



GREY MATTERS

A Guide to Collaborative Research with Seniors

Nancy Marlett and Claudia Emes

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Section 3

Conducting Inquiries and Research

This section includes three chapters about how to do your own inquiry and research. It helps you to put the specific research skills (observing, interviewing, focus groups, and peer-narrative interviewing), learned in chapters 3–6, to work. It is constructed as a series of steps, and each step includes a general description, key material, and links to resources. You can use this section as a course outline, a guide to the manual, or a framework when you are beginning a research project.

In this section we introduce a variation on collaborative inquiry to ensure that seniors are directly and authentically involved in research that affects them. This method arose during the writing of the book as we struggled to live up to the high standards that were proposed at the end of Chapter 1. We trust that you will find that this design helps you to appreciate the power of seniors-led research.

The three chapters draw on the experience of the Kerby Centre over a ten-year period, in taking up the cause of elder abuse. It is an example of how to create a program based on research. It also includes recent applications on elder self-neglect (an emerging aspect of elder abuse). Seniors who were involved in the project from the beginning provided the input.

We first saw a need to do something about elder abuse because of the persistent phone calls we received at Kerby Centre. Distressed seniors and their friends and family were desperate for help. We searched the community to see what was being done by others and in doing this we realized that there were few if any existing services and resources. We had a feeling that it was up to seniors to bring this problem to light. (CPA, 2007)

We have used the metaphor of a race in introducing this section for modern-day research has become very competitive. Each chapter depicts one stage in the race to research:

READY (Chapter 7) refers to the stage of gathering interest and focus, thinking about entering the research race, preparing for a race, getting the team together. We have included three activities in this first step: engaging other seniors, or building a base of interest; clarifying the problem or opportunity; and attracting other members. This stage ensures that the supports – the coaches, trainers, and equipment – are there for the race.

SET (Chapter 8) documents four activities that lead up to the writing of a research proposal: becoming recognized or qualifying as a race participant; surveying and selecting funding possibilities, which is like selecting the particular race to take part in; choosing a method or working out the race plan; and, writing a proposal, which is like registering to be a competitor for the race.

This chapter introduces a new research design, a collaborative inquiry method based on three distinct steps (SET, COLLECT, and REFLECT) that ensures that seniors are invested and involved in the process and outcomes.

GO (Chapter 9) refers to conducting the research or running the race. There are three activities here: creating the infrastructure; recruiting and training seniors as researchers; and, collecting and analyzing your data. Here we build on the values of partnered research (Chapter 1) and inquiry and the structures of SET, COLLECT, and REFLECT (Chapter 8).

At the **FINISH LINE** you have reached your destination and are savouring the results, preparing to let others know of your accomplishments. You are likely also preparing for the next race, reviewing your performance and planning to do better the next time. Here we discuss evaluating what you have done, sharing results, and taking action.



Grant Allen

Finally, I feel that I can play a role in credible research that can give seniors access to the decision-makers in matters specific to older people.