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“Older Adults and Their Experiences with Home Care and Assisted Living”

Faith Robinson
University of Southern Maine

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“Older Adults and Their Experiences with Home Care and Assisted Living”

Faith Robinson, MSW Candidate; University of Southern Maine

Caroline Shanti, Ph.D., LCSW, Faculty Advisor; University of Southern Maine

Abstract

As the state of Maine and the U.S. population at large continues to age, discussion about future care and living arrangements for older adults has become an increasingly relevant issue. Older adults are often faced with a range of options for housing, including staying in their home in their community while receiving home care services, or moving to an assisted living facility.

Currently a gap in the research exists as to the attitudes, perceptions, and lived experiences of the older adults themselves around these decisions, experiences, and the meaning of “home” in our older years. . This study aims to provide several perspectives which may serve to inform communities how we can better serve the needs of this population by adding to knowledge that fights ageism and seeks to improve programs and services for older adults.

Background

In 2010, the number of adults over the age of 65 had tripled from the year 1900, with the largest increase in the group over the age of 85. Older adults’ options for housing are often dependent on complex circumstances and unforeseen events in a person’s life which makes decisions around the “home” difficult. Despite these statistics, and understandings, this population has often been ignored by the counseling profession (Jungers, 2010), an area where social workers can make a difference.

Research Question

What are older adults’ attitudes and perceptions about receiving home care in their community, or living in an apartment in an assisted living facility?

•What is the meaning of home to you?

How do you define ‘home’?

•What have you experienced in terms of making decisions about where to live?

Can you tell me a story about an experience you had in your home?

•Are there ways your life at ‘home’ could be improved?

Figure 1. Sample Interview Questions



Figure 2. Google Image

“Home can be whatever you make it. Because it isn't always going to be the home that you had when you were 10 years old, or 15...and home almost begins to be more than your relatives, but more of where your friends are. Where you like to gather and as long as you got a bunch of friends around, you're home.”

Figure 3. Quotation from Participant 1

Reference:

Jungers, C., (2010). Leaving Home: An Examination of Late-Life Relocation Among Older Adults. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 88, 4, 416-423.

Methods

- This is an exploratory, qualitative study, with a Self-Determination theoretical framework.
- Five 30-45 minute Interviews were conducted with individuals over the age of 65.
- Three participants live in an assisted living facility, and two individuals are living independently while receiving home care services.
- The format of the interview consisted of a series of pre-determined questions as a starting points (See Figure 1).
- Inductive methods were used in analysis of the transcribed interviews using **Thematic Analysis** which included coding notable words, phrases, and ideas to find patterns. Then this researcher was able to categorize and consolidate the data to arrive at overarching themes.

Preliminary Results

Emerging Themes:

- The definition of ‘Home’ is always changing.**
 - Subtheme: Generational differences and society’s view of the ‘Nursing home.’
- Home is first and foremost a place of comfort.**
- Family plays a role but is not always central.**
 - **Subtheme: Significance of friendship in later life rather than family relationships.**
 - Subtheme: The helpers and staff become family.
 - Subtheme: Living situations that allow for maintenance and upholding of friendships are most desirable.
- Coping with being “scheduled”: ‘Making the best’ and finding independence, while feeling a loss of freedom.**
 - Subtheme: Firmly knowing one’s limitations and preferences.
 - Subtheme: Individual choice; Self-determination.
- Eliminating anxiety with familiarity, while also seeking newness.**
- Seeking safety & avoiding uncertainties.**
 - Subtheme: Moving/transitioning perceived as difficult.
- Importance of asking questions relevant to you, and planning ahead, in case of unforeseen events.**
- Continuing to learn and stay active.**
- Gratitude & Concern for less fortunate seniors.**