

Purpose and Goals. This project aims to engage older adults living in Ferguson and nearby communities to 1) document their experiences over the past nine months in relation to community protests and subsequent developments following Michael Brown's death; 2) describe how they understand these events in the context of their entire lives; 3) identify, from their perspective, strategies to improve their lives and their communities; and 4) learn how these older adults might be involved in advancing these efforts.

The ultimate goal of this developmental project is two-fold. First, this work will produce important insights about the experiences of older residents which will lead to larger studies addressing the impact of community unrest on the well-being of the older residents; cumulative disadvantage and later-life disparities; the resilience of older adults; and the potential of engaging the human capital of older adults in community development and intergenerational efforts. Second, this work will lead to interventions in the northern part of St. Louis County to ensure the inclusion of older adults in community-wide initiatives as well as strengthen the safety net for vulnerable older adults in the area.

Significance and Innovation. This proposed formative research and the longer-term agenda is significant in its focus on older adults, age 65 years and above, a largely overlooked population in recent community events. Older adults over 65 currently make up 15% of St. Louis County's population and 10-15% of Ferguson's population.¹ Based on the number of Baby Boomers in the County, population aging will continue to increase as Boomers reach 65 years. In addition, many disparities exist among older adults in these communities. Within Ferguson alone, rates of older adults living below poverty can range from less than 10% in some areas to up to 39% in others. Population aging and later life disparities are very relevant to sustainable urbanism.

This work is innovative in its perspective that these residents have much experience and commitment to contribute to community development efforts. This work builds on conceptual frameworks of successful aging,² productive aging,³ and age-friendly communities.⁴ All of these frameworks posit that the civic engagement of older adults is important for the health of the community as well as older adults themselves.

Partners. This project includes two academic institutions and three large community organizations, represented by the seven participants listed in this proposal. Gerontologists from Washington University (Nancy Morrow-Howell & Stephanie Herbers) and University of Missouri-St. Louis (Tom Meuser) bring expertise on aging, the older population, and research methods. Mid-East Area Agency on Aging (Mary Schaefer) represents aging services available to older residents. In addition, this project will be enhanced by the participation of urban planners from St. Louis County's Successful Aging initiative (Lori Fiegel and Justin Carney) and a community development expert from Better Family Life (Connie Wilson). These individuals will form the initial team. However, this team will grow over time to include other stakeholders. Specifically, two to three older residents in the Ferguson area will be added to help shape this work. Students at both the undergraduate and graduate level from WUSTL and UMSL will also be involved.

Methodology. To successfully engage older adults in Ferguson and nearby communities, we must fully understand the demographic profile of the older population, the current work of health and social agencies serving older residents, and existing efforts by the many community organizations currently involved in supporting change in the community. Thus, the first phase of the project will be 1) review existing data on older residents to ascertain demographics, health and social realities; and 2) review current efforts by health and social services agencies and other community organizations to ascertain how older adults are currently involved. A user-friendly summary report will be produced to provide background information to residents and other stakeholders as we move to the second phase—hearing from older residents via small groups in community settings and one-to-one meetings in homes as needed. In phase three, the information and ideas gained from these residents will be used by the project team to shape longer-term efforts that involve older adults in on-going and perhaps new community development efforts as well as strengthen the aging service network in these communities.

This table overviews the methods and timetable associated with these three phases.

	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Sources of data</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
Phase 1: Understand the current situation in regards to older adults living in Ferguson and nearby communities <i>(Months 1-3)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect all available demographic, health, and social information • Organize discussions on current services available • Document how older adults are currently involved in or affected by area initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing reports (e.g., <i>Aging Successfully in St. Louis County</i>,¹ <i>For the Sake of All</i>,⁵ <i>Older Adult Health Disparities in Missouri</i>⁶) • Aging network service staff serving older adults • Representatives from organizations currently working in this area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A user-friendly report that will be provided to all stakeholders and will guide subsequent activities
Phase 2: Engage the older adults residing in Ferguson and nearby communities <i>(Months 4-10)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene multiple small group meetings to engage older residents in organized discussions • Conduct in-home interviews as necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50-100 adults over the age of 65 living in the identified geographic area <p><i>(sample size will depend on amount of money awarded)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A summary of findings to present to stakeholders • A publishable manuscript
Phase 3: Develop longer term strategies in research and community action <i>(Months 11-12)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with team members and older residents to determine next steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports from Phases 1 & 2 • At least 10 older residents • All project team members and interested stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 larger studies identified, with a plan for grant writing • Recommendations for inclusion of older adults in community-wide efforts and safety net for vulnerable older residents

¹ St. Louis County Department of Planning (2014). *Aging Successfully in St. Louis County: A Quality of Life Assessment*. www.stlouisco.com/agefriendly

² Rowe, J. & Kahn, R. (1999). *Successful Aging*. New York: Random House.

³ Morrow-Howell, N., Hinterlong, J., & Sherraden, M. (2001). *Productive Aging*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

⁴ Scharlach, A. (2012). Creating aging-friendly communities in the United States. *Ageing International*, 37, 25-38. doi:10.1007/s12126-011-9140-1.

⁵ Washington University and Saint Louis University. (2014). *For the Sake of All: A Report on the Health and Wellbeing of African Americans in St. Louis and Why It Matters to Everyone*. <https://forthesakeofall.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/for-the-sake-of-all-report.pdf>

⁶ Missouri Foundation for Health. (2014). *Healthy Equity Series: Older Adult Health Disparities in Missouri*. <http://www.mffh.org/mm/files/Older%20Adult%20Health%20Disparities%20in%20MO.pdf>