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Creating Change: Finding Older Adults Role in Local Environmental Issues

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Abstract

Every person, regardless of their age, race, sex, class, disability or religion should have access and the resources needed to be an active participant in their community. The goal of this project is to highlight the importance of creating opportunities for the aging population to be involved in community initiatives and in particular, environmental initiatives. This project is meant to create awareness of senior's role and capabilities to be active in a community, potential barriers older adults face in participation and the importance of acknowledging and including older adults in community conversations that have the potential to impact their future.

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Creating Change: Finding Older Adults Role in Local Environmental Issues

In the next few decades, major changes are going to continue to affect our planet. As our environment is continuously affected by climate change, our population is also steadily growing and getting older. The environment that many older generations have lived in is diminishing. For some, the snow that used to fall every December has been replaced with warmer temperatures. For others, they are displaced or living in an unsafe environment due to a changing climate, human induced disasters and suffering from environmental injustice that are rooted from systematic and institutionalized social justice issues. The environment plays an important role in everyone's lives but yet affects everyone differently based on many factors including race, age, socio-economic status, sex and disabilities. Despite the effect that the environment has on older adult populations, there is a lack of involvement of environmental initiatives caused by the lack of inclusion and awareness that is stemmed from ageism and a lack of age friendly initiatives in the community and environmental organizations.

It is important to note that the environment can mean many things for people and the definition is not the same for everyone. For this project, the environment that the older adult population is affected by encompasses all aspects of the environment, including the physical environment in which they live as well as the environmental issues that affect older adults including disasters (hurricanes, earthquakes, wildfires, etc.) and climate change (air quality, rising heat temperatures, extreme cold weather, etc.). For older adult as a whole, the environment has a major influence on their lives and yet, many are not aware or included in the environmental justice issues affecting them or affecting members in their community. The vulnerabilities that older adults from environmental injustice are not seen as an urgent issue nor as an issue that they

should be educated and made aware of.   Through awareness and education that is open to all

Beverly community members and organizations on environmental issues affecting and

concerning to Beverly's older adults, I believe that it can build relationships, empower and raise

awareness to even broader issues such as age friendly cities, ageism, and other social justice

issues affecting Beverly and beyond.

The lack of inclusion between the older adults and environmental initiatives are rooted in

ageism that then creates marginalization through powerlessness. Creating awareness and having

conversations about engaging older adults in the environmental movement has potential to be

effective at the local level. Through community engagement and relationship building with an

intergenerational audience, I believe there is potential for meaningful conversations that can

further change attitudes on older adults in Beverly and their capabilities in the environmental

movement, further consideration on the external effects that policies, in particular environmental

policies, have on older adults.

This community-based project will engage the older adult population of Beverly on

environmental issues in the hopes of creating a space for senior voices and action in

environmental issues. Through forming community partnerships and strengthening relationships

at all levels of the Beverly community, I hope that I can show the power of involving all

members in a community and empower all citizens to take a stance on the issues they are

passionate about, despite their age and conceived notions of capabilities. By taking small steps

using awareness and education through a local community example, we can see the areas that we

need to improve on, the research that needs to be expanded on and the models that be

incorporated in to other communities.

Literature Review

Aging in America is transforming and drastically different than the generations before them. For aging adults in the U.S., their life expectancy is increasing and they are continuously living healthier lives. With the increase in older adult populations, U.S. society will be transformed and changes will need to be made to adjust the needs of this growing demographic. The growth of older adults, aged 65 and older, is one of the most significant demographic trends in the history of the United States and will continue to alter, both positively and negatively, multiple structures of the United States including the economy, infrastructure and institutions (Mather, Jacobsen & Pollard, 2015). This aging population is more independent as well as more educated than previous generations. Currently, 96% of older adults are living in housing units and only 4% in nursing homes (Mather, Jacobsen & Pollard, 2015). By 2014, the number of older adults receiving a bachelor's degree or more increased to 25% and 26% of the U.S. labor force will be age 65 and up (Mather, Jacobsen & Pollard, 2015). We can use this data to facilitate what direction our efforts should take in regards to this aging population, which means more independent-focused programming, increased career options and utilizing the skills of this educated generation by providing awareness and engagement to issues in their communities and in the broader context of the U.S.

In addition, this aging population has and will continue to have a significant role in shaping the future of the U.S. society through their significant turnout numbers for voting. For example, in the 2016 presidential election, 71% of older Americans voted compared to 46% from people aged 18 to 29 years old (Bunis, 2018). It will be of the utmost importance for communities to educate and include this aging population to solve the issues that communities

are facing. Older adults are more likely to view voting as a responsibility, and not just issues

concerning aging due to being more connected to their communities (Bunis, 2018).

Utilizing and empowering the increasing aging population will be integral in making changes on

policies and future political leaders.

Research proves the contributions that older adults make to the U.S., yet there is a

persistent perception that youth is ideal and aging is unwanted. Because of this perception, it

affects organizations, policies, health issues and ignores the contribution that older people make

on society (Angus & Reeve, 2006). Angus and Reeve (2006) explain the importance of

acknowledging that older people have the same needs as the rest of the community and therefore

should have access to participate and contribute in the areas of education, sports, creative and

political outlets. The role that the elderly contributes in the U.S.'s society is integral to

understanding the perceptions that need to be altered to truly reflect our aging society and what

roles older adults can contribute to solving some of the most important issues that the U.S. faces.

Aging in America causes significant challenges such as ageism that contributes to their well-

being and affects their engagement in U.S society.

Ageism

By 2050 a quarter of the world will be over the age of 60 (Haq & Gutman, 2014),

increasing the urgency for communities to become aware of the issues facing our older

populations now and what has the potential to affect them in the future. The root of many issues

that the older adult face stems from ageism. As Robert Butler (1989) coined the term, "Ageism

can be seen as a systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are

old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this with skin color and gender . . . I see ageism

manifested in a wide range of phenomena, on both individual and institutional levels—

stereotypes and myths, outright disdain and dislike, simple subtle avoidance of contact, and discriminatory practices in housing, employment, and services of all kinds" (Butler, 1989; Butler, 2005 as cited in Achenbaum, 2015).

The individual, societal and institutional level contribute to the lack of involvement and awareness of the older adults in environmental initiatives. Hagestad, Gunhild and Uhlenbery in "The Social Separation of Old and Young: A Root of Ageism" (2005) explain how society constructs age being matched with certain roles, in particular their level of capabilities that are determined by age. This social construction of certain roles as a person ages, is then internalized for older adults. This belief that because they are aging they can do less, has a direct impact on what they can be involved in. Older adult's perceived utility about their role in society can have an impact on what they believe they are capable of contributing. This perceived utility in society can also have an impact on what opportunities they have to contribute in communities and society as a whole. Perceptions on utility have an impact on older adult's role in society- this impacts what they believe they are capable of contributing. A lack of involvement also increases stereotypes which can be mistaken for a lack of care on the issue. Hagestad, Gunhild and Uhlenbery (2005) also address the issue of age segregation which include institutional, spatial and cultural segregation. The construction of these three spatial segregations can have an impact on older adults' involvement in the community, in particular on environmental issues in the community. For example, reinforcing these spatial segregations can increase lack of awareness of issues affecting their community, as well as less interaction between different generations. The lack of community involvement has the potential to affect policies and laws that contribute to the institutionalized ageism in a community.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism addresses how society is created and maintained through repeated interactions among individuals (Carter & Fuller, 2015). Symbolic interactionism is the way individuals act based on the meanings objects have for them and interaction occurs within a particular social and cultural context where people are defined based on individual meanings (Carter & Fuller, 2015). These individual meanings are then continuously created and recreated. These meanings thus do not reside in the symbols but rather the meaning is given to the symbol (Blumer, 1969 as cited in Low & Blanchard, 2013). Thus, in the context of aging symbolic interactionism explains how older adults and their sense of identity are formed by others who view them as less valuable as they age, therefore limiting older adults' contribution to society.

The greatest influencer of the symbolic interactionist theory is George Herbert Mead (1934) and his theories on the relationship between self and society (Carter & Fuller, 2015). Symbolic interactionism emphasized the importance of identity; the individual or felt identity that is individual to their biography, the personal or presented identity that is the view themselves displayed for others and the self or social identity which others attribute to themselves (Goffman 1963 as cited in Marshall, 1979). Marshall (1979) explains "for the self-arises in social interaction, and situations which brings selves together are controlled by the imposition of meaning". Thus, these identities that are based on social construction potentially affect older adults' perceptions of self, which then alters their future interactions as they continue to age. Based on this self-perception and sense of identity, and because of society's view of aging and negative stereotypes that stem from ageism, older adults view themselves as less valuable. Because of these stereotypes, society therefore views them as less valuable which creates a system for fewer opportunities for older adults to be involved in.

Plummer asserts that the theory of symbolic interactionism states that there are

opportunities to be modified, transformed and evolved through encounters (2016) and that even

though we regularly create habits, routines and have shared meanings, these are always open to

adjust (Perinbanayagam, 1985; Rochberg-Halton, 1986; Wiley, 1994 as cited in Plummer, 2016).

With the readjustment of these shared meanings, such as the creation of the social meanings and

definitions of aging which produce stereotypes, we can reconstruct societies view of our aging

population which will thus alter older adult's perception of their identity in a more positive light.

Environmental Justice

The environment, in common conversation, can hold a variety of meanings. The

environment can include urban design and public health (Day, 2010), environmental exposure

including pollutants and chemicals (Hong, 2013), as well as the outcomes of human-induced

change to the environment such as climate change and disasters. David Schlosberg describes

environmental injustice as the inequity of the distribution of toxics and hazardous waste as well

as the lack of access to transportation, green space, land use, water quality and distribution,

energy development, jobs and food justice (Scholsberg, 2007). In addition, environmental

injustice can be seen as an impact of climate change, "historically, American society has failed to

make the connection in terms of the direct impact of environmental injustices, including climate

change, on our own lives, families, and communities, all of whom depend on the physical

environment and its bounty" (Environmental & Climate Justice, 2018).

Massey (2004) in "Environmental Justice: Income, Race and Health" expands on the

definition of environmental justice as recognizing that minority and low-income communities

often bear a disproportionate share of environmental costs. There is a correlation between

diseases and disabilities that have an environmental component that is unequally distributed

across race and income levels, and in addition minorities often receive lower quality health care

(Massey, 2004). Poor and minority neighborhoods also bear unequal burdens from hazardous

facilities, waste sites, municipal landfills and incinerators (Massey, 2004). This data concludes

how important it is to be aware of the decisions and policies in place that affect low income and

minority communities that creates environmental injustice. For older adults, creating awareness

of the environmental issues that may affect them and identifying ways in which they can

contribute to stopping environmental justice in other communities is an effort that needs to be

made locally and nationally.

     Haq, Brown and Hards (2010) explain that "the risk and harm from climate change will

not be evenly distributed. Certain groups in society will be affected more than others." They

further explain that the age, sex and gender will also have a threat on how climate change affects

the population (Haq, Brown & Hards, 2010), which identifies the differences of redistribution

that Scholsberg mentions about environmental injustice (2007). The impacts of climate

variability are described by Haq as having direct and indirect effects on human health and well-

being, especially of vulnerable groups (Haq, 2017). It is important to distinguish that vulnerable

groups will be the most affected, which includes older adults. Haq, Brown and Hard (2010) go

on to state that older adults may be physically, financially and emotionally less resilient to the

effects from climate change. These barriers are rooted in social justice issues such as socio-

economic factors, lack of awareness, or mistrust of the government (Haq, Brown & Hards,

2010).

     A recent example of how older adult populations can be disproportionately affected by

climate change and environmental factors can be seen from the analysis that has been done since

Hurricane Katrina. Hurricane Katrina hit the east side of New Orleans, Louisiana on August 29,

2005 as a Category 3 hurricane. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina resulted in 80% of the city

flooded and over $200 billion in damages which makes Hurricane Katrina one of the most

economically costly hurricanes to strike the United States (Dolfman, Fortier, Wasser &

Bergman, 2007).

Pre-Katrina there were extensive warnings from scientists and the media about a potential

disaster due to the estimated 437,161 people that lived in a "bowl" below sea level and the

estimated 130,000 residents without vehicles, homebound, or in hospitals and in-care facilities

(Kates, Colten, Laska & Leatherman, 2006). Despite one million New Orleans metropolitan

residents that responded to public calls for evacuation, one quarter of New Orleans residents

were unable or unwilling to leave (Kates, Colten, Laska & Leatherman, 2006). "The burden of

these failures fell heaviest on the African-American, poor, aged, and infirm members of the

population (Kates, Colten, Laska & Leatherman, 2006). Hurricane Katrina is just one example

of how minority communities – including older adults – are impacted during a disaster.

The unfortunate result of Hurricane Katrina gives data to how environmental disasters

can directly impact older adults and the institutionalized policies in place that are rooted in

ageism and unawareness. Henderson, Roberto and Kamo (2010) observe the effect that this

disaster had on the older adults in New Orleans, Louisiana in "Older Adults' Responses to

Hurricane Katrina". The vulnerabilities of the elderly can be shown from the data that was

collected including, 73% of Hurricane-Katrina related deaths in New Orleans were 60 years of

age or older (2010). In comparison, New Orleans residents age 60 years and older only represent

15% of the population (Gibson, 2006; as cited in Henderson, Roberto & Kamo, 2010). From this

research it can be concluded that older people face different risks than other age populations and

therefore more likely to be challenged by health, mobility, financial and transportation issues

(Henderson, Roberto & Kamo, 2010). Post Hurricane Katrina, the older adults in this study had a difficult time accessing basic resources, and struggled with accessing money and transportation thus identifies the importance of having policies set in place such as basic resource allocations, communication networks, differential transportation options and other additional support services (Henderson, Roberto & Kamo, 2010). Research collected such as this, shows the vulnerabilities that older adults face in front of an environmental disaster. It is important to recognize that both now and the future communities across the globe will be faced with changing environments. This will require strengthening the community's role in participation in environmental justice action, community disaster planning, awareness, education and inclusion of older adults in these decisions.

Limitations to Involvement: Stereotypes

Stereotypes of the elderly people are rooted in ageism. Stereotyping can be a contributor to the lack of older adults participating in the environmental movement. Older adults may be aware that climate change exists but they not only feel like they will not be directly affected nor that they can personally contribute solutions to the issue (Haq, Brown & Hards, 2010). There are two key items that need to be addressed by this assessment by Haq, Brown and Hards which includes not being aware how climate change and environmental issues can affect older adults, as well as believing the notion that they are incapable of making change. As stated in the study, while it is an issue that there are significant vulnerabilities to older people, it is just as important to address and overcome the stereotypes of being incapable of "engagement, passive or disinterested" (Haq, Brown & Hards, 2010). In order to address this, it is important to address these stereotypes on all levels, including from self to institutional levels.

"Aging, Climate Change and Legacy Thinking" addresses two of the main stereotypes that older adult faces when it comes to environmental relations (Frumkin, Fried & Moody, 2012). One notion is that as people age, they become more conservative and a "greedy geezer" as opposed to the alternative idea of older people being generous and wanting to leave the world in a better place (Frumkin, Fried & Moody, 2012). Frumkin, Fried and Moody highlight the key studies that show a mixture of both of these ideas. For example, in "The Climate Change Generation? Survey Analysis of the Perceptions and Beliefs of Young Americans" found that respondents older than 60 were slightly more likely than younger respondents to report that they had given a lot of thought to global warming, considered it important to them personally and were worried about it (Friedman, Nisbet, Leiserowitz & Maibach, 2010). In Pew's Research Center in "What the World Thinks About Climate Change in 7 Charts", explains that the majority of all ages recognize that there is climate change and endorse taking actions to address climate change (Pews Research Center, 2016). The Cornell National Social Survey found that 83% of adults older than 55 years old reported that they would do what is right for the environment and 96% thought that they should maintain the environment for future generations (Survey Research Institute, 2008 as cited in Frumkin, Fried & Moody, 2012). It is extremely important to note that even with such high response rates, only 12% reported being members of environmental organizations and 15% involved in volunteer activities (Survey Research Institute, 2008 as cited in Frumkin, Fried & Moody, 2012). These statistics clearly combat the idea that older adults are greedy and do not care about the environment. It is important to note that recent research suggests that older people are more likely than younger people to change attitudes in light of new information (Eaton, Visser, & Krosnick, 2009 as cited in Friedman, Nisbet, Leiserowitz & Maibach, 2012). First, it will be necessary to address the stereotypes that older

adults do not care about the environment. Second, it will be necessary to create opportunities for older adults to have accessibility to engage in local environmental issues.

Solutions: Haq's "3 C" Approach

In "Growing Old in Climate Change" Haq introduces the idea of a "3 C" approach to the older adults' involvement in environmental issues (2017). Haq's "3 C" approach addresses the potential that the elderly give to the environmental movement, acknowledging their own contribution to harming the environment and their vulnerabilities in a changing climate (2017). Thus, Haq explains that older adults are casualties, contributors and champions of climate change (2017). Using this intersectional approach when connecting older adults and environmental issues, we can put forward the idea that older adults are not only casualties, contributors and champions of climate change, but casualties, contributors and champions of other environmental issues facing their community as well.

Casualties

Symer in "Greening Gray: Climate Action for an Aging World" calls attention to the threat that the older population faces with a changing climate (2017) and further explains why they can be casualties suggested by Haq (2017). Symer explains that they face threats due to preexisting medical conditions, function or cognitive limitations, as well as increased sensitivity to extreme weather conditions and climate impacts (2017). "Aging, Climate Change and Legacy Thinking" state that older adults are more vulnerable to several of the health impacts of climate change such as heat waves, diminished air quality and extreme weather events (Frumkin, Fried & Moody, 2012). "Environmental Justice and Older Age: Consideration of a Qualitative Neighborhood-Based Study" states that environmental justice research should pay attention to age because older people are physically more vulnerable to environmental hazards (Greenbery,

1993 as cited in Day, 2010). Hong in "Aging Society and Environmental Health Challenges"

notes that we need to better understand the risks to older adults from environmental exposure, in

particular because "environmental pollutants and chemicals adversely influence the homeostatic

status of aging, frequently resulting in development of certain diseases at an earlier age than

expected (2013). Hong also notes that the environmental contaminants that are mainly produced

from anthropogenic sources that are intended to improve living conditions, are actually

damaging human health (Hong, 2013). Haq and Gutman (2014) state than an international study

was conducted in Australia, Canada, UK, USA and Sweden and found that while older adults are

concerned about climate change, they fail to recognize how it could personally affect them which

calls for the need to create awareness on their vulnerabilities of climate change on a local and

national level.

Contributors

While older adults are disproportionately vulnerable, it is important to acknowledge the

contributions that this generation does make on the environment and why it is integral to include

them in addressing their own habits that harm the environment. In Yale's Global Warming of 6

Americans study they found that "45% of Baby Boomers are alarmed or concerned about climate

change, compared to 35% of Millennials" (2010) yet research shows that carbon dioxide

emissions in the United States increases with age (Haq, 2017). Baby boomers and their levels of

consumptions are currently higher than any other age group on carbon footprint (Haq, Brown &

Hards, 2010). Promoting greener attitudes and behaviors to influence lifestyle choices of older

people is a solution that Haq suggests (2017).

Champions

"Imagining the American Community Environmental Services: A Vision for Environmentalists and Elders" envision a substantial role for both the present generation and future generations of older Americans in combating climate change and protecting and improving the environment in a variety of other ways (Binstock, Sykes & Reilly, 2010). The President's Task force on Older Americans in 1968 noted that there is potential value in creating new social roles for older people that contribute to society and with entering in to an aging society, this is integral (Binstock, Sykes & Reilly, 2010). It is important to note the variety of skills and experiences that older adults can bring to the table concerning environmental issues (Symer, 2006).

Research is plentiful on potential benefits on environmental volunteerism for older adults. Haq suggests that involving older adults in environmental volunteering creates a role in building local community resilience (2017). In order to increase environmental volunteering and if it is to reach its full potential, "then we need to remove cultural, income, health and practical barriers and dispel and challenge discrimination, perceptions and attitudes" (Haq, 2017). Creating awareness of the benefits of environmental volunteering of older adults to both older adults and environmental organizations will be necessary. It will also be integral to make sure communities and organizations are integrating age friendly practices in order to have successful environmental volunteering experiences.

Involving older adults in the environmental movement could also create significant change, since the older population represents a growing share of the consuming and voting public (Frumkin, Fried & Moody, 2012). The elderly vote in high numbers and their attitudes towards climate change matter (Frumkin, Fried & Moody, 2012). Creating awareness could

have potentially huge benefits for creating solutions to solve environmental issues on a local and global level.

Generativity and Legacy Leaving

"*I want to leave things nice after I die for the next generations, for other people to enjoy in the future, for the earth and its inhabitants*" *(Pillemer et al., 2010)*

Using the theories of generativity and legacy leaving can be beneficial to increasing involvement in environmental issues and empowering older adults to engage in these issues more. Erikson created the concept of generativity, with an emphasis on building stability, perpetuating culture and transmitting values through the family (1959). Urien and Kilbourne (2011) explain that generativity refers to individuals' beliefs that their current behavior has consequences that extend in to future generations and is a resource for encouraging people toward the public good. It has also been shown that there is a relationship between generativity and pro-environmental behavior and generativity can be used as a framework to explore experiences of environmental stewardship activities (Warburton & Gooch, 2007, as cited in Urien & Kilbourne, 2011). A common way to increase generativity thinking for the elderly is focusing on an individual's self-interest, in particular children or grandchildren has the potential for supporting environmental values (Frumkin, Friend & Moody, 2012). McAdams and de St. Aubin (1998) suggest that "both theory and research on life course development suggest that older people share a need for activities that focus on improving the world and leaving a legacy for future generation" (as cited in Pillemer et al., 2010). To put theory to practice, Haq (2017) explains creating conversation and dialogue that focuses on ""How do you want to be remembered?" and "What do you want your legacy to be?".

Age Friendly Cities and Best Practices

By 2050 more than 20 percent of the world's population will be age 60 or older calling

for the need for communities to transition to more age friendly practices (Turner, Stanton &

Bergeron, 2015). AARP's report (Turner, Stanton & Bergeron, 2015) created "The 8 Domains of

Livability" in which cities and communities should be paying close attention to, in order to have

an age friendly community. Addressing these domains may have the opportunity to solve some

of the issues facing older adults from participating in the environmental movement. AARP's

eight domains include outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social participation,

respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and

information and community and health services (Turner, Stanton & Bergeron, 2015). Day

supports that the physical environment for aging is better in some locations than others and can

be a form of distributional environment inequity and potentially an injustice (2010), which brings

attention to the interconnections between age friendly cities and environmental justice. The

degree of environmental support for ageing has impacts on health and growing old in an

unsupportive environment can contribute to existing disparities (Day, 2010).   The

implementation of these age friendly domains have the potential to make significant strides in

addressing the involvement of older adults in the environmental movement.

Respect and Social Inclusion

"If you want to walk faster, walk alone. If you want to walk further, walk with others"

(Hollingshead, Corcoran & Weakland, 2014)

Respect and social inclusion reflect the importance of intergenerational programming that

creates a space for different generations of a community to learn from one another (Turner,

Stanton & Bergeron, 2015). Incorporating this domain to addressing local environmental issues

and the elderly have many benefits. There is currently research that interconnects intergenerational activities to address environmental issues.

Hollingshead, Corcoran and Weakland (2014) believe that using intergenerational learning, where the young and old come together in a shared, meaningful activity can create a space that shares knowledge and resources in order to help one another achieve the perspective and means necessary to enact sustainability. Hollingstead, Corcoran and Weakland (2014) recommend different generations learning together and about each other, learning about ecological, social, cultural and economic events related to them, and learning through shared experiences designed to develop skills to address the challenges to addressing sustainability.

Frumkin, Fried and Moody (2012) explain how intergenerational dialogue could spur discussions and thinking through discussion of their hopes and fears about the future that could transmit wisdom to young people and create legacy thinking about older adults. We have explored that legacy thinking, or generativity, can empower older adults to take action on environmental issues.

Haq (2017) explains that "climate change is one of the issues that unites generations and cuts across party lines" and in order to create conversation that multiple generations can engage in, we can include conversations around special places in the environment to them. Haq found that in talking with more than 200 people aged 18 to 80 years, only a couple of people said that there was no space with special meaning to them and that these types of questions offer a starting point for intergenerational discussions on climate change and climate action.

Civic Participation and Employment

> *"Engagement of community volunteers has been identified as one of the most important*
>
> *solutions to environmental problems" (Pillemer et al.,2016)*

Civic participation and employment states that age friendly communities have opportunities for older adults to work or volunteer, so they can be engaged in community life (Turner, Stanton & Bergeron, 2015). Environmental volunteering for older adults has been identified as a solution for engaging older adults on local environmental issues, yet there is a currently a lack of involvement and accessibility.

Currently, "[o]lder people are less likely to engage in environmental volunteerism than younger individuals" (Pillemer et al., 2016). New York State conducted a study which found that 2% of older people stated an environmental organization as the main organization that they volunteer for (Pillemer et al., 2016). Even if there is interest in the environmental movement, there are potential barriers rooting from ageism and the lack of age friendly organizations. When asked about the barriers of environmental volunteerism for older adults, some individuals feel that they lack sufficient expertise or knowledge about environmental issues or science (Bushway et al., 2011, as cited in Pillemer et al., 2016). Another barrier is being unaware of opportunities and an uncertainty as to how they could be involved (Bushway et al., 2011, as cited in Pillemer et al., 2016). Additional barriers include that many organizations do not meet the needs of older adults (Howgate, 2008 as cited in Pillemer et al., 2016) as well as not being socially fulfilling compared to alternate volunteer opportunities (Pillemer et al., 2010 as cited in Pillemer et al., 2016).

Incorporating environmental volunteering for older adults has many benefits that are discussed in "Environmental Volunteering in Later Life: Benefits and Barriers". Results from a

national survey by Librett and colleagues in 2005 concluded that environmental volunteering can increase physical activity more than any other type of volunteering (Librett, 2005 as cited in Pillemer et at., 2010). Environmental volunteering can also increase exposure to nature which also shows that the more exposure to nature that an individual has can improve cognitive functioning (Hartig, Mang & Evans, 1991, as cited in Pillemer et al., 2010) and enhanced psychological well-being (Kaplan, 1973 as cited in Pillemer et al., 2010). Environmental volunteering can also promote health and well-being by increasing social connections because many environmental activities take place with intergenerational contact that offers opportunities for meaningful relationships (Pillemer & Wagenet, 2008 as cited in Pillemer et al., 2010). Environmental volunteering can also be a valuable community building tool (Kuo et al., 1998, as cited in Pillemer et al., 2010) as well as a way to increase their sense of community (Lewis, 1992, as cited in Pillemer et al., 2010). Thus, from this research it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between well-being, health and relationship outcomes with environmental volunteering for older adults (Pillemer et al., 2010).

With such benefits to environmental volunteering, it is important to distinguish why there is a lack of involvement. Currently, two-thirds of environmental organizations do not make any special accommodations for older people (Pillemer et al., 2010). It is also important to note that studies have shown that the "one size fits all" for older adults that are volunteering does not work (Pillemer et al.,) making it important to distinguish the different capabilities and not just assuming that one way is more beneficial than the other. "Environmental Volunteering in Later Life: Benefits and Barriers" provides a number of suggestions that organizations can implement in order to become for age friendly. These include ensuring that the organization is accessible and meets ADA requirements, organizations provide a range of volunteer jobs for people of

different interests and physical capabilities, providing transportation when needed, and offering

daytime activities (Pillemer et al., 2010).

Environmental volunteering may "help form attitudes that support environmental

stewardship and legacy thinking" (Frumkin, Fried & Moody, 2012). Creating spaces to consider

legacy leaving and generativity in environmental volunteering spaces and beyond has the

potential to create more involvement in addressing environmental issues.

Social Participation

Social participation states that accessible, affordable and fun social activities can combat

isolation and increase health and wellbeing (Turner, Stanton & Bergeron, 2015). Using the ideas

of incorporating social participation can be useful to increasing participation of older adults in

the environmental movement. Binstock, Sykes and Reilly (2010) suggest that a current

challenge is developing social roles and responsibilities for older people that are valued by

society and enhance the quality of life for people of all ages.

Currently, as Haq, Brown and Hards (2010) state there are only a few initiatives on the

national level that engage older people in green issues. One way to combat this is to begin to

create initiatives on a local level which entails older adults having access to elements of social

participation. In particular, having access to social participation opportunities in the natural

environment that can help create social connections and increase older adults' sense of

community (Lewis 1992, as cited in Pillemer et al., 2010). Creating opportunities for civic

engagement in the community can be critically important in helping sustainability efforts as

described by Pillemer (2016).

As Pillemer (2016) states, there is more research to be done that focuses on the

motivations for engagement and the potential benefits for both older people and the community

and the current barriers to participation. More research needs to focus on the barriers to social

participation as a whole for a community, as well as individual sectors like the environment.

Haq, Brown and Hards (2010) focus on the importance of public engagement, which is "critical

to implementing policies to tackle climate change and to address the needs of an aging

population."

Communication and Information

"Older adults knowledge of the local environment, its vulnerabilities and how the community has

responded in the past allows them to play a key role in reducing the negative impact of climate

change related disasters" (Haq & Gutman, 2014)

"Age Friendly Report" describes communication and information as recognizing that

older adults have different ways than other populations for communication, thus communication

needs to be expressed through a variety of means (2015).   In order to increase participation for

older adults in the environmental movement they must make it accessible for all populations,

including all older adults in that community. The lack of awareness is also linked to accessibility

through ageism. Haq (2017) describes that it is difficult for older adults to access the appropriate

information to take action that are best suited to their personal, social or economic

circumstances. Considering the personal, social and economic circumstances is integral in order

to have inclusive engagement.

Looking at the Future

From the current research available, it is clear that the studies connecting older adults and

environmental issues are in the beginning phase. One of the main frameworks that needs to be

established is how to inform and educate a community to be inclusive and involve their older

adult in their initiatives to solve local environmental issues but to also be aware of their current

environmental policies in place that affect their older adult population. In order to create this framework, there needs to be a clearer understanding of the community wide effects that the environment plays on its community members, including the physical environment as well as environmental disasters and climate change. Recognizing the contributions that older adults can currently make in a community is integral to move forward in addressing social issues for any community. It will also be important to understand the barriers that older adults have in participation of these initiatives and acknowledging that they will be heavily impacted from environmental changes, and many more, and incorporating their voice will be integral to make changes in a community.

Project Plan

Situation Statement

There is a lack of involvement of older adults in environmental issues that is caused by the lack of inclusion and awareness, stemming from ageism and a lack of age friendly initiatives in the community and environmental organizations.

Project Goals

The goals for this project include:

- **Creating Awareness:** Creating a space for older adults in Beverly to learn about environmental initiatives.

- **Engaging Older Adults:** Creating a space for dialogue that allows a conversation about local environmental issues and initiatives in Beverly, a space to address Beverly older adults' role and participation on environmental issues.

- **Empowering Older Adults:** Giving an opportunity for Beverly older adults to express their concerns and ideas with local environmental organizations on the issues that they care about as well as providing a space to brainstorm next action steps.

- **Creating Inclusion:** The involvement of community partners, organizations and members creates an opportunity to learn more about older adult populations, alleviate biases and form partnerships to increase involvement and include older adults in their initiatives.

Target Audience and Stakeholders

Beverly Council on Aging Staff - BCOA staff will have a chance to learn of the environmental issues and initiatives that are affecting the population that they serve. This also gives them a chance to observe any biases that they may have regarding older adults taking action. They can also connect with other Beverly community partners to strengthen relationships and create partnerships.

Beverly Older Adults (residents 60 and up) - Beverly older adults will be given the opportunity to learn about the environmental issues that can potentially affect them, initiatives that they can take part in and develop an understanding of the impacts of ageism. They will hopefully leave with an understanding of information regarding local environmental issues, how ageism can impact what they are involved in, relationship building between community partners city official and empowerment to keep solving local issues.

Beverly Community (any person residing in Beverly or involved in Beverly issues) - this will serve as an opportunity to understand the local environmental issues in Beverly, develop an understanding of biases and ageism regarding older adults, as well as an opportunity for intergenerational relationships.

City Officials - City officials will be in integral part of the success of this

workshop. From their information, I hope to gather current environmental issues that Older

adults should be concerned about (addressing the gap of awareness), as well as starting a

conversation on initiatives that include the older adults taking action. City officials will also be

encouraged to attend the workshop so they can develop an understanding of biases and ageism

regarding older adults and hear the idea and action items that the older adults create.

- Mayor Cahill, Mayors Climate Action Agenda

- Robert Devel, Project Coordinator, Trash + Recycling, Marina Manager

- Amy Maxner, Environmental Planner

- Sharon Kishida, Northeast District Rep for the MassDEP. Even better, knowledge of
  Beverly issues and state-wide.

- Sue Higgins, current Chair of the City's Waste Reduction Committee.

- *Beverly Environmental Organizations:* Local environmental organizations will serve as
  the "experts" in the workshop. They will also be provided with an understanding of
  ageism and inclusivity in environmental organizations.

- Tidal Shift, plastic bag initiative

- Salem Soundwatch, water initiatives

- Black Earth Compost

- Beverly Recycle and Composting

Local experts - Local experts including professors and students studying various

environmental issues will be invited to partake in the workshop and discussions with the older

adults. They will be asked to help facilitate conversations and answer questions people may

have on environmental matters.

Craft a Clear Message

This workshop will provide an opportunity for older adults in Beverly to become more aware of environmental issues and initiatives happening in their community. This workshop will participants an opportunity to address the question "Who can make an impact?" and observe ageism and biases that older adult's face every day. From addressing these issues and observing the environmental issues that Beverly faces, older adults will be able to discuss with local environmental organizations and experts on the ideas that they have and the possibilities for action and partnership for the future.

Incentives

Stakeholder: Beverly older adults

Incentive: Awareness of environmental issues that will affect their community/environment

Incentive: A space to address ageism and how it affects older adults

Incentive: An opportunity to be heard, take action and create partnerships

Stakeholder: Beverly Council on Aging

Incentive: Opportunity to learn about the impacts that affect the population that they serve, including environmental impacts and effects of ageism

Incentive: Creating partnerships with local environmental organizations and fulfilling strategic plan goals of Beverly COA

Stakeholder: Beverly Community

Incentive: opportunity to understand the local environmental issues in Beverly

Incentive: develop an understanding of biases and ageism regarding older adults

Incentive: intergenerational partnerships and relationships

Stakeholder: City of Beverly

>Incentive: Sharing their knowledge of local environmental issues to inform and represent all of the populations that the city serves.

>Incentive: Increase knowledge ageism, biases and re-thinking how they can make initiatives more inclusive to all populations

Stakeholder: Environmental Organizations

>Incentive: forming relationships with Beverly older adults and potentially gaining more support and volunteer audience

>Incentive: Gaining a new perspective/potential expertise on ideas on addressing environmental issues that they are tackling

>Incentive: Advertisement of organization

>Incentive: Increase knowledge ageism, biases and re-thinking how they can make initiatives more inclusive to all populations

Stakeholder: Students

>Incentive: An opportunity to learn about environmental issues affecting Beverly

>Incentive: An opportunity to learn about age friendly practices, their own ageism, and how to be inclusive to all community members

Stakeholder: Local Experts

>Incentive: an opportunity to use knowledge of expertise to impact and inspire action regarding the environmental field

Outreach Methods

- Email city officials to set up interview
- Gather information from city officials

- Email local environmental organizations to set up interview

- Gather information from environmental organizations

- Create agenda for workshop

- Post flyers in Beverly community

- Create Facebook event

- Create sign-up sheet at BCOA

- Information table at BCOA advertising and explaining workshop

- Information table at Public library advertising and explaining workshop

- Contact environmental organizations to participate in breakout sessions for workshop

- Contact local experts at Gordon College, Endicott College and Montseratt to participate in workshop.

- Use multiple Encounters Dialogue methods to create agenda for workshop

Responsibilities Chart

NAME	ORGANIZATION OR AFFILIATION	RESPONSIBILITIES	CONTACT INFORMATION
Meagan	BCOA	- Email city officials for interview - Create agenda for workshop - Market for event: @ BCOA, Beverly community - Verify date/time of event at BCOA - Finalize environmental organizations/ local experts participation in workshop	mriche@beverlyma.gov
Classmates	Merrimack	Help facilitate workshop	
Beverly Council on Aging Staff	BCOA	Provide space and advertisement for workshop	

NAME	ORGANIZATION OR AFFILIATION	RESPONSIBILITIES	CONTACT INFORMATION
Beverly Waste Reduction Committee	Beverly	Attend and bring outreach materials	
Full Circle Earth	Full Circle Earth.	Attend and bring outreach materials	

Tools and Measures to Assess Progress

- 15 pre-workshop survey submission (to determine environmental interest)

- 15 post-workshop survey

- 3 informative interviews with city officials

- 2 interviews with environmental organizations

- 3 action items formed from workshop

- 1 partnership formed with BCOA and environmental organization

- 5 older adults express that they would like to take further action on local environmental (or community) issues

- 5 community members expressing that they will adjust habits concerning ageism after workshops

- 5 older adults expressing that they would like to volunteer for an environmental organization

- 5 older adults expressing increased awareness of local environmental initiatives and awareness

Timeline

Task	Nov 1-9	Nov 9-16	Nov 16-30	Dec 1-8	Jan 1-4	Jan 7-11	Jan 14-18	Feb	Mar	Apr
Collect Survey	███									
Contact Community Partners		███								
Create project plan		███								
Finalize details for event				███						
Email city officials to schedule interview		███								
Email env. Orgs to schedule interview		███								
Plan approved by Jessica + Mary Ann		███								
Interviews Completed					███					
Finalize workshop date						███				
Marketing							███			
Confirm senior participation and partners							███			
Finalize agenda								███		
Hold Workshop									███	
Assess information									███	
Write outcomes										███

Logical Framework

Long Term outcomes

- Empowerment of older adults to take action on local community issues

- Sustaining partnership with BCOA and environmental organizations

- Making a change on environmental social justice issues

- Awareness of how environmental policies will affect older adults in Beverly

- Establishment of Senior Environmental Council

- City officials, organizations and community addressing ageism and implementing age friendly initiatives regarding environmental issues and beyond

Intermediate outcomes

- Making environmental lifestyle changes

- Older adults becoming involved in environmental efforts

Short term outcomes

- Better understanding of age friendly practices and ageism

- Better understanding of environmental issues in Beverly

- A space for older adults to meet with local environmental organizations

- A space for older adults to have their ideas heard

- Senior empowerment

Methodology

The main target for my capstone, "Brunch and Learn: Older adults Taking Action on Environmental Initiatives" are Beverly older adults, city leaders and environmental organization leaders. Currently, there is a gap between older adults being interested and caring about the

environment in Beverly but not being involved in environmental initiatives. This project

provided a space to encourage civic action on environmental issues for older adults and a space

to provide learning on current environmental initiatives in Beverly.

Participants

The age demographics of this workshop represented the diverse ages that are included

under "older adults". The majority of participants were 65-85, with representation from mainly

65-74 (43.7%) and 75-84 (37.5%).

Materials

The materials I will be using for my workshop include a post-workshop survey. This

survey will be integral in identifying if the workshop objectives were met for both older adults

and community partners. There will be two surveys, one for senior attendees and one for

community partners. These surveys will be passed out at 11:50, which is last ten remaining

minutes of the workshop. It will be integral to include the surveys during the workshop and not

after, so as many participants fill out the survey as possible. Surveys will be distributed by

volunteers and myself during the announced time. Those distributing surveys will ask if they are

an attendee or a community partner so they are given the correct survey. Survey questions for the

attendees will gage interest in if they felt like they were able to participate and if because of this

workshop they are more interested in addressing or being involved in environmental issues.

Surveys for attendees will also address the most impactful pieces of the workshop and

suggestions for improvement. For the community partners, this survey will address if they

learned anything about older adult involvement in environmental issues and if this workshop will

affect their involvement with older adults for volunteering, outreach or participation for

programming. There will also be an option to see if they would like to implement any of the

suggestions from the workshop, as well as room for suggestions.

Procedure

In October of 2018 I distributed an interest survey at Beverly Council on Aging

pertaining to questions regarding older adults' interest in environmental issues in Beverly and if

they would be interested in an educational workshop. For the participants who expressed interest

in participating I emailed them confirming the date, time and location of my workshop. To reach

a broader audience I posted my event in BCOA's monthly newsletter, the Garden City Courier

and distributed a sign-up sheet on our front desk where our monthly activities are showcased. In

addition, with my position as a Community Engagement Fellow at Beverly Council on Aging

and being a member of Beverly Resource Group, I was able to advertise my event to community

members and city leaders. To gain participation of environmental organizations, I contacted all

environmental organizations in Beverly to see if they would like to participate as a community

partner. Incentives to attend the workshop include a free brunch, opportunities to learn about

environmental initiatives and an opportunity to brainstorm ideas and solutions to environmental

issues in Beverly. For community members and participating organizations, incentives include

opportunities to gain volunteers, participants or supporters of their program, an opportunity to

market their programs, as well as interacting with new community members.

This workshop will address a few key issues including senior engagement in

environmental issues and agency that older adults have in being informed and participating in

environmental issues. These issues are rooted in ageism and can be addressed with increasing

civic engagement of older adults and age friendly practices of city leaders and organizations. In

order to address these important issues, "Brunch and Learn: Older adults Taking Action on

Environmental Issues" will provide a space to address some of the issues surrounding senior

engagement, as well as an opportunity to brainstorm ideas and solutions for environmental issues

in Beverly. In order for attendees to begin to meet each other and to get people moving, I will

start off with an icebreaker, "Find Someone Who". These questions will pertain to fun and

simple objectives pertaining to Beverly and basic environmentally-friendly lifestyles such as

"find someone who loves to go to Beverly beaches" or "find someone who recycles at home". To

begin introducing senior engagement and civic action, I will show a video of Elders Climate

Action Group and what they do as an environmental advocacy group for older adults. Next, there

will be activity called "Myths vs. Facts" which will highlight the benefits of older adults

engaging in environmental volunteering and being involved in initiatives. From these two, short

activities I will provide my first round of group reflection questions. These questions will

address their ideas on senior engagement and what surprised them about the video and activity.

This will hopefully begin conversations around senior civic action and the benefits. The next

portion of the workshop will be introducing the current initiatives in Beverly with the

participating community partners. After a quick introduction of the current environmental

initiatives in Beverly, it will be each groups turn to address what they think should be happening.

I will prompt each group to find one issue that they think is important to address. After each

group has decided which issue they would like to address, they will present to the attendees. The

next session will give the groups an opportunity to find ideas for solutions. Each group will

present their solution and will be turned in to me. Surveys will then be given out to conclude the

workshop. I hope this workshop will give older adults the agency to create ideas to solve issues

and an opportunity to inspire next action steps in environmental issues in Beverly.

Results

Demographics

On March 12, 2019 there were 22 participants for "Brunch and Learn: Older adults Taking Action on Environmental Issues" and 4 community partner participants present. The survey completion rate resulted in 17 of the 22 participants completing a survey, resulting in a 77% response rate for participants. Four out of 4 community partner members completed a survey, resulting in a 100% response rate. Eighty-two percent of participants answered the question of race, resulting in 100% of participants being white Caucasian and 100% of the community partners were white/Caucasian. Attendees were asked to identify their age; with a 94% response rate, we were able to clearly identify the age representation of this workshop. Around 43.7% participants identified with the age range 65-74, 37.5% of participants identified as 75-85 age range, 12.5% participants identified with the age range 85 and older and 6.25% participant identified with 55-64. The majority of participants were between the ages of 65-85.

Figure 1: Participant Age Breakdown
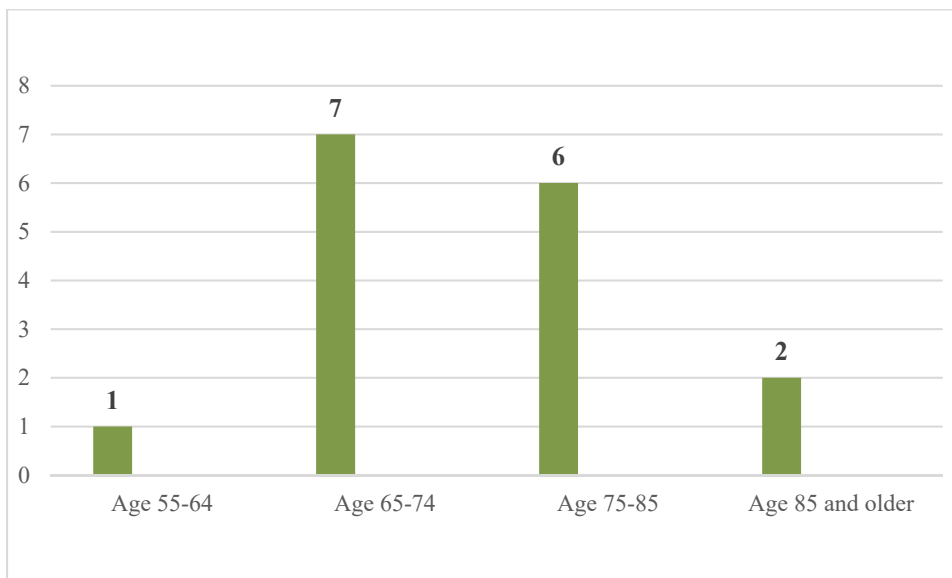
Fifty percent of the community partner participants were age 55-64 and 50% were 65 and older. Participants and community partners were given the choices of how they defined their gender; Male, Female, Trans or Non-binary or Other. All (100%) of the community partners were females. Eighty-eight percent of participants responded resulting in 80% female participants and 20% male participants. The majority of participants, in addition to the community partner participants were female majority.

Participant Survey Findings

For the first portion of the evaluation, participants were asked to rate the intensity of agreement using the following scale; strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. The responses of participants varied with each question. The content of each question reflected the objectives of this workshop which were aimed to create awareness, engage older adults, empower older adults and create inclusion Overall, the project was well received and 82.3% of participant responded to "Overall, how would you rate this workshop?". The workshop received a 3.6 out of 4 rating. The participants also stated that they were interested in the topics covered in the workshop.

Approximately 82% of participants answered, "I felt like my opinions/ideas were heard today" and rated it a 3.36 out of 4. Participants were asked if, from the result of this workshop, "I feel like I have something to contribute to environmental discussions" which received a 3.6 out of 4 rating. Overwhelmingly, participants either strongly agreed or agreed that there is a place for older adults in environmental issues. Eight-eight percent of participants responded to whether they know who to "reach out to if they want to get involved with environmental issues". This resulted in a response of 3.2 out of 4, 20% of respondents stating that they disagreed that this was possible.

All (100%) of the participant respondents stated that they either strongly agreed or agreed that they would be "interested in learning more about environmental issues" with a rating of 3.65 out of 4.

Figure 2: Participant Interest in Environmental Issues
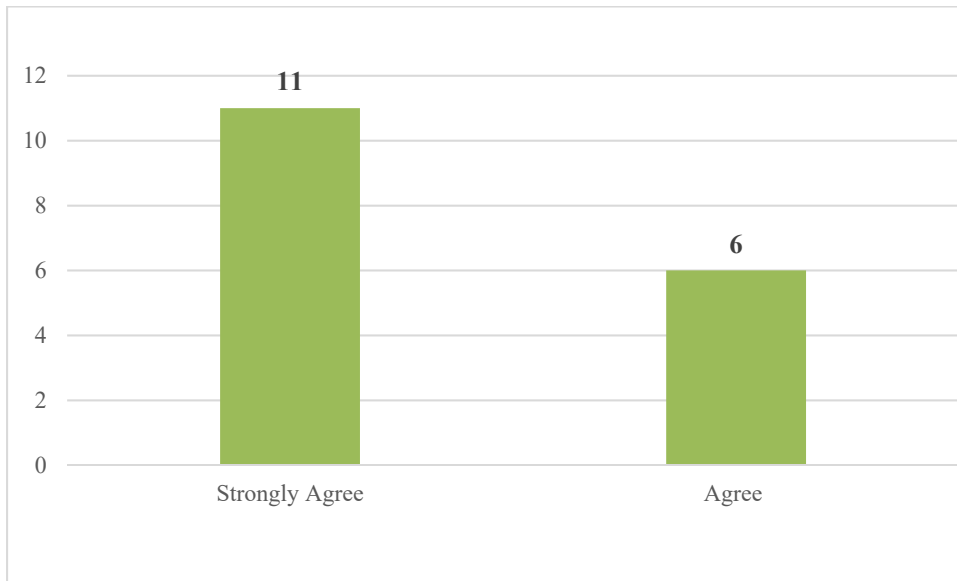
About 82% of participants responded that after this workshop, they would "be interested in volunteering or working with an environmental agency" resulting in a 3.5 out of 4 rating.

Figure 3: Participant Interest in Working with an Environmental Agency
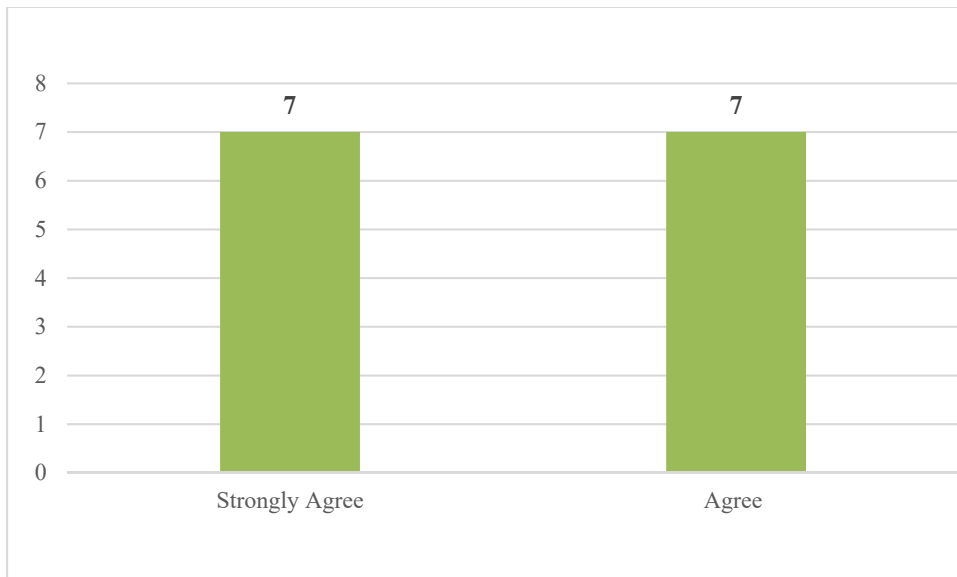
To gauge the interests of participants joining and creating an environmental organization at Beverly Council on Aging, participants were asked if they "would join an environmental justice group at Beverly Council on Aging" and "I would help start an environmental justice group at Beverly Council on Aging". These questions had a lower participation rate, resulting in 64.7% of participants responding if they would join an environmental justice group and 70.5% of participants responding if they assist in starting an environmental justice group. Joining an environmental justice group at BCOA received a 3.55 out of 4 rating, while helping to start an environmental justice group received a 3.08 rating.

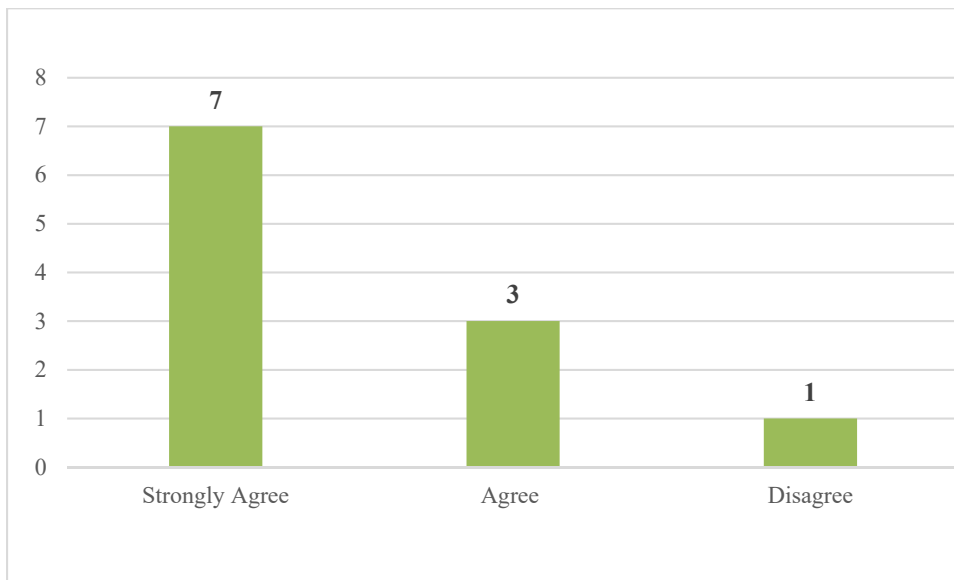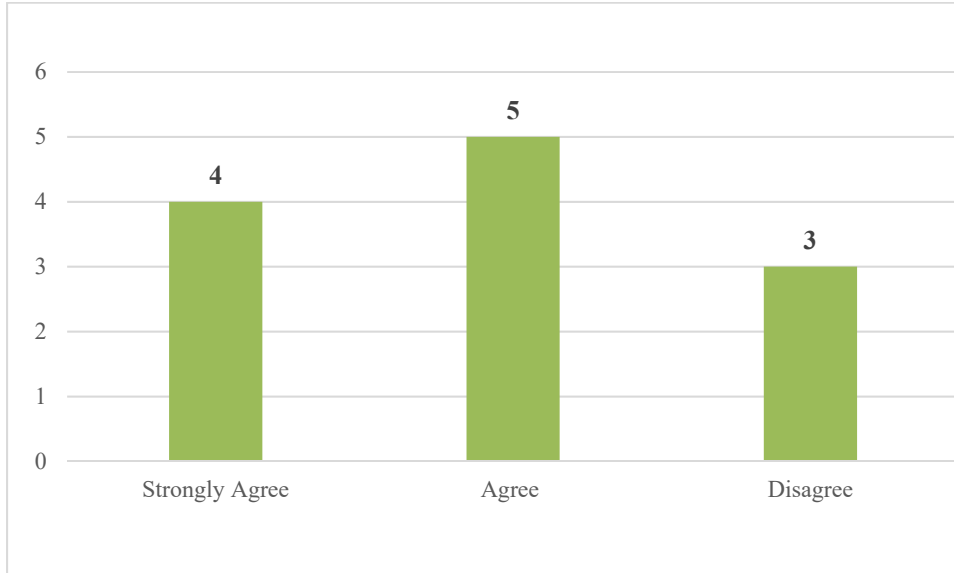*Figure 4: Participant Would Join Group at BCOA*

Figure 5: Participant Would Start Group at BCOA

Beverly older adults were asked to identify which environmental issues they were concerned about, in order to begin to understand where future efforts should be directed. Participants were given the choice to choose up to three environmental issues that they consider the most important. The options were as followed; air pollution, biodiversity/loss of animals, climate change, energy issues/clean energy, global warming, ground pollution, household and industrial waste, land use/conservation, recycling, trash/litter, water pollution and other. Out of a participant response rate of 88.2%, overwhelmingly, climate change, water pollution and recycling were issues that participants considered the most important environmental issues.

Figure 6: Participants Interest in Environmental Issues
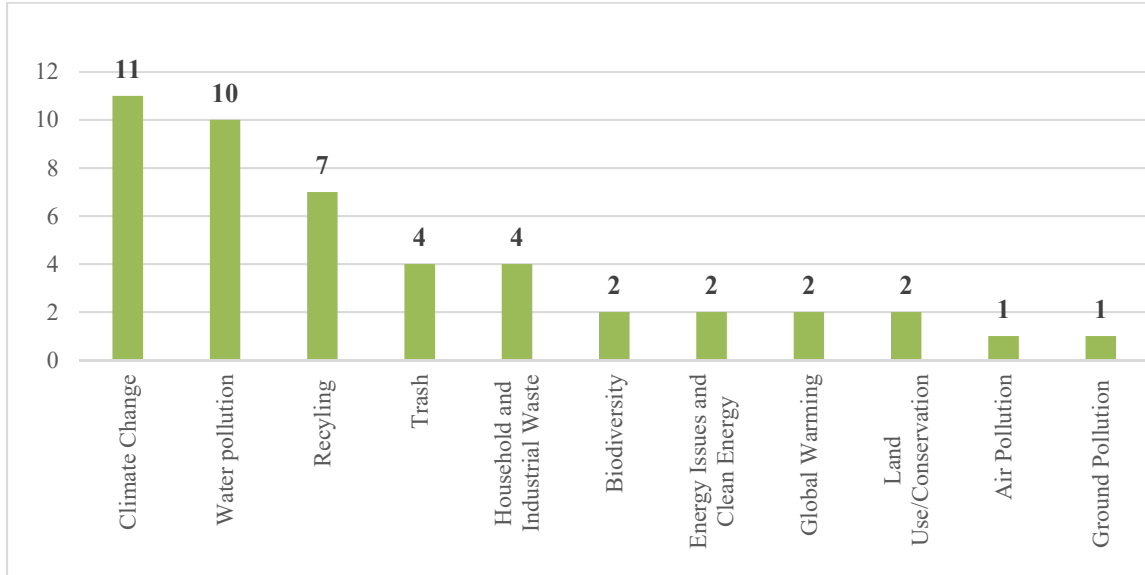
The final section of the evaluation addressed their learning experience from this

workshop, what types of activities that they would like to be involved in, what was their most

impactful piece of the workshop and how could the workshop be improved. Sixty-four percent of

participants, responded to "as a result of attending this workshop, did you learn about an

initiative, issue or organization you did not know about prior to the workshop?". The vast

majority (90%) of respondents to this question stated that yes, they did learn about an initiative,

issue or organization that they did not know of prior to the workshop. In particularly, 30%

expressed that they learned about the community partner that was present at the workshop.

Forty-one percent of participants responded to the type of activity or volunteering that they

would be interested in doing for environmental organizations. About 28.5% of participants stated

that they would like to work with one of the community partners present and 71.4% stated that

would be interested in general volunteering.

About 70.5% participants responded to "What was the most impactful or interesting piece of this workshop for you?" Approximately 41.6% respondents expressed that they had an impactful experience with a portion of the workshop that consisted of a presentation on what could be recycled and what could not be recycled that was presented by one of our community partners. Other responses included participating in a group workshop, getting to know other people in the community and the opportunity to meet community partners as an impactful experience from the workshop. Sixty-four percent of the participants responded to how this workshop could be improved, giving valuable information for the future of creating and implementing workshops concerning older adults and environmental initiatives. Thirty-six percent of respondents expressed developing opportunities for action steps on the issues talked about at the workshop. Other improvements included changes in the environment, such as smaller rooms so the "exchange of ideas" would be easier, as well as having more people involved. Another suggestion stated to be sure that there are inclusive icebreakers.

Community Partner Survey Findings

A separate survey was distributed to community partners to find out more information regarding their current involvement with older adults and their perception of older adults in environmental issues. For the first portion of the evaluation, participants were asked to rate the intensity of agreement using the following scale; strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. Community partner participants were 4 people and 100% of this group answered the majority of the evaluation questions. Community partner members rated this workshop a 3.75 out of 4.

Community partners were asked to identify a response to "topics today were interesting to me" which responded in 100% of participants starting they strongly agreed. One hundred

percent of community partners strongly agreed that ideas heard at the workshop were exciting or

interesting. Regarding community participant learning towards older adults concerns regarding

environmental issues, it received a 3.75 out of 4 rating. One hundred percent of community

partners strongly agreed or agreed that there are biases towards senior participation in

environmental issues.

Figure 7: Biases Towards Older Adults in Environmental Issues
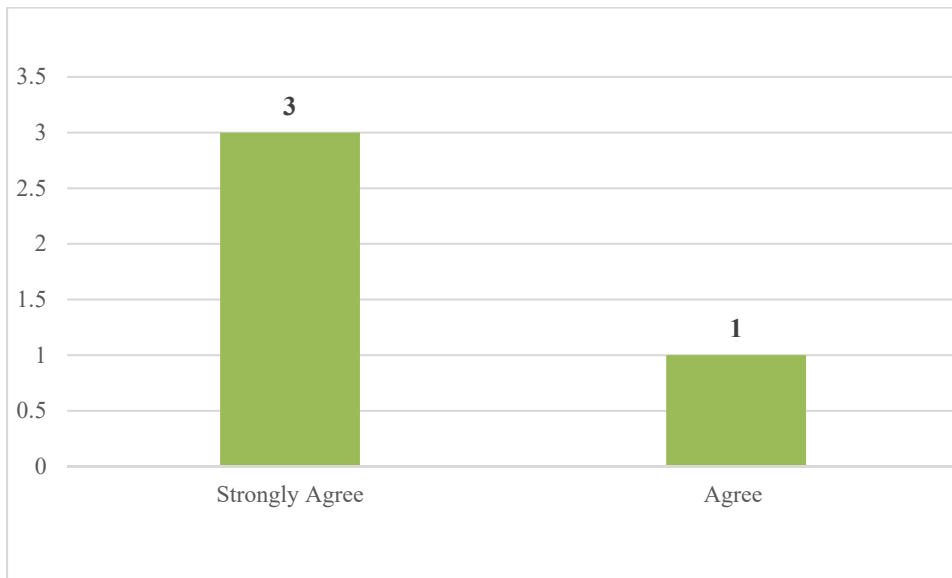
All four of the community partner participants stated that they feel that older adults "have

something to contribute to the environmental justice field". All of the community partner

participants stated that they hope to engage older adults in their initiatives.

In an effort to understand the community partner's current provisions for senior

volunteers and an effort to understand if there would be limitations to senior involvement it was

asked which provisions were made for senior volunteers. Seventy-five percent of participants

answered this question which resulted in all stating that they had accessible location that meets

ADA requirements, range of volunteer jobs and tasks for a variety of abilities and interests and

daytime activities. Around 66.6% participants responded that they had provisions for transportation when needed. Yet, when asked what percentage of volunteer involvement of older adults the percentages were a lot lower. All respondents answered but each with a different answer. Responses included "0%- but we are working on it!", "3%", "50%" and one community partner participant stated that they did not know.

The final portion of the evaluation observed if they would want to implement any of the ideas or suggestions that were brought up in the group work, what was the most impactful portion of the work and how could the workshop be improved. Seventy-five percent of community partner participants answered each of these questions. Wanting to implement any ideas from this workshop were overwhelmingly positive, stating that yes, they would want to implement the ideas discussed from the workshop. One-hundred percent of the respondents who answered stated that the most impactful portion of this workshop was senior engagement.

Discussion

The inspiration and intentionality behind creating this workshop was to observe the systems of society that create a lack of inclusion and awareness for older adults to participate in environmental issues, which recognizes the root of ageism as a major participant in this system. The lack of age friendly initiatives at the local level is a key factor in creating this system of exclusion and unawareness. Reflecting on the data of this workshop, it can be concluded that ageism, in the form of biases and stereotypes has the potential to impact senior's access to environmental initiatives. Yet, older adults are engaged and ready to participate, learn and take action on local environmental issues. Having access to education and awareness for older adults is integral to be establish a community that is representative of their community needs. In

addition, if a community wants to make changes and take action regarding environmental issues,

older adults will be key actors. Opportunities for older adults to take action need to be

established on a local level, including city and organizational levels. In order for this to be done,

establishing action and policies for age friendly communities will need to take place. This also

includes recognizing and showing support for policies and actions already in place that are

supporting age friendly initiatives. From this workshop it can be concluded that, providing

spaces and opportunities for awareness and action to take place is something that has been

identified as having an impact on older adults and environmental initiatives. If given the proper

resources and support, older adults are ready to take action and be engaged on solving the

solutions of local environmental issues, that have the potential to make an impact on the

environmental injustice issues facing much of the world.

Older adults Participation in Environmental Initiatives

With a high participation of "older adults" in the workshop, it contrasts what people

typically seem to identify as agents of change for environmental issues. This reflects an accurate

representation of the diverse range of ages that partake in initiatives to address environmental

issues. With this data, it can be concluded that organizations who are looking for volunteers and

community member's involvement, that they should extend targeting outreach to ages 65-84.

The participation of older adults with the community partners that were present created

an opportunity for community partners to understand older adult's roles and involvement in the

community. It needs to be noted that there were two community partners present, therefore not

entirely representative of other environmental organization's involvement of older adults in the

community. The range of answers from community partners with senior participation were

relatively low yet the majority of community partners met the ADA requirements to have senior

involvement. With the accessibility of having older adults participate in their programs, we need

to ask the community "why aren't there more older adults involved?" As a result of this

workshop, 100% of the community partners agreed that they hope to engage older adults more in

their initiatives. Therefore, it can be suggested that hosting workshops and involving community

partners and older adults can create more opportunities for older adults to be involved in

environmental initiatives.

Older adults' perception of participation is also important to observe. The majority of

participants stated that they agreed that they would like to be more involved with volunteering

with an environmental organization. It is important to note that nationally, there is little

participation of older adults in environmental organizations, despite their interest. There are as

little as 15% of older adults who are involved in environmental activities (Survey Research

Institute, 2008 as cited in Frumkin, Fried & Moody, 2012). It can be concluded that finding

ways to increase involvement are needed. From this data, we can suggest that workshops like

this create opportunities for older adults to want to be more involved.

Ageism: Perpetrated through Stereotypes and Biases

Ageism is rooted in many of the systems that we have in place in our society. Older

adults' involvement in environmental initiatives is not exempt. When the community partners

were asked what the most impactful portion of the workshop, 100% of the responses concluded

that the engagement of older adults was the most impactful. These included responses such as

"How engaged this audience is!", "Meeting people who are experienced, knowledgeable and

want to contribute their skills" and "a lot of ideas, older adults were very engaged". With the

impact and surprise of older adults being involved and knowledgeable of environmental issues,

we can begin to unpack the biases associated with senior's roles and capabilities. This aligns

with Hagestad, Gunhild and Uhlenbery (2005) who state that society constructs age being matched with certain roles, in particular their "level of capabilities that are determined by age". Despite biases and stereotypes, older adults should still have "access to participate and contribute" (Angus & Reeve, 2006). Symbolic interactionism demonstrates how biases and stereotypes have the potential to affect senior's sense of identity from others who view them as less valuable or capable because of their age, which therefore limits senior's contribution to society. We as a society have the opportunity to constantly reshape, reorganize and reconstruct how we view certain groups of people. Given that the community partners acknowledged how engaged the older adults who attended this workshop were, hopefully this will provide an opportunity to re-adjust their current perceptions of older adults' involvement in environmental initiatives, as well as inform and encourage others to do the same. From this workshop, 100% of community partner respondents stated that they hope to engage more older adults in their efforts which will hopefully create more opportunities for older adults in the Beverly community. All of the community partner respondents also stated that they either strongly agreed or agreed that there are biases towards older adults regarding environmental initiatives. With more opportunities and options available from the community, there is a possibility that older adults perceived identity will begin to change to a more active and engaged role. From this workshop, I can conclude that there needs to be more awareness of how an organization's biases and stereotypes creates disadvantaged opportunities for older adults in their community. I also suggest that all organizations create spaces and opportunities to re-adjust biases and stereotypes of all community members to ensure they are doing their duty in providing opportunities for all community members.

Top Environmental Concerns

In order to have a clearer understanding of what environmental issues were of importance to Beverly older adults, the survey asked participants to state what environmental issues they were concerned about. Climate change was the issue that was rated first, with 11 responses. Research suggests that people have perceptions that become more conservative and are a "greedy geezer" as they increase in age (Frunkin, Fried & Moody, 2012) yet this data contrasts this society belief. This data reflects what current research suggests, which is the majority of all ages recognize that there is climate change and endorse taking actions to address climate change (Pews Research Center, 2016). In addition, providing an opportunity to formally ask older adults in a community what are their top environmental concerns can give institutions supporting older adults an idea of where to focus programming in the future.

Potential for Impact

Older adults vote in higher numbers and their attitude towards environmental issues matter (Frumkin, Fried & Moody, 2012). Older adults have the potential to create meaningful solutions and assist in some of the most pressing environmental issues that we face today. The data from this workshop concludes that the majority of older adults in attendance were interested in topics concerning environmental issues, were interested in learning more, as well as wanting to take action after the workshop. It is also important to note that the majority stated that they felt like they had something to contribute to the environmental movement. With all of these findings, it will be integral to make sure that there are opportunities for older adults to make the change that they want.

The responses received regarding what type of volunteering efforts with environmental organizations included working with community partners that were present, information

dissemination to the community and being involved in volunteering activities in general. With

one of the most frequent recommendations for the workshop being "more action workshops", it

is a clear indicator they older adults want and need more opportunities to be involved. Spreading

awareness that older adults want to make an impact and that they do have an impact will be

integral in solving some of our most pressing environmental issues.

Haq and Gutman (2014) stated, "senior's knowledge of the local environment, its

vulnerabilities and how the community has responded in the past allows them to play a key role

in reducing the negative impact of climate change related disasters". This expresses why

creating spaces for knowledge of the local environmental are so important. With the local

knowledge they received from this workshop they are now more capable to take action.

The data also unveiled that while older adults would be interested in joining an

environmental justice group at Beverly Council on Aging, they are much less likely to help start

one. This brings awareness of the importance of taking small steps and creating opportunities for

older adults. We need to focus our efforts on creating partnerships with community initiatives

already in place and forming those relationships. With enough exposure and interaction and

leadership, then maybe a group can be formed in the future. It is integral to remember that

creating a group and leaving older adults to create opportunities on their own is not the first step.

Community Partners Impact

Involving community partners in this workshop was one of the most impactful

components to this workshop. Not only did it positively affect the organizations outreach

towards older adults, but having the opportunity for older adults to become educated by the

community partners was one of their biggest takeaways. Creating awareness is one of the key

foundations in involving older adults in environmental issues or any community issue for that

matter. One barrier to becoming involved in environmental initiatives is the lack of sufficient

expertise or knowledge about environmental issues and being unaware of opportunities and how

they could be involved (Bushway et al., 2011, as cited in Pillemer et al., 2016). The data

received from this workshop clearly expressed how much of an impact awareness has had on the

senior participants. When asked what the most impactful portion of the workshop was, 41.6% of

participants stated that the presentation on what could and could not be recycled by a community

partner was the most impactful experience. This is just one easy way of how to spread awareness

which then creates opportunities for engagement. It is also important to note that even though the

awareness had such an impact on participants, when asked if they knew who to reach out to if

they want to get involved on environmental issues, it received a much lower rating (3.2 out of 4).

This is important when moving forward to note that while older adults appreciate the awareness

and find it impactful, there is still a lot more that needs to be done.

Awareness, Engagement, Empowerment and Inclusion

From this experience, it can be concluded that working under the framework of

awareness, engagement, empowerment and inclusion will address the needs of older adults to

participate in environmental issues, and succeed and combat the stereotypes associated with

becoming an older adult. I also argue that this framework can be compatible with other civic

engagement efforts, with the freedom to add and shape as you like but knowing each piece is

integral for overall success. Creating awareness and engagement reflects the opportunities of

education on environmental issues and initiatives that need to be provided to older adults. The

Age Friendly Report (2015) expressed the importance of providing communication that is

accessible to everyone. This workshop provided communication through welcome packets,

presentations and demonstrations. Providing access to older adults is the first step to

involvement in the community. Engagement combined with communication is the opportunity to

interact with community partners such as having the opportunity to meet them. I argue that

providing opportunities to older adults to take action is empowerment, giving opportunities that

motivate them to do more. Lastly, inclusion. Without inclusion, there cannot be empowerment.

Informing and educating a community to be inclusive and involve the senior populations is

integral for civic engagement to persist and thrive. Inclusion includes creating opportunities for

the community to interact with older adults and opportunities to re-adjust stereotypes like this

workshop has done.

Limitations

Involved in this project were two community partners who are working on environmental

initiatives but there are many more environmental initiatives that are going on in Beverly that

were not represented. The results of the data may have been different if more organizations were

represented.

One area that needs to be addressed is the racial representation in attendance at this

workshop which for those who identified were 100% white. This draws attention to the potential

barriers for participation of people of color in spaces such as senior centers and regarding

environmental issues. Thus, there needs to be an emphasis on the impact that not having

inclusion of people of color can affect this and accurate stories and participation.

Recommendations for Future or Similar Workshops and Research

This workshop provided the opportunities to create awareness and begin having those

conversations about engaging older adults in the environmental movement. This workshop and

these conversations created many opportunities to learn and progress to the next steps that need

to be taken at a local level and also in research endeavors. With this data we have a clearer idea

of the research that needs to be expanded and the models that need to be incorporated in to other communities. Recommendations include guidance for older adults, institutions who support older adults, community members, organizations and city departments. Each of these agents have a different role to play in this movement, which has been uncovered in this data.

Learning Opportunities

Creating opportunities for awareness and engagement are one of the top priorities for older adults and they need the support from institutions who support older adults, community members and partners, as well as the support from the city. Having an opportunity to have access to initiatives going on in a community to all populations should be one of the first priorities of the city and organizations working on that initiative. For advocates and institutions who support older adults, it is your duty to understand the role that the environmental has on your population and ways in which you can help them to understand and become aware.

Senior Centers / Organizations Representing Older adults

It will be imperative for organizations representing older adults to provide opportunities to find out where their interests lie and what is important to their community. Many times, these wider environmental issues reflect local issues as well. For example, the Beverly community is a coastal community so it is no surprise that climate change and water pollution are the two top concerns. Both of these affect the environment. With the knowledge of what environmental issues your community is concerned about, it is then recommended to create community partnerships that coordinate with the needs expressed by the older adults.

One recommendation that needs to be taken in to consideration is adding on a second workshop for more action-focused activities or creating opportunities to take action such as an advocacy day or work related to that issue. For the Beverly community and the results collected

from this data, an appropriate group to partner with would be Elders Climate Action Group of

Boston. Creating a space that allows staff to know where they should put their efforts in is

integral but taking action based off of these recommendations will be even more important to

create change.

Community Partners

With such an impactful experience with involving community partners, programs in the

future should utilize and maximize the participation of community partners. Creating

partnerships with environmental organizations and community partners will ensure an increase in

civic participation of older adults if awareness of biases and advocating to distinguish the

different capabilities of older adults.

Workshop Logistics

Of the recommendations gathered from this workshop, ideas were gathered on logistics of the

workshop. In addition, for future workshops, extending a wider invitation to more community

members will be integral in having a representative community present at the workshop. This

could be done by extending invitations to other formal organizations such as churches,

universities, and senior housing. Inclusivity was also brought up, making sure than activities and

icebreakers will be accessible to all members of the group.

Future Research

The conclusions that we were able to make based off of one workshop is minimal and

shows the research and work that needs to continue to happen. One area that needs to be

expanded on is the impact that environmental issues has on minority communities. Creating the

link between minority communities, environmental injustice and how inclusion of all community

members to take action on environmental issues can begin to alleviate injustices done to

communities. Further research on programming to alleviate ageist biases towards older adults will be integral in creating age friendly communities. Further research needs to focus on how we can support environmental organizations in extending outreach and participation to older adults.

Conclusion

From this workshop I can conclude that informing, educating, and involving older adults in environmental initiatives does not have to be costly or complicated. Providing a space to be educated, encouragement to engage, opportunities to take action and alleviating barriers to succeed is the framework that communities can follow moving forward in establishing age friendly initiatives and increase participation for all age populations. With this data we can learn how to make progress towards future endeavors for age friendly communities, the social and civic engagement of older adults regarding environmental issues and beyond, inclusion from organizations and a progress toward addressing environmental issues that are disproportionately affecting people all over the world.

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Appendix A: Event Flyer

Appendix B: Event Agenda

9:00
Set Up

9:15
Registration Begins
Participants vote, "What environmental issue would you like to work on today?"

9:15 - 9:40
Brunch and Mingling

9:40 - 9:45
Intro

9:45 - 10:00
Icebreaker- Find Someone Who

10:00 - 10:15
Video and Small Group Discussion

10:15 - 10:30
Myth vs Facts Activity

10:30 - 10:50
Introduction of environmental initiatives in Beverly: Beverly Waste Reduction Committee and Full Circle Earth

10: 50 - 11:20
Group work: "What are some solutions/action items to address these environmental issues?"

11:20- 11:45
Group Feedback: each group summarizes their discussion and ideas
Questions

11:45
Surveys and closing remarks

Appendix C: Event Evaluation Form – Older Adults

Thank you for participating in this workshop. This post-event evaluation is being conducted as part of a student research capstone. The purpose of this evaluation is to gain your thoughts and opinions on the workshop. This evaluation should take no more than 5 minutes to complete. Please **DO NOT** write your name on the evaluation and all answers provided will be kept confidential.

First, please tell us your thoughts about the workshop:

1. Overall, how would you rate this workshop?
   ◯ Excellent   ◯ Good   ◯ Fair   ◯ Poor

Please respond to the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2. The topics discussed today were interesting to me	◯	◯	◯	◯
3. I felt that my opinions / ideas were heard today	◯	◯	◯	◯
4. I feel like I have something to contribute to environmental discussions	◯	◯	◯	◯
5. I feel like there is a place for seniors in environmental issues	◯	◯	◯	◯
6. I know who to reach out to if I want to get involved with environmental issues	◯	◯	◯	◯
7. I would be interested in learning more environmental issues	◯	◯	◯	◯
8. I would be interested in volunteering or working with an environmental agency	◯	◯	◯	◯
9. I would join an environmental justice group at Beverly Council on Aging	◯	◯	◯	◯
10. I would help start an environmental justice group at Beverly Council on Aging	◯	◯	◯	◯

11. Which **three** (3) issues do you consider the most important environmental issues? *Choose only 3.*

□ Air pollution   □ Household & industrial waste
□ Biodiversity / loss of animals   □ Land use / conservation
□ Climate change   □ Recycling
□ Energy issues / clean energy   □ Trash / litter
□ Global warming   □ Water pollution
□ Ground pollution   □ Other:
_____

12. As a result of attending this workshop, did you learn about an initiative, issue or organization that you did not know about prior to the workshop?

_____

13. What type of activity or volunteering effort would you like to do for an environmental organization?

_____

14. What was the most impactful or interesting piece of this workshop for you?

_____

15. How could the workshop be improved?

_____

Finally, please tell us a little bit about yourself:
16. What is your age?
○ Under 45
○ 45-54
○ 55-64
○ 65-74
○ 75-84
○ 85 and older

17. How do you define your gender? *Check all that apply.*
□ Male
□ Female
□ Trans or Non-binary
□ Other: _____

18. Which categories describe you? *Check all that apply*.
  □ Caucasian / White
  □ Hispanic / Latino / Latina / Spanish Origin
  □ Black / African American
  □ Asian
  □ American Indian / Alaskan Native
  □ Middle Eastern / North African
  □ Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
  □ Other (not listed)

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this post-event evaluation. Your responses will help our research and give us insight into developing and promoting future workshops. Please put your completed evaluation in the designated spot.

Appendix D: Event Evaluation Form – Environmental Organizations

Thank you for participating in the _____ Workshop. This post-event evaluation is being conducted as part of a student research capstone. The purpose of this evaluation is to gain your thoughts and opinions on the workshop. This evaluation should take no more than 5 minutes to complete. Please **DO NOT** write your name on the evaluation and all answers provided will be kept confidential.

First, please tell us your thoughts about the workshop:

1. Overall, how would you rate this workshop?
   ◯ Excellent   ◯ Good   ◯ Fair   ◯ Poor

2. Currently, what percentage of your volunteers are seniors (aged 65 or older)?
   _____

3. Which of the following provision do you make for senior volunteers? *Check all that apply.*
   ☐ An accessible location that meets ADA requirements
   ☐ A range of volunteer jobs and tasks for a variety of abilities and interests
   ☐ Provisions for transportation when needed
   ☐ Daytime activities (given that some seniors are reluctant to drive after dark)

Please respond to the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. The topics discussed today were interesting to me	◯	◯	◯	◯
5. I heard some ideas today that were exciting or interesting	◯	◯	◯	◯
6. I learned a lot about seniors concerns regarding environmental issues	◯	◯	◯	◯
7. I feel that, in general, there are biases towards senior participation in environmental issues	◯	◯	◯	◯
8. I feel that seniors have something to contribute to the environmental justice field	◯	◯	◯	◯
9. After today, I will reach out to senior groups for possible volunteers	◯	◯	◯	◯

10. After today, I will connect with the Beverly Council on Aging for volunteers	○	○	○	○
11. After today, I hope to engage more seniors in our initiatives	○	○	○	○

12. As a result of attending this workshop, would you want to implement any of the ideas or suggestions brought up in the group work? Why or why not?

_____

_____

13. What was the most impactful or interesting piece of this workshop for you?

_____

_____

14. How could the workshop be improved?

_____

_____

Finally, please tell us a little bit about yourself:

15. What is your age?
   ○ Under 25
   ○ 25-34
   ○ 35-44
   ○ 45-54
   ○ 55-64
   ○ 65 and older

16. How do you define your gender? *Check all that apply.*
   ☐ Male
   ☐ Female
   ☐ Trans or Non-binary
   ☐ Other: _____

17. Which categories describe you? *Check all that apply*.
  - ☐ Caucasian / White
  - ☐ Hispanic / Latino / Latina / Spanish Origin
  - ☐ Black / African American
  - ☐ Asian
  - ☐ American Indian / Alaskan Native
  - ☐ Middle Eastern / North African
  - ☐ Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
  - ☐ Other (not listed)

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this post-event evaluation. Your responses will help our research and give us insight into developing and promoting future workshops. Please put your completed evaluation in the designated spot.