generations, stagnation of ideas because the older generations are limited by their own experiences.

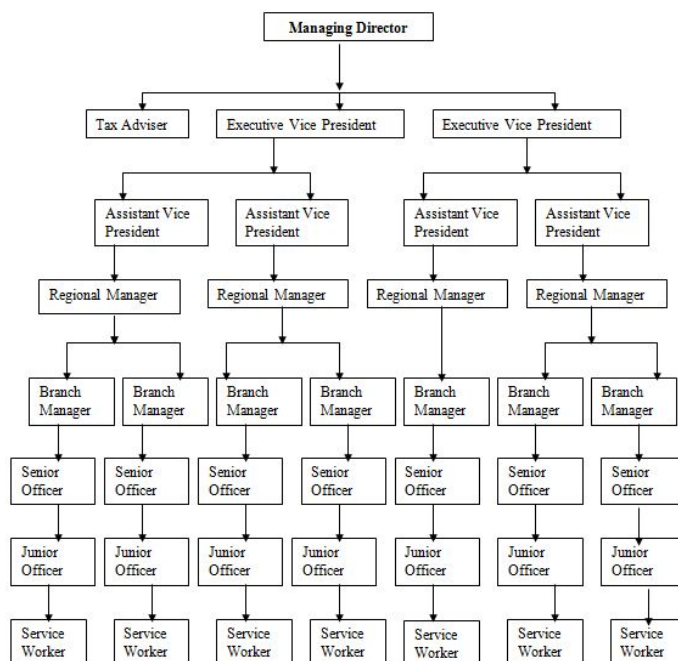
As Fukuyama puts it, humans are “status-conscious” by birth and in today’s society, age is correlated with experience, better judgement, wisdom and achievement. One of the main reasons why older generations of people will not give way to younger generations is because, they are status conscious and are not willing to give away their status. A simple, yet effective way to deal with this is by creating mandatory term limits just like the president of the United States has a maximum term limit of 8 years in office. This will not only give opportunities to everyone but will also recycle ideas and perspectives making organizations more competitive than ever.

Organizations can also follow the highly efficient flat hierarchical structures that are being followed by tech companies like Facebook where teams are interdependent on each other

to function and are leveraging strengths, experiences and unique perspectives to reach a more common goal, democratically, rather than following orders from an authority figure.



Representation of teams organized at Facebook(src: <https://lelefosdigc202.wordpress.com/2013/08/>)



Representation of teams organized at a typical bank
(src:<http://www.assignmentpoint.com/business/report-on-human-resource-management-practice-of-city-bank-limited.html>)

More importantly, the core issue is not life extension itself but rather it's the human tendency to be status conscious and extended lifespans only puts this issue under a magnifying glass, making it more important than ever to address this psychological issue. Therefore, if we successfully adapt to extended lifespans we will have taken another step

towards evolving psychologically as humans. As we will have transcended the nature of being status conscious that would have otherwise limited us from progressing.

Effect on the physical body - Alzheimer's Disease

In most of the developed countries, the number of people suffering from Alzheimer's is growing at an unprecedented rate. This is due to the fact that our brains haven't evolved to live as long as our bodies. As Fukuyama puts it, "the rapid growth in population suffering from Alzheimer's in developed countries is due to increased life expectancies" deteriorating parts of unused brains, memory loss leading to dementia is a common phenomenon in the developed world. Finding a cure to Alzheimer's disease is a scientific and technological challenge. In the short term, if a cure is not discovered before our lifespan extends further,, this could lead to the presence of a large population with deteriorated brains who are dependent on their close family and other resources to take care of them. This could also be a burden on our social security and health care systems. Although this could cause economic and social problems in the short term, finding a cure for Alzheimer's disease is going to advance us a step further in the timeline of evolution and increased lifespans are going to force us to find a cure more quickly thus contributing to our physical evolution, when it comes to memory loss and Alzheimer's disease.

Effects on Demographic

Women usually live longer than men. According to Fukuyama, as a result of life extension, more women will end up living up to advanced ages when compared to men. Although the reason is not clearly stated as why this would be the case, if it were true, it could have a significant changes in demographics and the type of policies made by the governing bodies. Older women would prefer less use of violence, our military forces would reduce drastically due to the unavailability of young men and tolerance to the loss of young people on the battlefield would also reduce greatly resulting in lesser wars. This could also create a political divide like the “North and South” divide between the more experienced, old women population and the angry, young men population, differ in political views. This kind of divide would probably resemble the divide in political views that our country currently faces between democrats and republicans. And we will be a lot more equipped with dealing with such conflicts and coming up with constructive solutions instead of being trapped in our own political bubbles as time progresses. And by finding better ways to communicate across difference in opinions, we will be a lot more equipped to work together and make more advancements, collectively as a race.

Conclusion

By exploring the effects of life extensions in social hierarchy, diseases like alzheimer's and social demographics, it's clear that life extension is going to enable better ways of approaching problems, coming up with creative ways of organizing to reach a common goal, scientific progress to find cures for alzheimer's disease and also communicating across

differences to evolve together as a race. Extended lifespans will magnify some of our current problems and as a result, we will be forced to work harder to overcome these problems and as a result we will have created a much desirable society. Because some of our greatest inventions come about in times of distress.

Works Cited

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