

Core Values of Older Adults in a Recreational Setting

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INTRODUCTION

"Every day for the next 19 years, 10,000 baby boomers will reach age 65" (Heimlich, 2010). With the rise of baby boomers becoming the next generation of older adults, the demand increases every year for adequate recreational activities that provide older adults with enough mental, physical, and emotional support. In the end, our goal is to increase older adult happiness by implementing fulfilling recreational activities.

To do this, we hypothesized that older adults had particular goals when attending recreational activities. To determine these focuses, we identified general core values in life through research on papers detailing the core values of adults through developmental psychology. This served as background information that was helpful when we decided to conduct an interview with John Sink, the Vice President of Avenidas, an older adult community center in Palo Alto. This interview helped us gain insight into the Avenidas center as well as many different aspects of life that older adults value.

After this interview, we decided to partner with the Avenidas Chinese Community Center in Palo Alto to test our findings. We chose this center initially because it was nested in the middle of Palo Alto, making accessible and the perfect choice. However, once we did further research we were notified of its unique qualities: it provides services to both American cultures and Chinese cultures. This interested us because we are American-born Chinese. Because of this cultural duality, we also wanted to observe differences between these populations in the way they approached recreational activities while revealing older adult core values. We wanted to investigate older adult attitudes toward current recreational programs, so we decided to find activities that fit the psychological needs of older adults and pinpoint their enjoyability through a feedback survey.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

What contributes to the values and behaviors of the elderly? To determine these answers, we decided to focus on a field of study called developmental psychology

We aimed to pinpoint the main values of older adults. From our research, we determined that health and fitness, sense of purpose, social interactions, and familial bonds were the four main values of older adults.

We were then interested to see if the findings from developmental psychology would prove accurate when it was put to the test; when applied to real people and real situations, would these broad generalizations still hold true?

One such environment to test our hypothesis is through observing and collecting data from recreational activities provided to older adults. Many community centers provide programs and recreational activities directly targeted toward older adults, who attend programs for a variety of reasons. These activities are crucial for older adults in the community to maintain a certain level of mental, physical, and emotional health.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

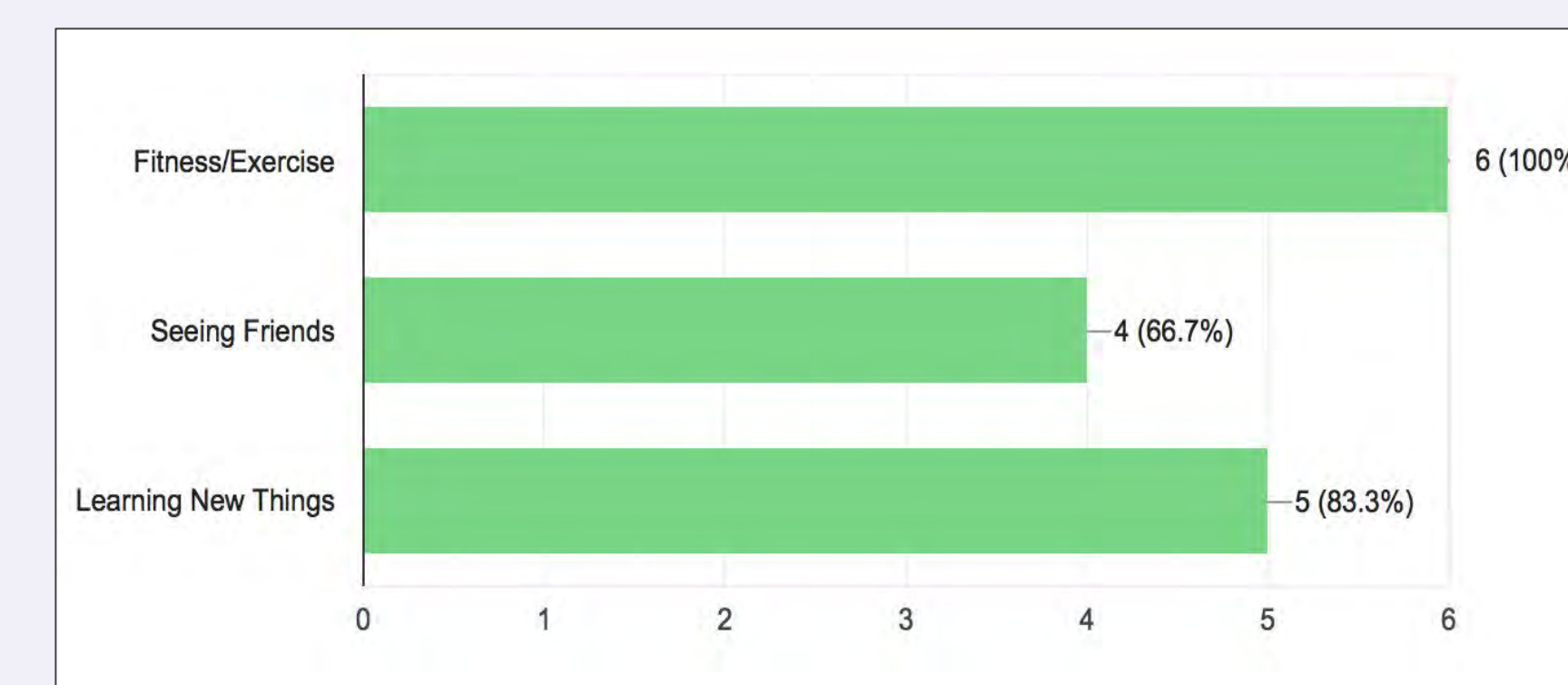


We decided to first categorize our research into a few broad topics compiled from our research: health and fitness, sense of purpose, social interaction, and familial bonds. We then set up a flyer at the Avenidas Chinese Community Center, a recreational center that accommodates both English and Chinese speaking older adults and asked them to fill out our survey voluntarily. From these surveys, we found out which programs older adults preferred and why. We also found out what motivated the older adults to attend any specific activity and compared the responses of older adults with a Chinese cultural background versus an American cultural background.

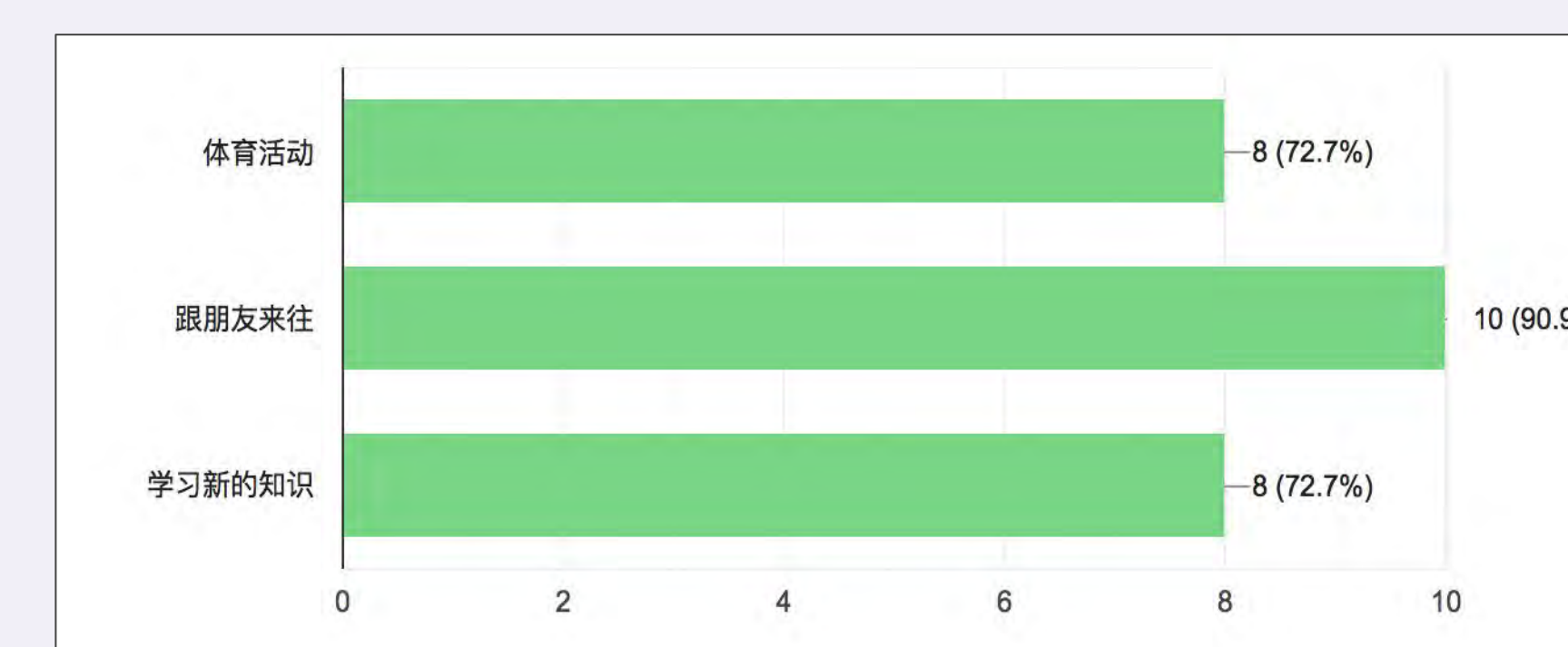
DATA AND FINDINGS

Survey Question 4: What made you decide/motivated you to attend an online Avenidas class today? (check all that apply)

English Version:



Chinese Version:



When comparing graph 1 and graph 2, we pinpointed that older adults with an American cultural background were motivated by slightly different values than those with a Chinese cultural background. The most obvious difference was that for older adult individuals with a Chinese cultural background, seeing friends was the single most common motivator to participate in recreational activities. This was inversely true for older adults of American culture, where social connections were the single least common motivator.

CONCLUSIONS AND ANALYSIS

Our research has a significant impact on the current baby boomer generation as they enter the older adult stage of their lives, where recreational activities will impact their emotional, physical, and mental health. Our research also compares an American cultural impact with a Chinese cultural impact on older adult values.

One difference between Chinese and American culture is their cultural basis: "the United States is commonly identified as the most individualistic modern nation, and China is commonly identified as one of the most collectivistic societies" (Forbes et al., 2011).

In China, they see the individual as part of a community and a set of family, hierarchical and friendly relationships. In particular, there is a focus on tacit mutual commitments, reciprocity, and trust" (FreightWaves, 2019). As such, the Chinese have fierce national pride as well as a general focus on community and friendships.

In contrast, American culture is heavily based on the concept of individualism. In the US, there is "a deep sense of individualism based on democracy with social and political freedoms" (FreightWaves, 2019). Thus, the culture encompasses individual achievement and growth rather than community and relationships.

While not the only cultural difference between American and Chinese people, the emphasis on individuals versus community struck us as capable of explaining the differences between individuals of Chinese culture valuing social connections more heavily than personal achievement, where those of American culture value personal growth and fitness and exercise, or maintaining a certain level of individual progress.

IMPLICATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

To further expand on our project, we hope to use the findings of our research to implement programs into the Avenidas Chinese Community Center that focus on older adults' psychological needs. We would incorporate the needs that are more prominent among the older adult generation into the programs in hopes of increasing older adult fulfillment after participating in the implemented activity as well as boost attendance to the activities.

From our cultural impact analysis, we hope to market to older adults with American and Chinese backgrounds in slightly different ways. As American cultural views on recreational activities are seen to focus more significantly on fitness and exercise and personal learning or growth, we would promote activities using English advertisements with the marketing focus on health and fitness and learning new skills; with Chinese advertisements, we would focus our marketing on forming social interactions, seeing that older adults with Chinese cultural impact pinpointed "seeing friends" as their main source of motivation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / REFERENCES

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