Aging in Finland and the US
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“How universal healthcare and other policies impact the aging experience: A comparative study of older adults in the United States and Finland”

Initial Findings

Finland
Community: participants attributed their health and happiness in to community support and collaboration
Activity: participants all had hobbies either physical or creative that they valued dedicating time to

United States
Friends, Family, Faith: Where faith was defined as a religious practice or in a set of moral and values, participants expressed these three things kept them happy
Health is Political: participants discussed their views on healthcare as a basic human right or not
Activity: participants all had hobbies either physical or creative that they valued dedicating time to

Skills developed
• Qualitative interviewing and analysis
• Critical comparison of global healthcare systems and practices
• Cultural competence towards Finnish cultural norms and adapting to language barriers
• Professional development through connecting with Finnish social workers and researchers

Qualitative Research
How universal healthcare and other policies impact the aging experience: A comparative study of older adults in the United States and Finland

A coinvented sample of 6 Finnish older adult and 6 American older adults were interviewed about their health, happiness, and healthcare experiences.

Connections

Classroom
• SW 644 Policies and Services for Older Adults
• SW 683 Evaluation in Social Work
• SW 693 Geriatric Seminar

Career
• Utilizing new global connections in future research
• Drawing from healthcare practices in Finland when creating new policies or best practices
• Practicing qualitative research skills and cultural competency skills in potential evaluation projects

Lessons Learned

Healthy Aging – In the US and in Finland, participants all claimed exercise and community kept them feeling good, despite various health concerns.

Global Citizenship – Education on how other countries practice health care and respond to the aging process is vital to implementing our own best practices.

Personal Connections Matter – I was able to connect with my participants and professionals all through a single personal connection with my host. It’s a small world when you ask for help.

Advice
1. Take advantage of every possible connection you can find to your prospective county.
2. Ask for help from anyone and everyone.
3. Being uncomfortable and afraid is a part of the experience and it makes you grow!

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Less than 20% of Finland’s population is 65 and older by 2030

20.5%
19%
of Finland’spopulation is 65 and older
of the USpopulation will be65 and older by
2030

Finland
Is a country known for its outstanding and innovative education system and it’s value of universal healthcare.

US
Is facing a dramatic increase in older adults receiving Medicare benefits and requiring health services.

Turku and Helsinki

Are two of Europe’s fastest aging cities

6thlargest aging population in the world in Finland
19thlargest aging population in the world in the US

Turku
Helsinki