

Lessons Learned and Possibilities Recognized: An Academic-Community Partnership to Engage Multicultural Populations During a Pandemic

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed multiple disparities; racial and ethnic minority groups experienced higher proportions of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. However, racial and ethnic minority populations are often underrepresented in traditional survey research. In a survey of the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 in a local area, we developed three distinct academic-community partnerships. We report these partnerships with particular focus on the partnership that promoted the inclusion of racially and ethnically minoritized multicultural populations in the survey. We describe each stage of the partnership, including survey design, translation, outreach and recruitment, results, and dissemination of results, and share the lessons learned, both in terms of academic-community partnerships and in surveying multicultural populations. Our lessons learned consist of four main themes: Outreach and recruitment is more labor-intensive with multicultural populations; the respondents in the targeted sample for this study differed from the general population in how they experienced the effects of COVID-19; researchers must be flexible and plan for more time and expenses; and academic-community partnerships are a valuable model for including traditionally hard-to-reach populations in research. A comparison of our survey reach to that of its corresponding representative survey affirms that our process was effective in recruiting a population that differed from the representative sample, both in terms of demographics and the severity of the pandemic's impact at the household level. Thus, additional efforts to reach multicultural and underrepresented populations are warranted, especially during a pandemic, and academic-community partnerships combine multiple areas of expertise to productively engage such populations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in millions of cases and deaths. Unfortunately, the burden of the pandemic was not equally distributed across geographical regions and subpopulations. In developed countries, including the United States, immigrants, migrants, and racialized groups experienced higher proportions of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in comparison to majority populations in the same settings (Aldridge et al., 2020; Coyer et al., 2021; Diaz et al., 2020; Strully et al., 2021). This disproportionate distribution was a result of several factors, including a higher burden of underlying conditions (National Research Council, 2004), more crowded living conditions, poverty, and a higher likelihood of being public-facing essential workers without the option of working remotely (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020).

Research during a pandemic should provide insight on outbreak management and control, describe the distribution and magnitude of the pandemic's effects, and provide information

on how to prevent future pandemics. These overarching objectives can be attained if research is conducted with representative samples that allow generalizability of the results (Allmark, 2004), yet racial and ethnic minority groups continue to be underrepresented in research and clinical trials (Camidge et al., 2021; Flores et al., 2021; Konkel, 2015; Pinsky et al., 2008). Successful recruitment and enrollment of racial and ethnic minority populations into research needs to confront several challenges, such as low research literacy, language barriers, mistrust of researchers and/or persons of authority, migration- and/or settlement-related stress, legal status, and limited participant resources including time, transportation, and childcare (Azuine & Ekejiuba, 2015; Bodewes & Kunst, 2016; Bonevski et al., 2014; Kerani et al., 2019; Khalil et al., 2020; Nazha et al., 2019).

Individuals who report discordance between a dominant or official language and a preferred language are more likely to experience poor social, economic, and health outcomes (Asanin & Wilson, 2008; Hsieh, 2016; Lor & Martinez, 2020).

Since multicultural individuals and migrants continue to be underrepresented in research, it is important to consider language diversity and preferences at multiple stages of research (Premji et al., 2020). Translating materials into multiple languages can be a laborious and costly exercise because languages may have different dialects and sometimes lack appropriate replacements to maintain meaning (Squires, 2009). Furthermore, self-administered surveys would have to consider participants' literacy levels; it is likely that one can speak and hear a language at high proficiency yet not write or read in the language. On the other hand, if surveys are interviewer-administered, interviewer positionality may influence their outcome (O'Muirheartaigh & Campanelli, 1998).

Some of the challenges associated with conducting research with racial and ethnic minority groups can be addressed through partnerships between academic institutions and community organizations (Redman, 2003; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). Community organizations are likely to have access to racial and ethnic minority populations and also be knowledgeable about the community. These partnerships can improve dissemination of research findings in contextually appropriate ways and improve the long-term relationship between the community and researchers, which can have a positive effect on community socioeconomic and health outcomes (Greenhalgh et al., 2016). In turn, data coming from specific local populations can help direct community organizations' initiatives.

Therefore, the objective of this paper is to describe an academic-community partnership that planned for, recruited, and enrolled multicultural populations into a study that aimed to identify and describe the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on Lancaster County, PA. By "multicultural," we specifically refer to individuals who, due to language preferences, immigration/refugee status, or other similar reasons, feel connected both to majority U.S. culture and a minority home culture. We recognize that other ethnic and racial minority groups in Lancaster County are also multicultural, but they are not the focus of this paper. In this paper, we outline the planning and implementation of our partnerships and the research project; discuss the adaptations, successes, and challenges; and share lessons learned.

Academic-Community Partnerships

From the conception to the completion of this project, three distinct phases of partnerships

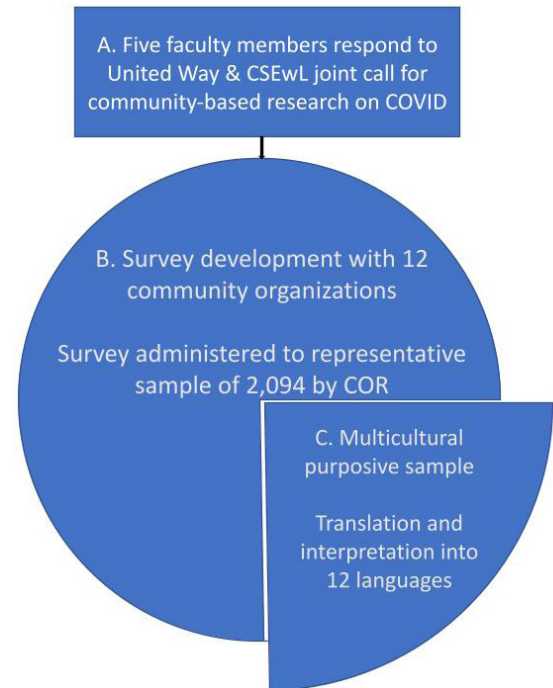
developed, each with a different goal. These partnerships are described below and are illustrated in Figure 1.

Partnership to Identify and Coalesce Resources and Skills to Address a Community Need

In May 2020, Franklin & Marshall College's Center for Sustained Engagement with Lancaster (CSEwL) announced a call for interested faculty to conduct COVID-19-related research projects in response to community-identified needs and in partnership with United Way of Lancaster County (UW). UW is a nonprofit organization that works to "help remove barriers for people by increasing nonprofit organizations' capacity to do good work ... so more people can live healthier, happier lives" (<https://www.uwlanc.org/AboutUs>). Franklin & Marshall College is a liberal arts college located in Lancaster County in Pennsylvania, United States. The CSEwL within the College, was created to "be a catalyst for change and connect engaged community members ... with the academic resources of F&M" (Franklin & Marshall in Lancaster, n.d.). CSEwL was funded by a grant from the Endeavor Foundation (2018–2023).

The first and fourth authors along with three other faculty members, all from varied academic disciplines (applied linguistics, economics,

Figure 1. The three academic-community partnerships critical for the project development and implementation.



epidemiology, political science, and sociology), responded to the call and met with both the director of CSEwL and the CEO of UW. Following the initial conversations, the five faculty members decided to work collaboratively to conduct a longitudinal survey to describe the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on Lancaster County residents.

After several meetings between UW, CSEwL, and the academic researchers, three salient points emerged from the conversations. First, researchers would design and conduct a project relevant to and of value to Lancaster County residents. Second, this work would be conducted in consultation with community organizations that provide services to Lancaster County residents. Finally, UW and CSEwL agreed to jointly fund the project.

Partnership to Develop the Data Collection Tool

UW and CSEwL introduced the researchers to representatives of various community organizations to learn about their needs, the needs of the communities they serve, and interests that the survey could potentially address. In addition, researchers reached out to community organizations in their social networks. The five researchers met with 12 local community organizations. Of particular relevance, Jessica Cox (JC) met with community organizations that teach English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes to adults. The researchers then constructed a survey that combined items and scales from previous research studies where possible; incorporated and constructed items based on conversations from community organization representatives; and wrote and piloted new items, where necessary. Topics included COVID-19 knowledge, perceptions, and behavior; childcare; job and income loss; employment; stress; demographics; and remote instruction of ESOL classes for adults.

Once the survey was developed, the researchers shared with the community organizations survey questions relevant to their services and/or recommended by them, if necessary. This allowed the researchers to verify the validity of the questions. Furthermore, the survey was piloted with a sample of 50 Lancaster County residents through Qualtrics. Once finalized, the survey was translated into Spanish by the Center for Opinion Research (COR) at Franklin & Marshall College. The survey and its administration protocol (described below) were approved by Franklin & Marshall

College's Institutional Review Board, and COR administered the survey to a representative sample of the county in English and Spanish.

Partnership to Promote the Inclusion of Racially and Ethnically Minoritized Populations in Research

Because of the population diversity of Lancaster, the researchers decided to ensure representation by facilitating survey administration in multiple languages and purposely recruiting multicultural participants. This was important to identify any unique impacts to specific populations in the county. Two of the five researchers (JC and Harriet Okatch [HO]) assumed responsibility for this part of the project and identified two community members to collaborate with (Amer Al Fayadh [AA] and Bruno Daniel González Cervera [BC]). Several elements were critical to the execution of this section of the project, which is the focus of this paper. We first describe the setting to clarify the need for this partnership. We then proceed to describe the positionalities of the four individuals who formed this partnership and consequently are the authors of this paper. Finally, we describe the processes of this project.

Place/Setting. Lancaster County has been called the “refugee capital” of the United States (Strasser, 2017). In 2015–2016, more than 750 refugees from 18 countries resettled in Lancaster County. Following that year, 1,275 refugees representing 25 countries were resettled in Lancaster and surrounding areas (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, n.d.). However, the state of Pennsylvania does not track refugees after their initial resettlement. More broadly, the U.S. Census reports that Lancaster County's population is approximately 90% Caucasian, 5% African American/Black, 2.5% Asian, and 2.5% identifying as other or multiple races. Eleven percent of residents identify as Hispanic or Latinx, and 5% identify as foreign-born. Eleven percent of the population lives below the poverty line. In the city of Lancaster, which is the county seat, diversity is even greater; for example, 17% of residents identify as African American/Black, 19% as other or multiple races, and 38% as Hispanic/Latinx. Twenty-four percent live below the poverty line.

In Lancaster County, 17% of people report speaking a language other than English at home, and about 37% of those reported speaking English less than “very well”; those numbers in Lancaster city are 35% and 47%, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Crucially, official statistics are likely

to underreport racially and ethnically minoritized communities, who may choose not to participate in the census or similar surveys due to a lack of trust in authorities or linguistic or cultural differences (Leeman, 2016). Thus, conducting a survey inclusive of multilingual and multicultural populations was essential to the project's aim of knowing the pandemic's socioeconomic effects and their distribution in local communities.

Personnel and Positionalities. Jessica Cox (JC) is a U.S.-born White woman; as a professor of Spanish and linguistics, she has some relationships with local Spanish-speaking organizations from previous research and teaching projects, but she is overall an outsider to migrant and refugee communities. Harriet Okatch (HO) is a Ugandan by birth and holds citizenship in Botswana, where she resided for 15 years as a refugee. She is a professor of public health and works with several community organizations in Lancaster to address childhood lead poisoning.

JC and HO contacted Amer Al Fayadh (AA), Language Services Program Coordinator at Church World Service (CWS) at the time, to discuss the logistics and feasibility of the purposive sample. AA is an immigrant from Iraq. He resettled in the United States with his family in 2010. He engaged with CWS, which allowed him to build an extensive network within immigrant communities.

AA brought in Bruno Daniel González Cervera (BC), who has a background in multicultural communication and research. BC is Mexican by birth and holds U.S. citizenship, having migrated as an adult. BC has worked with CWS and for the Office of Refugee Resettlement, thereby creating professional relationships within the migrant and refugee community, and he is also a professional translator and interpreter. BC recruited participants and conducted survey interviews.

Partnership Development. JC and HO recognized their limitations in administering the survey interview on their own. Although they collectively speak four languages, the diversity in languages spoken in the area required engaging language services to effectively administer the survey. JC and HO initially met with AA to discuss the logistics and feasibility of collaborating with CWS's language services to facilitate the purposive sample.

Initial discussions centered on how to reach migrant and refugee adults, especially without in-person contact during the pandemic, and the necessary budget for working with translators and interpreters to reach participants who

preferred to take the survey in a language other than English or Spanish. Additional aims of the multicultural purposive sample were (a) to add to the Spanish-speaking respondents in the COR sample, which were expected to be low in number since COR does not specifically target Spanish speakers in its recruitment, and (b) to add to the number of multicultural respondents who took the survey in English, since even those comfortable doing so may be less likely to respond to passive recruitment strategies.

AA suggested BC to JC and HO as an ideal candidate to add to the composition of the team. AA and BC had previously worked on projects together. After a series of meetings, the four authors made decisions about the translation of surveys considering the number of languages and which ones; the recruitment approach; and the mode of survey administration. During the discussions, each author's expertise and experiences were valued. Collaboration and communication were essential throughout the project.

Survey Translation. The languages for translation were determined based on the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services data on refugee resettlement, which lists refugees' countries of origin. Since refugees' preferred languages may not be the dominant languages of their countries of origin, AA's experience working with locally resettled refugees was crucial for settling on the following languages: Swahili, Arabic, Nepali, Burmese, Kinyarwanda, and Russian. Additional languages were added later in response to participant demand on advisement by BC.

Upon receipt of the English survey, AA began evaluating and engaging CWS-Lancaster staff interpreter-translators to choose interpreter-translators who best fit the project. The interpreter-translators' past and present experience in conducting research or academic work, professional experience in translating surveys, and years of experience were part of the selection criteria. AA selected three to four staff interpreter-translators per language to work as a team to support the project as translators, reviewers, and interpreters. After AA briefed the interpreter-translators on the nature of the project, they reviewed a copy of the survey and highlighted any concepts, terms, or abbreviations that were difficult to understand or could be challenging to translate. Finally, AA reviewed and answered their questions before beginning survey interviews.

This team of interpreter-translators supported the project throughout to ensure consistency in services. All the interpreter-translators were native speakers of the language(s) they worked with; thus, they brought both linguistic and cultural competence to their work. In addition, most of them were local to Lancaster County. Working with an organization such as the language service unit of CWS, which later transitioned to an independent business run by AA, gave the researchers access to an already established group of local professional interpreter-translators. After completing the translations, AA conducted a follow-up review of the translated materials. The teams continued to have access to both the English and the translated surveys to reference when interpreting for the interviews. In sum, the teams followed a process of forward-translation and review with members of the target group (Thompson & Dooley, 2020).

During the project, CWS was no longer able to continue supporting a language services program and instead supported AA in establishing an independent language services business to fill similar community needs. The same team members continued to work on this project during and after the transition to ensure consistency and continuity.

Outreach and Recruitment. The multicultural section of the project used a purposive convenience sampling technique because of the absence of a sampling frame. Also, preventive measures put in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic did not allow for traditional recruitment strategies such as printed ads or tear-off flyers placed in common spaces. JC developed a PDF flyer, which AA and his team translated into multiple languages, that directed potential respondents to text the name of their language to a research mobile phone managed by BC. Community organizations that teach ESOL classes for adults distributed this flyer electronically. We also used professional and personal networks as entry points for recruitment, and this led to snowball sampling.

Appointment Scheduling. Messages from participants were received at different times of the day; when text messages were received either early or late in the day or when BC was busy, BC would quickly respond with a pretranslated message in the respondent's language saying, "Thanks for your text, I will call you back." If BC was available when the potential participant reached out by text or phone call, he utilized on-demand phone interpretation to connect with the participant, invite them to participate in the study, and answer any questions they might have. Once

the participant was scheduled, BC would call one of the interpreters who was familiar with the study and content of the questionnaire.

In some cases, participants were connected to BC through representatives of community organizations, interpreters, or individuals who had taken the survey. Respondents recruited through snowball sampling usually did not send a text message; rather, the individual who referred the respondent would make the call to connect the respondent to BC, usually with the potential respondent also on the call.

Ethics. The project and all accompanying materials were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Franklin & Marshall College. The content of the consent form was read to the participants and administration of the survey proceeded after verbal consent was obtained. Following the survey administration, a \$20 gift card was mailed to each participant at their provided address.

Survey Administration. The four authors decided that surveys would be conducted by phone or videoconference through WhatsApp to balance the need for social distancing with the benefit of an interviewer to guide administration of the survey and serve as a public face to the survey. We followed several recommendations for survey administration: (a) administering the survey in languages in which respondents are proficient, (b) allowing time for their responses, and (c) allowing for oral responses, so that literacy was not a limitation (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The interpreters read each question and its response options and provided participants sufficient time to make their selection. When the selection was made, the interpreter would share it with BC, who recorded the response. We ensured that only the interpreters who were familiar with the study and survey content participated in survey administration.

Prior to each interpreter's first assignment, BC met with them to review research expectations and answer their questions. BC also debriefed with the interpreters at the end of each interview to address any concerns and gather recommendations to utilize during future interviews.

With COR's permission, the college team shared the Spanish translation of the survey with BC to use with Spanish-speaking respondents. Because of BC's proficiency in Spanish, he administered the surveys directly to participants whose preferred language was Spanish.

Dissemination of Findings. In addition to scholarly presentations and publications, analyses

of the data collected were shared in a Zoom meeting open to the local public and hosted by UW. UW publicized the event to over 200 community organizations, and personal invitations were extended to the 12 community organizations that helped shape the survey and to those that facilitated the multicultural purposive sample. In addition, JC and HO presented their findings on *The Academic Minute*, a national public radio segment, and each was featured in podcasts hosted by CSEwL.

In-Field Lessons

Overall, we identified and learned several lessons that can inform the establishment of academic-community partnerships and the development of future survey-based research with multicultural communities. We report some lessons that we learned in this study.

Partnership-Specific Lessons Learned

Partnerships between academia and community can be pluralistic, even for a single project. We report on three different phases of an academic-community partnership with different community partners in each phase. Each of these partnerships was successful because of collaboration, consultation, and communication. The first phase comprised agenda setting among an umbrella organization that works with several organizations in the county (UW), a center based in an academic institution with a focus on strengthening academic-community interactions (CSEwL), and five faculty members. UW and CSEwL provided funding and advertised a call to engage researchers to address a critical community need—to describe the impact of COVID-19 on the community. Entities looking to establish similar partnerships need to consider and commit to frequent meetings without rushing the outcomes of the meetings. The time component was particularly important for this study, as the project needed to generate findings that could be used by community partners to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 as it was happening.

The second partnership consisted of consultation between researchers and representatives of community organizations to guide the development of contextually relevant data collection tools. In this partnership, the academic researchers recognized that survey development without the input of community members might lead to a survey that did not accurately assess the effects of COVID-19 on the community. The researchers utilized their

own networks and those of UW and CSEwL to ensure representation of multiple community organizations offering a wide range of services to Lancaster County residents.

The third partnership was between the researchers and the community partners engaged in recruiting and surveying community members. In this partnership, both the academic researchers and the community partners recognized and appreciated the different and critical skill sets each possessed. JC is trained in applied linguistics; BC is a bilingual professional who speaks both of the predominant languages spoken in the United States (among others) and is a certified translator and interpreter; AA was a language services program coordinator at the commencement of this project and now is the founder of an independent language services business, as well as being a certified translator and interpreter; and HO is trained in public health research methods. The authors' like-mindedness organically led to the establishment of a partnership that was collaborative and nonhierarchical. While identifying personnel with complementary skills is important, it is also crucial that all partners develop and agree on the goals and activities of the project and value and respect one another's expertise and contributions.

An unintended yet critical element of success was that all authors had a heart for the community and were heavily invested in bettering outcomes for the communities of interest. JC and HO recognized the need and importance of including the racially and ethnically minoritized populations in the study. Their intentional seeking out and inclusion of racially and ethnically minoritized populations demonstrates an attitude that exceeds the "publish or perish" mindset. BC and AA were encouraged to partner with the academic researchers because they supported the research as an opportunity to include often-unheard voices in a socially focused way. Additionally, their commitment to this project was not simply contractual; they invested more hours than they received payment for. Whenever possible, partnerships focused on relationships and not contracts are likely to be more successful. However, it is also important to ensure that community members and organizations are compensated fairly.

Continuous consultation was another strength of this partnership. As an example, BC, based on his interactions with participants, consulted about and suggested adding additional languages. This suggestion was well received by the academic researchers, and AA was amenable to facilitating

the translations. BC suggested sharing with the team the lessons he had learned during the project, which birthed this paper. JC and HO welcomed the advice and expertise offered by BC and AA and also made suggestions during the course of the study that were discussed with BC and AA.

All involved partners committed time to engaging and discussing study protocols and processes over multiple scheduled and impromptu meetings. This ensured ongoing and effective communication. All parties adopted a flexible and adaptive attitude to absorb and respond to necessary changes, which were numerous because of the iterative process. We observed that the large time commitment and funding limitations could potentially hinder effective partnerships. The professional relationships developed during this project have led to the development of other collaborations among the authors.

Process-Specific Lessons Learned

In addition to lessons learned related to the academic-community partnerships, we learned other lessons that may be valuable for similar partnerships aimed at recruiting multicultural populations. In this section, we describe the lessons learned with regard to outreach and recruitment, survey translation and administration, sample reach, cultural differences in research practices, and time and budget demands.

Outreach and Recruitment. During outreach and recruitment, the team learned a number of lessons: (a) Personal and professional networks can facilitate successful recruitment; (b) consenting to participate in research is a multistep process; (c) previous negative experiences can influence participation; and (d) belonging is a good recipe for recruitment.

Personal and Professional Networks Should be Utilized for Recruitment. Although we had planned for two different recruitment approaches (the use of electronic flyers and snowball sampling), recruitment was most effective when interpreters and/or translators reached out to their personal and professional networks. During the survey administration, respondents often, unprompted, shared the name of and/or relationship to the person who referred them to the project. Respondents usually stated that the referrer had described the study as important and legitimate. We hypothesize that the implicit trust between the referrer and the respondent, possibly established in previous interactions, may motivate participation. A noted limitation to this type of recruitment was that some

respondents' motivation to participate was based on a social responsibility to whoever had informed them about the study. One potential respondent declined to participate because the individual who referred them had left the country.

Recruitment Can Be an Arduous Process and Requires Patience. An example of a recruitment process illustrates this point: A faith-based organization was contacted by phone, and details of the study were shared. The initial response was positive, with the person who answered the phone expressing interest in becoming a survey respondent and agreeing to call BC back whenever the religious leader was available. This suggests that consent for an individual in this desired targeted sample may include several steps; both the individual and another person of authority, in this case the religious leader, needed to consent. The follow-up phone call was met with the same response, since the leader was still not available. After 3 weeks of intermittent attempts at communication, the religious leader scheduled a phone call to discuss the project. Following a description of the project aims and methodology, the leader consented; however, this coincided with the deadline for data collection.

Previous Negative Experiences Can Influence Participation. In several cases, when BC presented the study to representatives of organizations to share with their patrons, clients, or congregations, the representatives were unwilling to share study details because of previous negative experiences with researchers. In respectful conversation, the representatives shared stories of how researchers had misrepresented them or their organizations. Others felt that researchers had taken advantage of them and not respected their ideas, thoughts, or opinions or had used them to pursue their own agendas. These individuals were protective of themselves, their organizations, and their patrons, and they were hesitant to engage in the research project. In some cases, they agreed to share the information after a rapport had been established, but this was not always the case.

Belonging Can Serve as a Tool in Recruitment. In some outreach scenarios with Hispanic communities, hesitancy to participate in the research project was reversed when BC presented himself as part of the Hispanic community rather than just a researcher. This was also observed when BC engaged in non-project-related conversations initiated by the potential participants. Researchers often identify as being part of an academic organization (as is the requirement for ethical

reasons and transparency); however, it is likely that these academic organizations mean little to the potential participant, and in some cases they may deter participants who come from areas where academic institutions are controlled by the government. However, when the researcher is accepted by the potential participant, the researcher might unconsciously bring credibility to the academic institution, paving the way for future academic-community partnerships. Thoughtful establishment of research teams should be a moral priority; ideally, research team members should share some characteristics with the community of interest. Humaneness, care, and compassion were key for successful recruitment without coercion and without compromising the study and its objectives.

Survey Translation and Administration.

AA identified a minimum of two translators per language who conducted a written translation of the survey and at least two people for oral interpretation when administering the survey. Having more than one translator, especially translators who knew different dialects of the language, helped us consider alternative translations. The decision to have more than one interpreter ensured availability of an interpreter when a respondent was ready to take the survey. Interpreters always had the English and translated versions of the survey when engaging with the participants.

It was rewarding to observe our prudence in having three to four translators/interpreters per language. Languages have dialects that present with vocabulary differences or are contextually and culturally modified by specific communities. Early in the translation process, translators discussed some of these differences, and they shared with each other different words they might use to clarify terms in the survey when a participant communicated limited understanding of a survey question. When this happened in the field, the interpreter was equipped to communicate to the participant an alternative translation. Nevertheless, not all relevant variations can realistically be anticipated, and occasions arose that required the interpreter to draw on their linguistic abilities and experiences to clarify. This was the case with Standard Arabic, Egyptian Arabic, and Iraqi Arabic. The survey was translated into Standard Arabic, yet comprehension of Standard Arabic can depend on one's education level; some participants needed additional translation from Standard Arabic to Arabic dialects. This occurred in a few cases, and

it resulted in additional communication between BC and AA and the interpreter-translator team.

Sample Reach. Our goal had been to survey multicultural participants in the six languages listed above; however, the word-of-mouth referrals and snowballing recruitment strategies also attracted participants who spoke other languages. Based on participant demand, we decided to expand the recruitment to any interested multicultural individual rather than sticking strictly to recruitment goals set by census or other data that may not have accurately represented all of the multicultural populations in the region. Thus, we added Amharic, Haitian Creole, Oromo, Somali, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese survey translations and interpreters. This revision necessitated additional resources with regard to interpreters and increased the representativeness of our sample.

Between December 2020 and June 2021, 61 multicultural individuals were recruited, enrolled, and surveyed as described above. The demographic characteristics of that cohort, and one measure of the economic impact of COVID-19 on them, are shown in Table 1. Also in Table 1 are the corresponding data from a subsample of the participants recruited by COR using conventional sampling methods, who were similar to our multicultural sample in that they reported a language other than English as one of their first languages.

At the same time, we note differences in the linguistic backgrounds of the two samples. The purposive sample respondents were less likely to have English as one of their first languages compared to the multicultural subsample recruited by COR (23.0% of the purposive sample; 66.8% of the COR subsample), and no respondents reported native-like English proficiency in the purposive sample, whereas 11.4% of the COR subsample did. Thus, the purposive sample was effective in reaching individuals with less connection to the English language. Additionally, there were differences in the number of languages spoken by those who did not report English as one of their first languages: In the purposive sample, a language per capita ratio of 0.34 was reported, compared to 0.27 among the COR subsample. Thus, the ESOL portion of the purposive sample was relatively more linguistically diverse than the ESOL portion of the COR sample.

As for the economic impact felt in the two groups, loss of work was appreciably higher in the purposive sample compared to the COR subsample

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants and Economic Impact of COVID-19

Multicultural purposive sample (N = 61)			Subset of COR representative sample (N = 193)	
	Median	IQR	Median	IQR
Age	37.5	29.75–47.0	50.0	37.0–70.0
	n	%	n	%
Gender				
Male	23	37.7	99	51.3
Female	36	59.0	90	46.6
Other	0	0.0	4	2.1
Educational attainment				
High school diploma or less	27	44.3	71	36.8
Some college or more	33	54.1	120	62.2
Was English the first or one of the first languages that you learned as a child?				
Yes, with another language	14	23.0	129	66.8
No	47	77.0	64	33.2
Self-reported oral English proficiency				
Like a native speaker	0	0.0	22	11.4
Advanced	9	14.8	19	9.8
Intermediate	13	21.3	17	8.8
Beginner	15	24.6	6	3.1
Functionally zero	10	16.4	0	0.0
Not applicable (reported English as one of their first languages)	14		129	
At any point since March 2020, did anyone in your household lose work?				
Yes	35	57.4	61	31.6
No	22	36.1	131	67.9
Do not know	4	6.6	1	0.5

Note. IQR = interquartile range.

(57.4% vs. 31.6%). Further comparison of the two samples is beyond the scope of this paper.

Cultural Differences in Research Practices.

We observed that questions that are typically considered sensitive in U.S.- or Eurocentric surveys were not necessarily viewed the same by this sample. As an example, traditionally surveyed respondents in the United States are often hesitant to respond to questions on income; however, some respondents in this study were willing to provide details of their income and even report exact amounts, which the survey did not ask for. On the other hand, some questions typically deemed appropriate in traditionally surveyed populations in the United States were considered offensive.

For example, some individuals who identified as male were offended when asked about gender and presented with different gender options. Also, a large majority of the respondents were not familiar with research and its objectives and effectiveness.

Time and Budget Demands. Time and budget demands for surveying multicultural populations are significant. It takes longer to identify willing participants who are part of a racial and ethnic minority group; they are few in number and difficult to access, especially during a pandemic. It took 6 months to purposively sample and survey 61 multicultural individuals, yet passive recruitment and surveying of the COR sample of 2,094 respondents was completed in 5 weeks.

Once participants were enrolled in the study, surveying these participants also took additional time because of the use of interpreters. Overall, participant recruitment and surveying took longer than anticipated. The additional time required for participant engagement impacted the budget significantly and necessitated acquiring additional funding equivalent to 10% of the original budget, which we were able to secure through an internal interdisciplinary grant from the academic institution. The project funders (UW and CSEWL) were unable to provide the additional funds.

Multiple meetings between the authors and the reiterative processes whereby research activities are reviewed and revised based on continuous evaluation and feedback from potential and actual survey participants increase the time demands for studies that aim to utilize an academic-community partnership.

Replication of such a partnership would need to consider the expenses of hiring multiple professional interpreter-translators as opposed to relying on volunteers. Trained interpreter-translators are more likely to yield effective and useful research products and may be contractually obligated to be available in alignment with participant schedules. However, researchers should plan accordingly and identify appropriate sources of funding.

Discussion

Our study primarily reports the establishment of an academic-community partnership to engage a multicultural population in a research study to understand the social and economic impact of COVID-19. Recruiting and enrolling multicultural participants into this study required several considerations, including developing relationships between researchers in an academic institution and community organizations. As documented in the literature, we report that effective and timely communication and mutual respect are critical for a successful partnership (Greenhalgh et al., 2016; Redman, 2003; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006).

Recruiting and enrolling multicultural individuals into this study constituted a large proportion of time. Other authors who have attempted to recruit and/or survey racial and ethnic minority populations report challenges similar to the ones we encountered, including low participation rates, time and labor intensiveness, high cost, and lack of a sampling frame (Azuine & Ekejiuba, 2015; Bodewes & Kunst, 2016; Bonevski et al., 2014; Kerani et al., 2019; Khalil et al., 2020;

Nazha et al., 2019). However, participation rates and likely fidelity were enhanced by seeking consent from community leaders and having a researcher whose identity enhanced belonging to some participants. It is, however, unlikely that research teams can be composed of the spectrum of identities corresponding to all potential participants. We also note that while the partnership established was healthy, this does not necessarily translate to guaranteed and easy recruitment.

Language diversity considerations during translation can be informed by an accurate knowledge of population makeup. The absence of a sampling frame limits accurate translation, and capturing every single dialect during the translation process might not be feasible due to time, human, and financial constraints. Although we had three to four interpreter-translators per language, we might not have addressed all relevant dialects, which became evident when interpreters had to make intelligent adjustments during the survey administration. This might have impacted the data quality (Renschler & Kleiner, 2013).

Due to the timeliness of this study, the pandemic preventive measures in effect at the time, and the difficulties in accessing this multicultural population, the survey was not piloted in this population. The majority of the survey questions were adopted as-is from validated survey instruments or adapted to suit the study. Nevertheless, piloting the survey after translation might have identified issues related to clarity of questions and dialects. Additionally, piloting the survey might have identified the questions that caused discomfort for some of the respondents. However, it is likely that because this was a multicultural sample, piloting might have resulted in different survey instruments for each language/culture group, which would have complicated and further compounded the time and budgetary considerations.

Demographic differences were observed between the targeted multicultural sample and the sample recruited and surveyed by COR. English was not one of the first languages for several of the multicultural participants; in fact, one-sixth reported no basic proficiency in English. In the United States, health care access, spending, and outcomes are linked to English language proficiency (Diaz et al., 2020; Himmelstein et al., 2021; Manuel et al., 2022; Mui et al., 2007). The multicultural population experienced COVID-19 job losses at a significantly higher rate than the

COR sample. Generally, immigrants without host country language proficiency struggle to attain economic and social integration (Boyd & Cao, 2009; Miranda & Zhu, 2013; Schuss, 2018; Yao & van Ours, 2015). While the COR sample might have provided information that could be utilized to develop COVID-related interventions, it is likely that these interventions would not be useful and/or relevant to the targeted sample because of the differences in demographics and experiences. Therefore, it was worth the extra time and cost to survey the multicultural population.

Conclusion

In this paper, we share the lessons we learned recruiting and surveying multicultural individuals about the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 through an academic-community partnership. This partnership's success relied on the authors' like-mindedness to engage in socially focused work, consultation, and communication.

We report the lessons learned in four main themes: Outreach and recruitment are more labor-intensive with multicultural populations; the respondents in the targeted sample for this study differed from the general population in how they experienced the effects of COVID-19; researchers need to be flexible and plan for more time and expenses; and academic-community partnerships are a valuable model for accessing and including hard-to-reach populations in research. The different COVID-19 impacts experienced by this multicultural population emphasize the need for this type of research and the utility of the academic-community partnership in executing it, especially during a pandemic.

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