

Abstract

This research aims to study the life of female elders in the governmental home for the aged in the aspect not generally included in most related studies, i.e. the process of making "self" in the socio-cultural context of that institution. The anthropological field study was conducted in one of the governmental home for the aged in Bangkok. The concept of "identity" was adopted to perceive and to understand how female elders developed their "self" in coherent with their status and everyday life in the institution.

The study proposed that the "identity" of elders in the institution had been developed collectively from the interaction between individuals and their environment in the institution. They accepted a new status as elders in the institution at their enrollment, and consequently perceived the view toward themselves as helpless, incapable, different from ordinary people, and not self-confidence. This had led to a process of hiding one's self as an elder in the institution and redefining it in various other different ways depending on the situations. In their daily life, elders behaved themselves according to the rules of the institution, but at the same time they tried to adapt themselves, mentally and behaviorally, and negotiate as could, to maintain an affiliation with their previous status, life style, and meaning of "self".