

Elderly care in a globalized world: a study of cross-cultural interaction in the context of Swedish elderly care

Primary investigator: Sandra Torres, Ph.D.
 National Institute for the Study of Aging and Later Life
 Linköping University, Sweden

Why study cross-cultural interaction in this context?

- 12.7 % of Sweden's 65+ population was born abroad (i.e. has an immigrant background)
- 8.2 % of those 80+ have such a background as well
- 20% of new recruits in 2004 to community, medical and welfare service sectors were foreign-born
- 14% of those working in these sectors were born outside of the EU

What is the methodological point of departure?

- An ethnographic study:
 - 333.5 hrs. of participant observation in 2 nursing homes (30 days in each setting)
 - 37 semi-structured interviews (26 elderly care providers, 8 elderly care recipients and 3 relatives to the elderly care recipients)

What does the literature on cross-cultural interaction in health and social care settings tell us?

- Focus has been on experiences. The understandings of ethnic / culture different 'Others' that precedes them remain unexplored
- Studies on caregivers' experiences dominate the int'l. literature
 - Focus so far: caregivers from ethnic majority group
 - Remain unexplored: caregivers from ethnic minority groups
- Few studies focus on care recipients (particularly elderly)
 - Focus so far in Sweden: ethnic minority elderly
 - Remain unexplored: Swedish elders' perspectives
- No study on care providers (as providers and as co-workers) AND care recipients

What are some of the themes from the preliminary findings?

- Lack of a common language/ points of reference seem to be a problem
- The division of labor between workers is affected by assumptions regarding what Swedishness and non-Swedishness entail:
 - Swedishness = higher effectiveness
 - Non-Swedishness = a higher 'human factor/ friendly approach' to elderly care provision
- Non-Swedish care providers are believed to be bound to be the target of derogatory comments and behaviors by Swedish older people
- Cross-cultural interactions are challenging because understandings of old age are static and ideas of what ethnic relations entail are, in turn, essentialist

What are the project's objectives?

- To shed light on:
 - How elderly care providers and recipients perceive those that are culturally / ethnically different from them
 - How they relate to them
 - How the perceptions and interactions in question facilitate and / or inhibit the deliverance of high quality and user-friendly elderly care

What will the contributions of the project be?

- To theory: Increased understanding of how ideas re: old age and ethnic/ culturally-different 'Others' interact with one another in this context
- To practice: Identification of the challenges associated with the design of culturally-appropriate care

Collaborator: Dr. Azita Emami, Dept. of Nursing, Karolinska Institute

For more information contact us at sandra.torres@mdh.se