

Background

- Older African Americans are significantly underrepresented in health-related research studies within the United States
- Past research atrocities contribute to older African Americans' underrepresentation in research; consequently, there is a need to understand successful recruitment strategies
- Limited empirical research explores why certain recruitment strategies are more effective than others
- There is minimal research focused on older African American adults' perspectives of the recruitment process
- In light of co-morbidities and high use of health care services in this population, participation in health-related research is necessary

Purpose

- To explore whether research recruiters' caring behaviors contribute to older adults' decision to enroll in a research study with high commitment (postmortem brain donation)
- To explore whether the effect of caring behavior on the decision to enroll varies by the participant's race (African American vs. non-Latinx White)

Theoretical Framework

Kristen Swanson's Middle-Range Theory of Caring: A situation-specific theory predicated on five non-mutually exclusive interpersonal processes (knowing, doing for, being with, enabling, maintaining belief)

Within these 5 processes, behaviors can be considered:

- **Caring:** displaying genuine sympathy for the individuals' well-being as the priority
- **Uncaring:** reflecting exploitation, impudence, and being devalued

Methods

Swanson's five caring processes illustrated in vignettes

Processes	Vignette Type	
	Caring	Uncaring
KNOWING Recruiter is an expert on the study	Linda takes the time to walk Ms. Smith through the brain gift process and answers all of her questions.	After a brief explanation, Linda ask Ms. Smith if she would sign a consent form today to gift her brain to the study when she dies.
DOING FOR Recruiter provides help on behalf of participant	Linda asks where she may set up her testing tools to begin the memory games. Ms. Smith points to the dining room table.	Linda walks in and places her testing tools on the table to begin the memory games.
BEING WITH Recruiter is authentically present and considerate	Linda arrives at Ms. Smith's home, states her name, and asks to come inside. Linda removes her shoes as she enters Ms. Smith's home.	Linda arrives at Ms. Smith's home and states her name as she walks into Ms. Smith's home.
ENABLING Recruiter facilitates warm engagement	Linda smiles and hands Ms. Smith a booklet that explains the steps of the brain gift program and the required family support	Linda walks out the door. As she leaves, she gives Ms. Smith a booklet about the study and doesn't explain what it is.
MAINTAINING BELIEF Recruiter is optimistically supportive	Linda says she knows it may be hard to make this choice alone and advises Ms. Smith to talk it over with trusted loved ones.	Ms. Smith asks for more time to think about it. Linda says okay without making eye contact with Ms. Smith as she put her testing tools away.

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Methods, contd.

Design

- Cross-sectional experimental study design
- Random assignment to one of two experimental conditions

Experimental Conditions

- A vignette simulating real-world recruitment scenario of a high-commitment research study involving brain donation
- Experimental manipulation involved behavior of the recruiter (caring or uncaring) according to Swanson's Middle-Range Theory of Caring

Sample

Inclusion Criteria:

- Currently enrolled in 1 of 3 NIH-funded Alzheimer's Disease studies
- Older adult (≥ 65)
- Self-identify as African American or non-Latinx White
- Not cognitively impaired

Random Selection:

From over 2,000 eligible individuals, 200 (100 African Americans; 100 non-Latinx Whites) were randomly selected to participate

Measures

- Demographics: age, gender, and education
- Participant Feedback Questionnaire - an author developed tool that assessed:
 - Participants' judgment of the vignette-recruiter's caring behavior (caring or uncaring) and
 - Whether participants were willing to make a higher commitment to the hypothetical research study (willing or unwilling)

Procedures & Data Collection

- An introductory letter, informed consent, the vignette, questionnaire, and the pre-addressed envelope were mailed via the USPS, and participants were given two weeks to respond
- After two weeks, non-respondents were called and given the opportunity to complete the questionnaire over the phone
- All responders were mailed a \$15 VISA gift card

Results

Participation

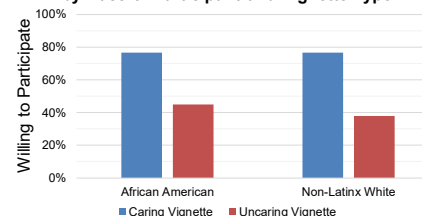
- Non-responders:
 - 11 (5.5%) deceased
 - 22 (11%) unable to contact
- Refusals: 47 (23.5%)
- Participants: 120 (60%)
 - Participants by mail: 83 (69.2%)
 - Participants by phone: 37 (30.8%)

Demographics

- African American n=60 | non-Latinx White n=60
- Predominately women (81.7%)
- In later life (mean age = 79.5 years ± 7.14) and
- Highly educated (>80% some college or graduate-level)

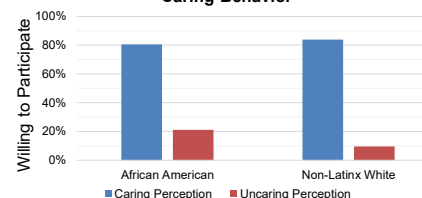
Results, contd.

Differences in Willingness to Participate by Race of Participant and Vignette Type

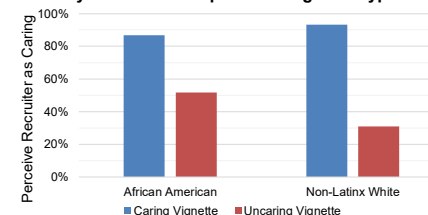


- African American and non-Latinx-White participants did not differ in their likelihood to perceive the recruiter as caring across vignette type (caring vs uncaring)
- Participants who received the caring vignette were more than twice as likely to perceive the recruiter as caring regardless of race ($p < .001$)
- Differences in the impact of vignette type (caring vs uncaring) on perceptions of the recruiter as caring did not differ between African American and non-Latinx-White participants ($p = .119$)

Differences in Willingness to Participate by Race of Participant and Perception of Caring Behavior



Differences in Perception of Caring by Race of Participant and Vignette Type



- Participants who perceived the recruiter as caring were more than five times as likely to agree to participate regardless of race ($p < .001$)
- Among those who perceived the recruiter as uncaring, African American participants were twice as likely to participate as non-Latinx White participants. Despite this difference, the impact of perceptions of the recruiter on willingness to participate did not differ significantly by race ($p = .294$)

Discussion

- This experimental study revealed that regardless of race, it is essential to be attuned to how research recruiters express caring recruitment approaches for older adults
- A more nuanced understanding of caring and uncaring behaviors may be warranted to employ appropriate recruitment approaches that target specific populations
- The experimental study sample may have been biased by participants' concurrent enrollment in NIH-funded studies. Trust and familiarity with positive recruitment experiences in the existing research studies may have influenced the participants' perspectives and their willingness to take part in the hypothetical study presented in the vignette

Conclusion

- When all five of Swanson's interpersonal processes are enacted throughout the recruitment process, it may enable research recruiters to be more intentional in their recruitment efforts. Recruiters who invest time in building strong relationships with participants and prioritize trust as a foundational premise can break down recruitment and enrollment barriers