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## Grey Matters: a guide to collaborative research with seniors

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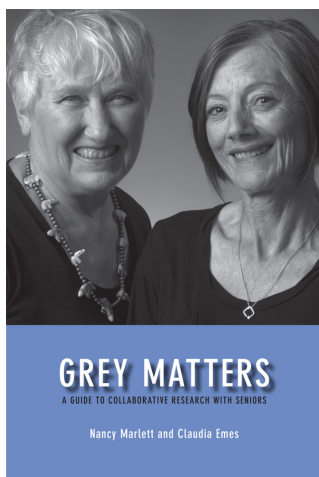
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## GREY MATTERS

### A Guide to Collaborative Research with Seniors

Nancy Marlett and Claudia Emes

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# 4

## Interviews and Questionnaires

While it took time to compile the questions and do the interviews it was worth it. The older women who administered the questionnaires stood up to people at the town hall meeting. We were presenting a united front because we all knew where the information came from. (MW, 2007)

The seniors of Ogden were faced with a dilemma about how to support the needs of their community and at the same time find housing alternatives that they controlled. Ogden is like a small town surrounded by industrial areas and therefore isolated from the rest of Calgary. It was one of the original communities but had not been taken over by high-income housing like the rest of the inner city because of toxic waste. The housing prices and the income level are low but the percentage of people owning their own homes is very high compared to other communities.

As seniors they wrestled with the fact that many of the home owners were now aging and wanted to sell and downsize. They wanted to use their collective resources to support the community, by selling their homes to young families to rejuvenate the schools and the economic viability of their community. However, because it was a lower income area in the inner city, Ogden already had a number of charity or city-run housing projects. They did not want to be a project, looked after by others but wanted to be the masters of their own housing.

As they started to plan they were faced with bureaucratic red tape and entrenched beliefs that seniors were not capable of handling their own housing. These beliefs came from both sides, from the seniors themselves and from the officials they had to work with. Seniors felt: “How many seniors have ever had to deal with government? We’ve been raising families and keeping our heads above water. This all seemed so foreign to us. Talking to government is threatening; we don’t even speak the same language” (MW, 2007).

As we talked about this chapter Marianne said, where was this book five years ago when we had to figure it all out for ourselves?

The same reluctance about seniors being able to see a development through to completion was apparent from officials as well. It seemed that at every stage, there was a need to prove that there was a need; each time the request seemed to mean a new piece of research but there was no money to learn how to do the work. Luckily, Ogden had practicum students and champions who had been part of the Kerby project.

If seniors are going to take control of their own destiny, they need to be able to counter prejudice with competent research. Ogden Millican seniors have agreed to share their experiences with us in finding questionnaires that worked for their planning process. We include not only questionnaires that were actually used but use their experience to design questionnaires that might prove helpful to others. The main

voice in the chapter is Marianne Wilkat, who was the president of Ogden House Senior Citizens' Club and is now the catalyst of the housing project.

Of all the research methods in this book, questionnaires and surveys are likely the most familiar. Most seniors have been involved in surveys, at least in answering survey questions at malls or on the phone. In this chapter we describe a range of survey research methods, when to use questionnaires, the role of the interviewer, what questions to ask, how to record answers and analyze results, and how to train seniors to become interviewers. In other words, we hope to prevent other groups from having to learn on the job, as did the seniors of Ogden House.

In the previous chapter, we explored what could be learned about people and groups by observing and participating in their activities. In this chapter, we move our attention to those aspects of research that are not readily observed – how a person's past experiences influence thoughts and feelings in the present. To tap into these aspects of people's lives we need to ask questions.

Interviews and questionnaires can be used in all forms of inquiry where you want to collect information from individuals about their thoughts and feelings. You might use a questionnaire in a newspaper mail-in asking if people support tax benefits for fixed income seniors, you could post a series of questions on your website to evaluate the website's effectiveness, or you could interview pioneers about what food they ate.

Surveys are large-scale investigations that use some sort of standardized oral or written questionnaire. When we call something standardized, it means that the questions have been tested to make sure that they are measuring what is intended and that the process used for administering the questionnaire is the same each time. Survey research is popular in consumer satisfaction and market research. Interviews can be conducted in person, by phone, by mail, or on the

Internet. Administering questionnaires seems straightforward, but it takes practice to learn how to speak clearly, how to pace your questions, and how to clarify answers.

## A. When and How to Use Questionnaires

The following is a quick overview of when you might use the different approaches. We have included both the Ogden Housing project and the Kerby Centre research project in our examples.

**Informal interviews.** Informal interviews are used when you want to explore a new idea. You should likely limit your interviews to fewer than twenty people and often three to ten are sufficient to understand the scope of the answers. You do not generally need ethics approval for this exploratory step because you are still setting your research directions.

The groups that designed this informal type of questionnaire in the Kerby research project found that informal interviews were much like a conversation and the questions emerged from the flow of the interview. They found that the person being interviewed was comfortable and open and that they could tailor the interview to the person. During the interview the information gathered seemed to be important but, once the interview was over, the senior researchers seemed unsure about what to do with the data other than to describe what they had covered.

The following quote from the Ogden House seniors' housing project is a good example of informal questions at the beginning of a project.

We started out asking people to make lists of their wishes, what they were looking for in a housing project. Because cost was a major concern in the first go round, we started looking at apartment complexes. We then spent some time talking to

people about what they were losing by leaving the community. Here we found a strong feeling that people feared losing a sense of community, the small town feeling you know. They were afraid of losing touch with family and friends, stores they knew, church and services. Both the positive and negative questions were important at the beginning to get the full picture at the beginning of the project. The questions helped focus our work. (MW, 2007)

**Interview guides.** Interview guides and semi-structured questionnaires are a common set of questions that are open-ended. These are good for involving a lot of researchers and for capturing people's experiences and stories. Generally ethics approval is not needed if you are using information to develop more formal research. If this is your chosen method in a formal study, you will need to consider consent forms that can be as simple as signing the questionnaire.

The Kerby group that used this method created a set of questions with space to enter answers. One of the researchers mentioned that she liked the blend of structure (knowing where she was going and what was coming next) and being able to ask the questions in a conversation. They felt confident that they had covered what they had wanted. In discussing the interview results, they used the outline and summarized the points covered under each question. They wondered if this was all there was to research. This type of questionnaire can be seen as intrusive in that you are controlling the questions but are asking participants to reply freely. As we see in the following quote from the Kerby research, asking questions can make some people uncomfortable because they don't know what is expected of them:

There seemed to be a sense of their privacy being invaded. They came to this club to get away from the pressure of everyday life. It's almost like a "safe-house" and they wanted it left that way. I had explained the process to them before we began

so they really didn't have any inquiries. They were all friendly and seemed happy to see me again but when the men realized why I was there, they began talking among themselves and shortly after, went for coffee. I was nervous to begin with but felt better as the interview progressed. The men had not returned before I finished the interview and left. (NW, 2004)

There is a variation of semi-structured questionnaires that provides very specific questions that are asked in a set order. In research, these are called "standardized open-ended interviews." A group in the Kerby project worked on the wording of their questions and were determined to use exact wording and to use the same order. The group was very secure in using their questionnaire because each senior researcher knew what to do and they felt that they were "scientific" because they felt their personal opinions and biases would not get in the way. They were confident that they would be able to combine their data after the session. However, they found that the interviews were somewhat awkward; the people answered only the questions and didn't offer much more. Their questions didn't seem to provide answers that were helpful.

The following example from Ogden House demonstrates how open-ended questions are used to guide discussions and planning.

Would you prefer to own your unit or rent it? Could you share the reasons for your answer?

The following summarizes the responses. While most people understood why an apartment complex was cost-effective, they were uneasy about renting.

They had worked all their life to own their own home and it was part of their family tradition. (MW, 2007)



This led the group to investigate life lease, a form of “ownership” that had the flexibility of leasing. Some of the questions they then asked included:

If you sold your present home, would you consider moving into a life lease? Life lease is taken to mean that the lease of the condo is paid up front, and you or your estate would receive the lease price back when you or your estate wanted to move. Please discuss your ideas and concerns about life lease.

Another example of open-ended questions was used when finding a location to build the housing complex. Originally the seniors asked, “What is needed in a location to build a housing complex?” They found answers: close to bus routes, shopping, children and seniors’ centres. From there they located 13 green spaces and asked about each of the spaces in an open way. This led to an uproar over the one large empty green space and led to a heated community meeting. In the end the seniors chose a little-used baseball diamond beside Ogden House.

**Closed questionnaires or surveys.** Here the questions *and* the responses are fixed ahead of time. This type of questionnaire generally requires pre-testing to make sure that you have the questions that will provide the data you really need. Pre-testing also gives you a chance to ensure that you have covered most of the potential answers. Closed questionnaires are generally used when you want to reach a large number of people to prove a point to some authority. You generally need ethics approval to do large surveys and consent can be built into the survey format.

One of the research groups at Kerby chose to design a closed questionnaire with the questions and a list of answers attached to each question. While this type of structured survey is very useful with large numbers, it didn’t work very well with our small samples. The list of answers didn’t seem to fit very well and the questionnaire

seemed very impersonal and mechanical. The person being interviewed worked hard to fit her ideas into the answers provided but was frustrated. The senior researchers felt that if they were to collect information about a large population they would appreciate the careful construction of this type of survey.

The following section of a needs survey was crafted after much discussion and testing with groups of seniors at Ogden house. Two university students took a large number of open-ended questions that had been used; they recorded all the answers and created a set of answers from the responses. These were then tested with a small number of seniors and the questionnaire was formatted to make it easy to answer questions quickly. The survey had five parts but took only about five minutes to complete. It was administered by the seniors at the grocery store, the churches, and meetings. With seniors on hand, questions could be answered about why the survey was needed and what was going to be done with the information.

Table 4. Closed questions extracted from the Ogden House housing survey.

What are the reasons you would consider moving from your present home?

- Sometimes I feel lonely and isolated.
- Upkeep of home seems a burden now.
- Stairs and accessibility.
- To reduce costs.
- Better location (closer to bus, walk to store, closer to family).
- Access to assistance and eventual care.
- Death in the family.
- Other.

What services you like to see available in a seniors' affordable housing complex?

- Seniors activities
- Shopping
- Health-related services.
- Meal services.
- Cleaning services.
- Maintenance.
- Parking.
- Small convenience store.
- Hairdresser.
- Other.

Ogden House also used closed survey questions in the newspaper and in a public canvass to gauge community support for their project. The questions were simple:

“Would you support an age in place complex in this area?”  
Yes or No.

“Would you support a complex that housed independent living and assisted living in Ogden?” Yes or No.

To each of these they received almost 100 per cent yes replies of the five hundred responses.

Whatever the style of interview or questionnaire, you need to know how many responses are enough responses to enable you to speak with authority about your findings. If there are only 200 seniors requiring social housing and you wanted to do a detailed needs analysis, you would need to aim at about 25 per cent of the potential population. When surveying a population over 500 you would want at least 100 surveys completed to be able to speak with confidence about the results. With numbers this large, you need to design a very short, precise survey.

You need to ensure that you represent the characteristics of the population you are surveying. For example, if you were looking at the need for affordable seniors' housing in Ogden and Millican, you would need to make sure that you surveyed people from each neighborhood, that you surveyed all age groups, and that both men and women answered the questions.

You need to include the important aspects you are studying (location, age, gender) in the questionnaire so that you can describe those that completed the survey to prove your sample represented the community.

In summary:

- Use open-ended informal questions to test the water. Use careful notes, flip charts and self-reports to gather as many different opinions as possible and to narrow your area of interest.
- Use semi-structured, standardized questions with space to record answers to test out your ideas and gather rich descriptions of your topic.

- Use closed questions for large formal studies to prove need, identify options, etc. These must be carefully constructed, pre-tested, and short.

## B. Ethics Approval

Closed questionnaires are widely used because the anonymity of the person is protected in the use of coded answers. However, individual personality is washed away with the protection. Informal in-depth interviews and open-ended questionnaires are more problematic from an ethics perspective because the personality of the person is more likely to be recognized in the quotes used.

The consent form should include:

**The purpose of the research.** This questionnaire will help us determine if there is a need for seniors' affordable housing in the Millican Ogden community.

**Why the person was chosen.** If you are 50 years old or above and live in Ogden or Millican, please answer the following questions. If not, we thank you for taking the time to answer the general questions.

**The expected duration and style of the interview.** This survey will take about 5 minutes to complete. You need not sign the survey and all information will be held in confidence; we will not be asking you for any personal contact information.

**What will be done with the information they give.** We will use this information in our negotiations with the provincial and federal governments and with the city for land-use permits. Potential investors and donors also need to know this information. Your ideas will guide the development of a senior affordable housing project in your community.

## C. Recruiting People to Answer Questions

If you are doing informal, guided, and open-ended interviews, select a small number of people, deliberately chosen so that they are different from each other while being knowledgeable about your topic. Recruiting is much easier when seniors know that other seniors are involved as researchers. They know that the research has been vetted by other seniors and is being done with them in mind.

If they know your face, you can talk to them; it's not just for me but for them as well. (MW, 2007)

The “look” of the questionnaire can be a factor in enlisting people. Seniors like to see what is being recorded or to record the answers themselves so that they know what is being attributed to them. This means that the questionnaire needs to be in large print with a minimum of writing. Don't try to save paper by crushing questions into a single page when you could make it easier to read and more understandable in two pages. Places to record answers need to be in a list, not strung out across the page.

People don't want to write a lot but we always leave space to add ideas. This lets them know we are interested in their ideas and it provides spaces between the questions. They feel they are getting somewhere when they have finished a page when there are lots of spaces. (MW, 2007)

Try taking questionnaires to a community meeting or a regular event but be sure to let people know ahead of time that you are coming and post the questionnaire beforehand so that people know what to expect. If the questionnaires can be completed when they are given out, you will have more returns, especially if there is someone there to answer questions. Natural meeting places include waiting areas, malls, the post office, the shopping mall, or grocery stores. You can use chat

lines on the Internet if you know that the seniors you are targeting use the computer; chat lines have become the meeting places of today.

We found we got a much better response rate when we handed the surveys to people who were waiting anyway. For example, people are just sitting waiting to be called at our flu clinics and if it is a short questionnaire they can fill it in and hand it in when they go to get their shot. (MW, 2007)

If you want to recruit people to interview personally, it takes more time and care. Setting up appointments with seniors is best done through a trusted third party. Cold calls on the phone are particularly unsuccessful because of the high incidence of consumer fraud that begins with the pretence of conducting a telephone survey. Setting up interviews through a seniors' centre, a known program, or a community service works well. Meeting for coffee is likely the best way to set up face-to face interviews, especially if it is in the seniors' centre or a neighbourhood coffee shop. Meeting in a university office is not advised because these settings may make the person uneasy and shy. Conversely, suggesting meeting in the person's home can raise fears about invasion of personal space.

We found the best way to reach seniors in their home was to have pairs of a student and a senior. We were able to start with people from our group and then each person we interviewed was asked who else we should talk to. (This is called a "snowball effect" – like a snowball dance). This partnership between the student and the senior gave both sides credibility. The student from the university handled the recording and the senior described what we were doing. Most times people don't think seniors know how to do this work, but they do and do it well. (MW, 2007)

## D. What Do You Do as an Interviewer?

Your role as a researcher will depend on the type of interview or questionnaire being administered. The more structured the questionnaire, the less flexibility you have. Highly structured interviews require less experience to administer because the process is set and you are expected to follow the protocol (the order, the wording, the answers, and your pacing). Even if these aspects are not stated, it is good to practice delivering the questions in research pairs so that you can be heard clearly and that you are comfortable waiting in silence for an answer.

In informal or conversational interviews, your role is one of a good conversationalist. You should be able to engage the aging adult being interviewed, guiding conversation and following up leads that arise in the interview. Depending on whether you are going to be interviewing people you know, doing phone interviews, mall interviews, or interviews on line, you need to practice so that you know the questions and how to get the answers.

Rules for asking questions:

- Use a conversational speed. If you read the questions you will start reading too fast. Reading too slowly irritates the listener who can easily lose touch of your meaning.
- Practice reading in front of a mirror. Learn to establish eye contact while you are reading.
- Pause between questions. Allow at least five seconds before you comment.
- Encourage sparingly. Do not say “good” after answers, for this implies that there are good and bad answers. If you must say something, say “thank you.”



We found it better to do things in person. Seniors had trouble hearing on the phone and they were afraid of hackers on the Internet who could use their information for other purposes. Our seniors are afraid to let people know they live alone so we saw people at the Centre or arranged to meet them at home only after they were comfortable. (MW, 2007)

Work in pairs with one person recording or writing answers to open-ended questions while the other asks questions. Recording is a skill in its own right and sharing roles allows each person to concentrate on one aspect of the research at a time.

Seniors, both those answering the questions and those recording, didn't like to write very much. That may have been because they were not used to writing, they may have been embarrassed by their spelling or writing skills or they may have arthritis or shaky hands. Whatever the reason, we had to work to cut down writing and provide lots of practice so that people were more comfortable. (MW, 2007)

If you are administering questionnaires that people fill out independently, *do not watch as they write* their answers. Do not interrupt unless they ask a question, seem confused, or uneasy. On the other hand, if you are assisting a group of seniors who are filling out a questionnaire, it is wise to establish what you can answer in advance. For example, you may suggest that you can clarify the question but not tell them if an answer is what is expected.

Once, when we were doing questionnaires in a group, people would listen to the questions people asked about their answers and revise their own answers. We ended up with many people with the same responses. It was as if they used the other person's answer as their own since it had been discussed and was therefore acceptable. (MW, 2007)

## E. What Questions Can Be Asked?

The simple answer is “any question.” Questions emerge from thinking about your topic in light of existing information, and talking to other seniors and stake-holders.

When designing a survey it is helpful to start with very broad, open-ended questions and with more questions than you need. Reduce the number as the questions are tested and grouped. Seniors tend to appreciate questions that are similar being together, rather than randomly placed throughout the questionnaire as is done with many standardized questionnaires. The following are some of the questions that might be included in your questionnaire:

**Background questions.** These questions should always be part of a questionnaire because they provide a commonly accepted way of grouping your results. Questions generally tap age, gender, education, location, income level, transportation, and affiliations. Most research uses closed questions with fixed categories to ask these types of questions.

Table 5. Standardized background questions.

1.	What is your age	65 or under	66–75	Over 76
2.	What is your gender	Male		Female
3.	Your education and work history	Trades	Business	Professional
4.	Where do you live	Ogden	Millican	Outside of district
5.	Income level	CPP pension subsidy	CPP and pension fund	Pension plus investments
6.	How do you get around	Transit, Family or friends	Independent car	Subsidized accessible pass
7.	How long have you lived here	All my adult life	Most of my life on and off	Less than three years

**Experiences.** These questions ask people to think back and to remember what they have witnessed or lived through. Such questions might include examples of hardships they endured as a child, times when they had to manage pain, or moments of great joy in nature. These questions are generally framed in an informal way, although you might also be able to provide some answers to get people thinking. People appreciate the time to consider their answers and to compose their responses about their own experiences.

Table 6. Questions about experiences.

<p>1. What type of pain did you experience most as a child, adult and aging adult? (eg. injuries and breaks, illnesses, aches and pains)</p> <p>As a child:</p> <p>As an adult:</p> <p>As an aging adult:</p> <p>2. Are you or have you cared for a spouse/friend/relative at home?</p> <p>Yes —</p> <p>No —</p> <p>If yes, describe the situation (eg. how long, what care you provided):</p> <p>What did you learn about yourself through this experience?</p>
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**Skills, interests, knowledge, and needs.** These questions can be addressed using closed formats that identify whether the skill, knowledge, or need is present, what kinds of support people would like, or how independent they are. These questions need to be developed with a group of seniors to make sure that the closed categories are respectful and relevant.

Table 7. Questions about skills, knowledge, and needs.

What assistance do you take advantage of now? (Place checkmark where appropriate.)	Never	Occasional	Regular
Yard work			
Snow removal			
Repairs around the house			
Chores/cleaning around the house			
Grocery shopping			
Other			

**Opinions and feelings.** These questions are statements done with a standard response such as agree/disagree or a five-point or seven-point scale. These statements should address different perspectives and world-views, for a question that everyone answers the same way doesn't provide much information.

Table 8. Questions about opinions and feelings.

	Agree				Disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
I look forward to moving into a smaller place.					
My family are concerned about me being on my own in this big house.					
I worry about what to do with all my "stuff" if I move.					

## F. Recording Answers and Analyzing Data

Your analysis will only be as good as the questions you ask and your care in capturing the answer.

**Recording.** Recording of informal and open-ended interviews is usually done in one of three ways:

- You record the answer on the questionnaire or tape record the session for both in-person or telephone interviews.
- You summarize the interview and answer the questions after the interview. You should record your answers immediately after the interview and enter answers in a structured guide. Recording an open-ended and unstructured interview after the fact can be risky as it is difficult to remember all that has happened unless you have some sort of structure.
- The participant records the answers with or without your assistance. It is much more effective to use a combination of closed questions and space for personal responses if the person is to record his or her own answers.

**Analysis.** Researchers can develop many questions, spend a great deal of time getting responses and then be lost as to what to do with the data. There are several types of analysis you can employ.

- First impressions as you read the answers.
- Patterns and themes in open-ended questions.
- Responses that are counted and are reported as numbers, percentages, or graphs.

**First impressions.** Underline information or ideas that jump out while reading responses. Jot down ideas when first listening to the tape recording of the answers. You may notice that the person was uneasy about a question, that an answer raised a question for you, that it was a new way to answering the question. Always give yourself a chance just to read/listen the open-ended or semi-structured answers thoroughly before you do any formal analysis. Once you have spent the time reading/listening to all the responses, you will have a much better feel for the range of answers and where the problems or opportunities may lie.

**Patterns or themes.** Photocopy the questionnaire (put the originals away for safe-keeping) and cut the answers to each of the questions into strips so that you can look at everyone's answers to a question at the same time. You can then begin by sorting them into piles of similar responses.

For example, in the question about caring for someone at home, you got 30 responses. You might find that most people wrote in that they enjoyed being able to care for their relative or friend. Some answered that the person they were caring for was difficult to manage when they were in a strange environment and a few answered that the person wanted to die at home and they felt they had made a commitment to do this. You could then write about three themes (joys, challenges, and commitments) using quotes to back up your ideas.

**Frequencies and descriptive statistics.** In closed questionnaires you can calculate numbers and percentages to present a strong statement that will impress authorities. There are many easy-to-use software packages that produce tables, charts, frequency graphs, pie charts, etc. It is very important to know when it is possible to use these options to create the best presentation of your data. If you are using an

internet survey such as Survey Monkey, your data will be analyzed and presented for you

If you want to include number data, it is best to ensure that the recording for each of the questions you want to compare is the same. For example, in the needs study at Ogden House, you wouldn't want to have the questions about meals to refer to *how often* you prepare your own meals (never, sometime, often, always) and other questions ask about *how much* help they need (need full assistance, partial assistance, no assistance) and still others answer a yes or no. You may find that it is better to word all questions so that they are answered by a "yes" or "no," sometimes, so that you can present more than one question using the same type of chart or graph.

If you have fewer than a hundred responses, you can count the answers to each question by hand. Record the totals on a blank questionnaire. You can then add a marker at the end of the line as follows to look at what you have found. The following is based on a hundred hypothetical responses:



Table 9. The number of people who respond to questions about meal preparation.

Question: When it comes to meals do you:	Yes	Sometimes	No
1. Like to cook and prepare good meals?	48	44	8
2. Like to cook but find it expensive and worrisome?	38	60	2
3. Cook yourself but don't eat very well?	36	44	20
4. Have someone else in your home that makes meals?	46	7	47
5. Share some meals each week with friends or family?	10	12	78
6. Use a meal service like Meals on Wheels?	15	1	84
7. Eat out more than 3 times a week?	11	29	60
8. Have a friend or family who helps out?	8	2	90
9. Have a home maker to make meals?	6	34	60

This chart was created from the earlier survey question on preparing meals. You will notice that there are more categories here to reflect write-in responses and the order has been changed to keep answers that were similar together.

This same questions could be used when asking people to think about what they might do in five years time. This type of data can be extremely helpful in thinking about how to arrange a housing project.

For example, only 48 per cent considered themselves well set when it came to meals (response to question 1), a good indicator of the current independence of those thinking of moving into a life-lease apartment. Over 35 per cent were coping but were not doing as well as they would like (questions 2 and 3). These are suggestions that they are already looking to some sort of support or sharing to handle meals (remaining questions). This would indicate that a housing project might want to include some type of voluntary meal-sharing, either a shared meal option several times a week or one meal a day, etc. By comparing this type of data to the five-year expectation, the group could much more accurately tackle the issue of meals in their planning.

Whatever method of analysis is used, it is helpful to do the analysis with a group so that ideas can be shared.

## **G. Suggestions for Training People to Become Good Interviewers**

It is possible to train aging adults to administer a standardized questionnaire without an understanding of the research methods as long as there is ample time for practice and feedback.

When questionnaires and survey research was taught to the Kerby group, we discussed how questionnaires could be part of qualitative research (describing experience) and quantitative or more scientific research.

We found that developing a questionnaire was a wonderful learning tool. In the process, the seniors were able to make decisions about

the questions to ask and the type of questionnaire to develop. Administering their questionnaire and evaluating the results allowed them to learn about the advantages and disadvantages of their chosen method and the types of questions asked. By comparing notes with other groups, they learned about all approaches and could evaluate methods.

The following outline could be used to teach aging adults about survey research and questionnaires:

**Pre-reading (Chapters 1 and 3)** of the manual to provide a background on research in general. As a group, discuss the topic and the issues you might be interested in studying through questionnaires. (Discuss how to use questionnaires in other research and demonstrate related commercial questionnaires.)

**Set the topic.** Discuss how you might begin the process of identifying questions: make lists, brainstorm, ask open-ended questions. Take the ideas from the group discussion and create a set of open-ended questions that each person then administers to 2–5 other aging adults before the next class.

**Set the questions** from the open-ended or semi-structured questionnaires and decide upon a set of five questions, each with a range of answers. Pre-test the questionnaire with your research group and have each senior researcher pre-test them with up to five people to make sure that the questions and the answers are coherent before the next class.

**Use the questions in pairs,** practice the pacing of questions and the speed of delivery, pausing and prompting until comfortable. Bring the answers back to Day five to analyze your responses and write up a short summary. You are now ready to recruit a sample, gather your data, analyze what you have found. You can finish this section by reviewing what you have accomplished, how to share your feelings and use the data to guide what you are doing.

## Resources

For background reading on exploration as related to verification in the social sciences, see: R.A. Stebbins, *Exploratory Research in the Social Sciences* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001).

For background reading on survey research, see: J. Converse and S. Presser, *Survey Questions: Handcrafting the Standardized Questionnaire* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1986).

For definitions of research terms, see: W.P. Vogt, *Dictionary of Statistics and Methodology: A Nontechnical Guide for the Social Sciences*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998).

For specifics about design, see: W. Foddy, *Constructing Questions for Interviews and Questionnaires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

For a more academic and historical approach, see: A.N. Oppenheim, *Questionnaire Design and Attitude Measurement* (London: Heinemann 1968).

*Questionnaire Design and Surveys Sampling*: <http://obelia.jde.aca.mmu.ac.uk/redesgn/arsham/opre330Surveys.htm>

*Virtual Ethnography: Interactive Interviewing Online as Method*: <http://www.cjlt.ca/index.php/cjlt/article/view/40/37>

*Summary of Survey Analysis Software*: <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~stats/survey-soft/survey-soft.html>