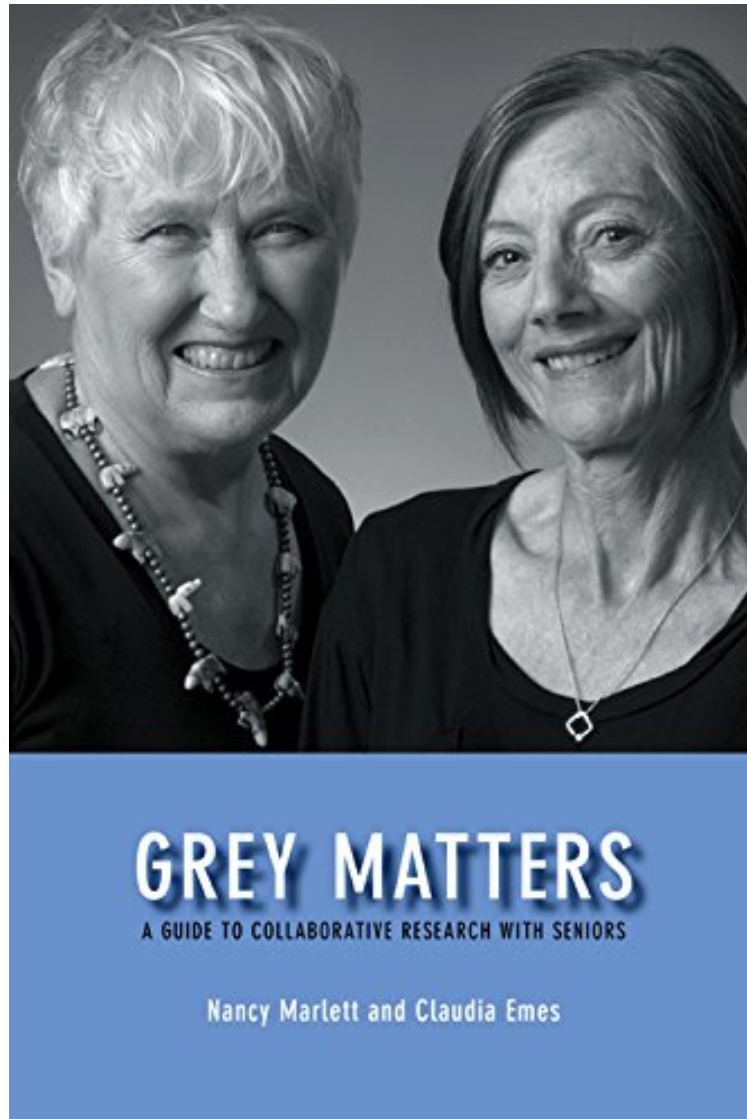


## Grey Matters: A Guide for Collaborative Research with Seniors

*Nancy Marlett, Claudia Emes*

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**Nancy Marlett, Claudia Emes : Grey Matters: A Guide for Collaborative Research with Seniors** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Grey Matters: A Guide for Collaborative Research with Seniors:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An insightful piece, very highly recommendedBy Midwest Book ReviewRetirement that is sitting around the house is worse than death for many seniors. "Grey Matters: A Guide to Collaborative Research with Seniors" delves into the call of research that many seniors embrace in their later years, as this volume discusses how seniors can be valuable partners in academia and explains it well. From Nancy Marlett and

Claudia Emes, both taking a strong role in academia regardless of age, "Grey Matters" is an insightful piece, very highly recommended.

This study marks a major step in making collaboration between seniors, academic researchers, and community researchers a reality. Many aging adults are motivated to undertake research projects in later life or even return to university after retirement. Grey Matters is the result of a pilot project developed to study the effectiveness of collaborative research involving seniors. Because the project was such a success, the authors were encouraged to make their model available both to seniors interested in undertaking their own research and to those hoping to involve seniors in collaborative research. This guide provides a helpful framework for making the most of research projects by and with seniors, including sections on such techniques as narrative interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

The Calgary Herald, Neighbours section, November 11, 2010 Seniors 'play' with potential How-to guide empowers older adults BY ALEX FRAZER-HARRISON A quiet revolution is changing the way older adults takes part in research. For so long, they've often been the subjects of studies -- often dealing with diseases, disabilities and other problems. But the publication of Grey Matters by the University of Calgary Press marks a change in this attitude. It's the culmination of seven years of promoting how seniors can become more involved in research that affects their lives. "Seniors have always been 'the other' -- the people who needed to be studied, who have always looked to others to tell them what they needed, or what's appropriate, or what's best," says Nancy Marlett, the book's co-author. A senior, herself, she is a full-time faculty member in the Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies unit in the U of C's faculty of medicine. Her collaborator, Claudia Emes, is a retired U of C kinesiology professor. Grey Matters: A Guide to Collaborative Research with Seniors is an easy to follow manual. It covers different methods by which seniors -- individually or as groups -- can conduct valid research into issues of interest to them. The book covers topics such as how to create a research proposal, as well as how to conduct surveys and focus groups. It grew out of work started in 2002 to 2003 by the Kerby Centre of Excellence as part of a project formed to allow seniors to drive research into topics of concern. Resiliency was chosen in 2003 as the first topic of study. "We had situations where people had gone through horrendous experiences -- were immigrants, lived in poverty or lost partners, but they could still get up and smile, while others might lose their partner and die within six months," says Centre of Excellence manager Dorothy Dooley. "We asked seniors to come out for a full-day workshop on the topic and 150 people turned up. They worked in separate groups and we asked them what were the factors related to resiliency. "They came up with quite a few factors and we asked if any of them would volunteer for a research project. We brought in a number of emeritus professors to teach them how to do research." Working with people from their late 50s to their 90s with educations ranging from Grade 7 to PhD, revealed different styles of research. But there was one thing in common -- the seniors wanted to be involved in collecting the data, themselves, says Ralph Miller, a retired education professor who was one of those who volunteered to teach the seniors how to do research. "We had some very astute people and they were clear about the fact they didn't want their futures planned by a bunch of people who knew nothing about what it was like to be old," says Miller. "There is one part of the senior spectrum where their voices have always been heard -- retired judges, etc. -- who had a lot of authority in their working life. "You get a little further down the pyramid and there are seniors who didn't have a lot of clout in their working lives. These are the seniors whose voices need to be heard." Dooley says past research projects often left seniors "feeling they were guinea pigs and portrayed as not being full, capable citizens." So when the resiliency research was completed and the results were unveiled in 2007, the idea was initially to publish a book on that topic. But the focus instead became promoting the methods used so effectively by the Kerby seniors, says Marlett. "We knew it was possible -- but how to replicate it and how to spread it?," she says. "This is about seniors doing research they want to do and that they think is important, not somebody else saying: "We want seniors to look at X, Y, and Z." Grey Matters aims to cast as wide a net as possible in terms of readership and use. It is the first "open source" publication by the U of C Press, which means the book is not only available in standard print, but also as a free-of-charge e-book download. The book is designed to maximize readability and understanding. "It's not written for academics," says Marlett. "This has a lot of potential, (especially) if there's something seniors need, but have to prove it to the policy-makers. "This book isn't about making it an easy go. Seniors have to stand up and be counted, and take up the challenge to learn and become good researchers." The worst thing that can happen to a piece of research is for it to be stuck on a shelf and forgotten. Grey Matters aims to provide senior researchers with the tools to keep their own research a going concern, rather than as cabinet filler. "It's a living document," says former Kerby Centre president Maureen Wills, who assisted in collecting information from rural seniors about issues they'd like to see researched. The things the resiliency research uncovered provided enough material for another book, she says. The percentage of the population age 65 and over will approach the 50-per-cent mark once the baby boomer wave arrives -- so the new ground being covered through Grey Matters has potential to be significant as this new generation of older Canadians demands a greater say in their future, says Dooley. Marlett is enthusiastic about the potential for the Grey Matters manual to spread well beyond Alberta. Downloads of the book have been recorded from as far away as Europe and she's been in touch with colleagues in the U.K. "They say they

need this book immediately," says Marlett. The guide isn't just for seniors taking part in formal research through a school or Centre of Excellence, she says, adding it could just as easily be utilized by a senior wanting to embark upon a personal project. "This book is a little piece of cheekiness saying: 'There's your potential -- come out and play,'" says Marlett. - - - CHECK IT OUT Grey Matters is available in both print and e-book (PDF) versions at [www.uofcpress.com](http://www.uofcpress.com), with the e-book version a free download. - - - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW The book, Grey Matters, is aimed at different groups of people: -Aging adults interested in research. -Groups of aging adults wanting to engage in research projects such as needs surveys and oral histories. -Researchers looking to hire seniors for research work. -People looking to apply for research grants, or launch projects in collaboration with seniors. -Educators in gerontology and related fields. -Policy-makers who want to accurately gauge their older constituents' needs.

About the Author Nancy Marlett is the director of Community Rehabilitation Disability Studies, an interdisciplinary unit of the Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary. Her research interests include the development of research models and program evaluation that facilitate shared expertise and new forms of knowledge. Claudia Emes is a professor in the Faculty of Kinesiology at the University of Calgary. Her areas of expertise are adapted physical activity for children and adolescents with special needs, wellness and exercise for seniors, and curriculum design and learner-centred education