

Elderly Pack Behaviour: An Ethnographic Study

Kohle Torgenson

Abstract

This study challenges the current anthropologic views of the elderly and assesses the potential risks to the status quota by mean chronological increases to society. Ethnographic observations are conducted, assessed and recommendations are made through a partially blind study.

Introduction

With the proliferation of aging societies throughout the world, scientists must ask themselves what social impact the increasing ranks of this historically docile, passive and geriatric minority will have on the social landscape. Logic and legend indicate that single, old, creepy ladies tend toward devious behaviour, including the black arts and haggary. Certainly the frequently documented accumulation of cats, or familiars, by elderly women lends folkloric credence to this conclusion. But in the absence of hard scientific evidence the true nature of the elderly will forever be left to the imagination.

Recently studies document that elderly communal living is a growing trend, which indicates that field observation of geriatric gatherings is required to understand the elusive behaviour of the elderly. As ethnography, this study will utilize observation in their natural habitat to assess the social dynamics of the elderly, to determine if there is some way to harness their increasing

numbers, and to gain social advantage over this growing minority.

Method

The long-established rigour of ethnographic research has been well documented within the science of anthropology. From the early days of the dark continent's opening (Conrad, 1898; Livingston, 1857; Silliphant, 1973), to more recent studies of open incontinence (Attends, 1984; Med. Disposables, 1986; Tranquility, 1987), the cannon of ethnographic method best-practices remains consistent: long term, in-depth participant engagement provides the most successful means of rich data collection. This study takes no exception.

In situ observation of participants required the researcher to conduct a 'partially blind' study utilizing an oblong, black lycra novelty suit, simulating an astigmatism, to gain access to the geriatric commune. Anecdotal field notes were gathered, recording predatory behaviour, diet,

hygiene and social interactions over the course of several months.

The Researcher

So that the reader may be better able to understand the perspective from which I as a researcher encounter this study, I have prepared a brief summary of pertinent facts from my life that I believe hold some relevance. I lost both sets of grandparents at the age of two, due to a tragic ballooning disaster in the Canadian Rockies. Oddly, the balloon that carried Oma and Opa was unharmed during the tragedy. It seems that the elderly couple argued to their deaths over how high the balloon should be allowed to go, since all members of the ballooning party suffered from severe respiratory or cardiac ailments. Coroner's reports indicated that Oma was too optimistic when it came to her health, and that of Opa.

Due to limited interaction with the elderly, I spent many of my formative years objectively viewing and cataloguing elderly behaviour in locations around the world, to great critical acclaim (Martingez, 1982). While an avid anthropologist, I have been instrumental in many ethnographic studies. These include a study on the "California Raisins" (Torgenson, 1985) and another on the effects of asexual reproduction on apparent self-esteem (Torgenson, 1974).

Results

Observations were gathered through September to late October. The following list of the researcher's journal

entries were particularly stirring and will guide the later discussion of emergent themes, not to mention further studies in the future.

September 22, 2003

It is a sunny day, and the subjects seem to accept me as a part of their natural environment. The air is a brisk 16°C. It would seem that the subjects are trying to conserve their valuable and limited time on Earth, by preserving their vital heat to be expended in the future. It will be a short day of observation today, as my skin-tight lycra astigmatism provides minimal protection from the elements.

October 3, 2003

Early in the morning, around sunrise, a large trough was wheeled into the 'dining room,' where the subjects gathered in preparation for the morning feed. The largest, most agile members of the group were the first to dominate the 'kill,' which consisted largely of poultry embryos, hog remnants, flat grain patties and what appeared to be some thick, red slurry, presumably intended to make the grain patties more palatable. Eventually all subjects consumed some food, but the first to the trough were fed the freshest and largest portions. Interestingly, this mimics canine pack animal behaviour.

Later in the day, a similar feeding pattern was observed. The largest subject, a broad shouldered specimen whom other pack members defer to, was again the first to the feed. I will watch this specimen closely. Perhaps his superhuman ability to remove his teeth and insert them at will keeps the proverbial dogs at bay.

The large alpha male displayed his dominance over the lesser males in the 'recreation room,' by asserting his desire to watch curling instead of 'Jeopardy.' One large male, with extensive back hair, bristled at the viewing selection, but was put in his place by a bark from the larger male, whom I have named Abe.

October 27, 2003

This day has provided the most revealing glimpse into the complex life of the pack. The larger, older pack members spent the day relaxing in the sun room, presumably conserving their energy for some event that would require a reserve of energy, possibly a hunt, or some geriatric mating ritual. The younger, more energetic members played in the games room, practicing the wily skills that would make them more successful in the days to come. One group performed ritualized movements to improve balance and agility, while one group threw stones along salted boards, mimicking the ballistic skills that would give the pack an edge in a conflict situation. Another group used sticks to move stones along the floor; presumably this is the advanced group of fighters, taking their unique brand of ballistics to a newer, more technical level. It should be noted that the female members of the pack behaved in comparable ways, slinging stones and attacking with sticks equally often and as ferociously as the males.

October 29, 2003

I can't help but feel that some major event is coming. There is a sense of anticipation in the air; the whole pack

seems agitated. The recent excursions into the local mall in the morning have become more aggressive, with 'lone wolves' breaking off from the pack and marking their territory, as bladder control seems to have become optional. Other pack members have taken to grazing on the near unlimited resources this abundant landscape has to offer. Yet others travel in groups, walking slowly, making obscure sounds and dominating the hallways. I fear for the future, but as a scientist, feel compelled to let nature take its course.

October 31, 2003

The atmosphere of the pack is electric. Pack activity is at a fevered pitch, with members donning war paint and ominous masks in an avataristic pursuit to connect with more primal powers. Abe has been taking notice of me in my camouflage, and has ominously dressed in black and replaced his usual teeth with a set having extended canines, which are terribly intimidating. I feel that my presence is becoming intolerated and I fear I will not be able to carry on my research from this distance. To make matters worse, I have caught wind of a plan to bait young people into proximity of the pack. One can only imagine the horrors that will occur with isolated targets lulled into the reach of elderly. I will have to vacate the area, as Abe has been looking at me with despondent animal rage.

Discussion

Extensive observation of the elderly in their natural habitat provides evidence that the aged, given the opportunity, will hoard together and mimic feral

animal behaviour. While obvious affection is displayed amongst pack members, the elderly cannot be trusted to move unsupervised in a younger society. Further study must be conducted to ensure the safety of younger, less 'wild' members of society.

One suggestion that would help guard society from this chronological menace is to isolate individual seniors from other seniors, as the group dynamic appears to accentuate the primal pack nature of the antiquated. Further study needs to be conducted to determine the long-term effects of the pack on the environment, and what natural interventions can be employed to protect society from the elderly, and ostensibly the elderly from a society unwilling to tolerate deviant group dynamics.

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