

Ethnography Report

On Wednesday, 12 February 2012, I visited the Brookline Senior Center. The goal was to observe and study the behavior and patterns, related with the older adults.

In my time spent there, I observed older adults exercise; learn crafts and general activities like playing cards in the main room. The people who were participating in these activities were generally at the age of 70-90, I presume. The thing that caught my focus after observing these activities was that older adults are more energetic and enthusiastic than otherwise I imagined. They were eager to learn and work on the given task. Other thing I realized is that they actually look forward in spending time at the facility.

In the exercise room, what I noticed was that even though the elderly, could not perform the moves as instructed, they were trying to perfect it even without being told to do so. This was interesting because it seems that even such activities put strain on their body, they know that it is for their best, thus the willingness to learn.

In other rooms like the card room and the crafts rooms, people were generally socializing with others. After being told by the administrator who was encouraging them, that most of them did not really know each other, I realized this. Older adults are more open and social than I thought of. They really like spending time with people of same age group or anyone for that matter.

In the main room, where there is lunch facility too, I noticed that older adults try to choose the healthiest of foods available, even though there was plenty of junk food to eat. I realized that even though they are old, they still think about their day-to-day diet and nutrition.

After the time I spent observing these, I took some time getting to know some older adults so that they would feel comfortable about being interviewed. I did not have any kind of negative reaction, although I had to

speak to more people than thought of, as some of them were not mentally healthy to go through an actual interview.

The interview was not individual, as I presumed that they might feel nervous, so I interviewed three people together, so that I get a general discussion of opinions from different group of people.

To name them, they were Hoda, Rose and Paula. Hoda was slightly younger of them and was in charge of some service there. She mentioned that older adults living there are very much concerned about their health and fitness. Also suggested that many actually look forward to being present there. She quoted *"Most of them live alone, without family, so they try to spend more time in the facility"*. When asked about computers, she responded by saying, *"none of them have any experience with phones or computers, they are generally overwhelmed, but they are very curious about the technology"*. She also mentioned that many use *"simple phones"*, only because their family members want them to have it, in case of emergency.

Rose, the youngest of the three, was very willing to give her inputs and suggest improvements related to the matter. She mentioned that there is no one to teach them, otherwise she would learn about the technology. She states, *"I would never use a smart phone, because there is no one I have to call"*. This immediately suggests that they still are under the impression that smart phones are just fancy phones for only calling purposes. They have no idea about the application domain of the smart phone. She also mentioned her concerns with the use of Internet, her main concern was the amount of Ads in any website and how it spoils her experience and gets completely lost because of this. She states, *"Microsoft products completely frustrates me, because the document icon was replaced with recent icon, and I had to call my relative to figure out where my documents are"*. From that point on, she suggested that she avoid using the editors.

In total I had a very good experience from this assignment, and led me to rethink about my project idea and its uses.