

Advanced Engagement Subcommittee Meeting Notes November 13, 2023

Attendance: Taylor (Student), Sophia (Grant Staff),

Older Adult Members: Nancy, Elizabeth, Lisa, Alice, Linda, Michael, Nancy, Steve, Myrna, Brenda, Janet, Naomi, Alice, Beverly

Welcome, Review of Agenda & Materials

Taylor reviewed the meeting guidelines and agenda then introduced his new daughter, Maeve, to the group. Taylor also reminded attendees that he would be contacting a few individuals about their project bios after the meeting.

Post-Feedback Session Discussion

Volunteers from this group participated in the first of several “Feedback Sessions” to review research projects and provide feedback during live meetings with researchers and students, lending the older adult perspective to their projects. The first session was on November 2nd and featured work from Anthony Meo. He is a researcher from the University of Buffalo with an interest in developing a survey that measures older adults’ attitudes towards learning. Several attendees reflected on the experience and made the following points:

- The process was beneficial and valuable. Some members felt the Researcher’s aims were a little vague leading into the session, but many questions were cleared up after discussion. Some still felt that the research question was a bit vague by the end of the meeting but clarified other aspects, like the audience.
- The session was interesting. Attendees reported being a bit frustrated at first with non-clarity but felt it may have been beneficial as it allowed the researcher to better clarify his work during the session.
- Some members felt the researcher came into the meeting with a preconceived notion that older people have different motivations for learning than young or middle-aged people.
- It is okay for researchers to be at different stages of their research; they do not have to have everything together before meeting with the feedback session group.
- Members felt that recognizing unrealized bias is one of the most important functions this group serves, so trying to get rid of that before the sessions would be counterproductive. However, it may also be beneficial to have a specific question in the researcher’s materials that could uncover biases, such as: “What are some of your assumptions about older people?” or “What biases have you observed in other people?”
- Members felt it may be helpful to know what stage of research that feedback seekers are in before the sessions take place. This would allow the feedback givers to have more context about the work ahead of time instead of figuring that out during the meeting. Taylor and Sophia will add the stage of research for future sessions.

First Multimedia Product

Taylor explained that we are ready to move forward with our second multimedia product for this project, and that based on responses from multiple advisory structures and the focus groups, we are going to create a testimonial style video. The group discussed what each target group (older adults, students/researchers, and funders) need to hear and who they should hear it from. The following points were drawn from this discussion:

In a past meeting, the Subcommittee had already identified the following items that researchers should hear from older adults:

- Incentives for their work
- How to work with older adults
- Importance of working with underrepresented groups
- How to recognize their own bias

What messages might older adults need to hear in a testimonial about engaged research?

- They want to know their voice is going to be heard and they would have an impact on the research.
- They want to know that if researchers intend to help them, it needs to be consistent and go beyond the project. Being “beside” them and being supportive is important.
- They want to feel hopeful and confident that a solution to their issue is finally coming.
- Several respondents want messages that show the benefits of engaging older adults in research:
 - What the benefits of the work will be for them, and others like them. These benefits can be material or psychological (psychosocial, negating isolation/loneliness).
 - Concrete positive results or achievable goals regarding the benefits of engaged research. Benefits can go beyond the individual level and beyond the “here and now.” Future benefits for others can be impactful as well.
 - The benefits of engaging may be best received if delivered by another older adult.
- They want to feel empowered in the fact that they are unique in their experiences. Researchers need to recognize that older adults’ uniqueness is a benefit to their project, and older adults need to know that researchers recognize such.

What groups other than older adults should older adults hear a testimonial from?

- A state organization or researcher that has achieved positive results of engaged research.
- Students and researchers (specifically young researchers) who humbly come to older adults, recognize that they have valuable life experience, and ask for help.
- Those who work in community settings with older adults like councils on aging and senior centers; they could share what problems they feel are not being adequately addressed in their settings. There is value in highlighting some negative experiences in addition to the positive experiences.

What messages do students and researchers need to hear, and from who?

- Researchers and students need to hear messages from “higher ups” or those in charge:

- The supervisors and committees of students are a direct line to the student. Hearing from them that engagement is important would be impactful.
- Researchers need to be hearing this message from their funders.
- Researchers need to hear from other researchers about the benefits of engaging older adults vs not engaging older adults.
- Several potential testimonial givers were mentioned, including Erin, Dr. Paul Nash, and the researchers who are participating in the feedback sessions.
- One member suggested starting a database that tracks studies that use engaged research.

Key Takeaway from Discussion: Each group needs to hear from each other about the benefits of engagement. Older adults need to hear from other older adults but could also benefit from hearing concrete results from researchers. Researchers and students need to hear from their higher-ups and funders that engaged research is worthwhile but would also benefit by hearing directly from older adults about the benefits. Funders need to see from researchers' success that the work they fund will be of higher quality and they need to hear from older adults that this style of research creates results that are applicable and relevant.

Are you willing to provide a testimonial based on your impact on this project?

- Some attendees feel unsure if they have made an impact yet due to only being on the project for a short time.
- No one voiced willingness to share a testimonial about their work on this project.
- One member felt that at the micro level (within project) they have made an impact but not as sure yet about the macro level (impact of the project on the research landscape).

Next Steps

- Taylor and Sophia will add specific questions about bias to the feedback session prep resources provided to researchers.
- Taylor and Sophia will add a question about the stage of research to the feedback session prep resources provided to researchers.
- Taylor will contact those who have unfinished bios.