

COMMUNITY MEMBERS' PERSPECTIVES OF THE ROLE THE
INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE PROCESS SERVED IN CHANGING
RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES AND STRATEGIES FOR WORKING TOGETHER:
A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY IN TWO RURAL
MIDWESTERN COMMUNITIES

by

Terry R. Waugh

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Human Sciences (Leadership Studies)

Under the Supervision of Professor Leverne Barrett

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2006

UMI Number: 3208119

PREVIEW

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 3208119

Copyright 2006 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

COMMUNITY MEMBERS' PERSPECTIVES OF THE ROLE THE
INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE PROCESS SERVED IN CHANGING
RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES AND STRATEGIES FOR WORKING TOGETHER:
A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY IN TWO RURAL
MIDWESTERN COMMUNITIES

Terry Waugh, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2006

Advisor: Leverage Barrett

The purpose of this multiple case study was to describe community members' perspectives of the role the Intergenerational Dialogue Process served in changing resident's attitudes and behaviors in two Midwestern rural communities. Approximately one year after their involvement in the Intergeneration Dialogue, ten people (five from each community) were interviewed to describe if participating in the Intergenerational Dialogue changed their attitudes and behaviors toward seeking solutions that could resolve rural community issues. Three themes emerged from the interviews: understanding the generations, community action, and changes in communities. The findings of this research outlined changes in the participant's attitudes toward other generational perspectives and their willingness to work together that resulted from their experience of the Intergenerational Dialogue.

DISSERTATION TITLE

COMMUNITY MEMBER'S PERSPECTIVES OF THE ROLE
THE INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE PROCESS SERVED IN
CHANGING RESIDENT'S ATTITUDES AND STRATEGIES
FOR WORKING TOGETHER: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY IN
TWO RURAL MIDWESTERN COMMUNITIES

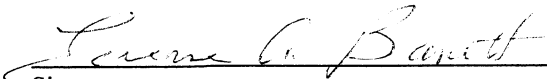
BY

Terry R. Waugh

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Approved

Date


Signature

4/14/06

Dr. Leverage Barrett, Chair

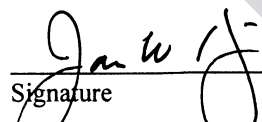
Typed Name


Signature

4-14-06

Dr. Daniel Wheeler

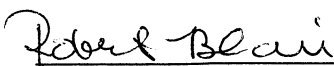
Typed Name


Signature

4-14-2006

Dr. James King

Typed Name


Signature

4-14-06

Dr. Robert Blair

Typed Name

Signature

Typed Name

Acknowledgments

Many people have helped me as I wrote this research. I hope I have thanked each one of them personally at sometime during the past four years. To acknowledge each of them would take several pages.

I feel I would not have been able to finish this dissertation without the help of several people who I would like to acknowledge.

I would like to give a special thanks to my academic advisor and chair of my doctoral committee Dr. Leverage Barrett. He was always encouraging, patient, accessible and knew when to ask that important question, "When will you be giving me something to look at?" I want to thank Dr James Gambone who is the originator of the Intergenerational Dialogue Process. He contributed his time, resources, and made himself available whenever I wanted to discuss this project. Thanks to Dr. Dana Miller who is an expert in the qualitative research process. She was so patient and creative as she advised me throughout this qualitative research. I want to thank my doctoral committee, Dr. James King, Dr. Daniel Wheeler, and Dr. Robert Blair for their time and feedback.

I want to thank my family, I would not have been able to take this journey without their support. Because my three children, Abbie, Alex, and Marne have grown into responsible young adults, I was able to drop out of my regular life to complete this goal. They have all moved, married, graduated college, developed careers, had children, or purchased homes during the four

years of this study. They supported me by celebrating each other's successes and maintaining our relationships.

I extend my thanks to my life-long friend David who was always willing to take time from his busy life to give me technical assistance no matter the hour of the day. I still do not know why the biggest computer problems happen late at night. Thanks to Frank who encouraged me and was more than happy to play devils advocate by asking questions about the study that sometimes were very hard to answer. I want to give a special thank you to my friend and colleague Yuki. Her vision, work ethic, stamina, and courage always served as an inspiration for me to complete this research.

I thank Fivel and Zeek for showing me how to live my life for the past fifteen years. If they had something to eat, an adequate place to sleep, were near people who love them, all was well.

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
Chapter One: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Context.....	2
Purpose Statement.....	7
Central Question.....	7
Sub-questions.....	7
Theoretical Framework.....	8
Target Audiences of Study.....	12
Definitions.....	13
Delimitations and Limitations.....	15
Significance of Study.....	15
Chapter Two: Review of the Related Literature.....	17
Introduction.....	17
Current Situation in Rural Communities.....	18
Models of Community Development.....	19
Success of Rural Community Development.....	22
The Use of Community Issue Forums.....	24
The Intergenerational Dialogue Process.....	25
Other types of Generational Dialogues.....	30
The Meaning of Discussion and Dialogue.....	31
Conclusion.....	33
Chapter Three: Procedures	35
Rationale for a Qualitative Study.....	35
Rationale for Multiple Case Study.....	38
Sampling Method.....	40
Data Collection Techniques.....	42
Data Analysis.....	44
Verification Strategies.....	45
Ethical Considerations.....	47
Role of the Researcher.....	48

Chapter	Page
Chapter Four: Two Intergenerational Dialogues: The Context of This Study	51
Introduction to the Communities.....	51
The Community of Central City.....	51
The Community of North East.....	53
Structure of the Intergenerational Dialogue Process.....	55
The Central City Intergenerational Dialogue.....	61
The North East Intergenerational Dialogue.....	86
Chapter Five: Findings.....	108
Introduction to the Participants.....	108
Central City Participants.....	108
North East Participants.....	112
Presentation of the Themes.....	116
Theme One: Understanding the Generations.....	117
Sub-Theme One: Being Concerned for the Future....	117
Sub-Theme Two: Uniting the Communities.....	120
Sub-Theme Three: Understanding	
Generational Perspectives.....	122
Theme Two: Community Action	125
Sub-Theme One: Communicating With Each Other....	126
Sub-Theme Two: Working Together	
Intergenerationally.....	128
Theme Three: Changes in the Communities.....	131
Sub-Theme One: Broadening View.....	132
Sub-Theme Two: Changing Residents' Perspectives.	134
Sub-Theme Three: Willing to Work Together.....	136
Sub-Theme Four: Motivating Communities.....	138
Chapter Six: Summary, Implications, and Recommendations.....	140
Summary.....	140
Implications.....	142
Recommendations for Target Audiences	150
Recommendations for Future Research.....	151
Chapter Seven: Journal Article for the Research Study.....	153
References.....	181

Tables

Table 1: Comparison of Self-help Theory and Intergenerational Dialogue.....	12
Table 2: Comparison of Christenson's Three Models for Development,,,,,,,,,	20
Table 3: Sample Agenda of an Intergenerational Dialogue.....	60
Table 4: Central City Descriptive Words X Age X Generation.....	63
Table 5: Central City Mediating Generational Panel Questions.....	66
Table 6: Central City Millennial Generational Panel Questions.....	69
Table 7: Central City Diversity Generational Panel Questions.....	71
Table 8: Central City Civic Generational Panel Questions.....	74
Table 9: Central City Boomer Generational Panel Questions.....	77
Table 10: Recommended Solution to Central City's Community Issue.....	83
Table 11: North East Descriptive Words X Age X Generation.....	88
Table 12: North East Mediating Generational Panel Questions.....	92
Table 13: North East Diversity Generational Panel Questions.....	94
Table 14: North East Millennial Generational Panel Questions.....	96
Table 15: North East Civic Generational Panel Questions.....	98
Table 16: North East Boomer Generational Panel Questions.....	100
Table 17: Recommended Action Plan for North East.....	104
Table 18: Introduction to Participants.....	115

Figures

Figure 1: Generational Groups BY Age Chart.....	58
Figure 2: Visual Display of Themes and Sub-Themes.....	116
Figure 3: Visual Display of Theme One and Sub-Themes.....	117
Figure 4: Visual Display of Theme Two and Sub-Themes.....	126
Figure 5: Visual Display of Theme Three and Sub-Themes.....	131

Appendices.....	160
-----------------	-----

- A) IRB Consent Form
- B) University of Nebraska-Lincoln IRB Approval of Research
- C) Interview Recruitment Phone Script Form
- D) Interview Protocol
- E) Interview Questions
- F) Interview Verification Form
- G) Demographic Information Form
- H) Interview Matrix
- I) Themes and Sub-Themes X Interview Codes
- J) Interview Codes X Generational Participants

Chapter One

Introduction to the Study

This qualitative study explored the experiences of ten people who participated in an Intergenerational Dialogue process. The Intergenerational Dialogue is a community issue forum that brings together five generations and reflects as much diversity as contained in the community or organization where the Dialogue is taking place. The Intergenerational Dialogue is a unique and valuable process because it is an approach to solving community issues that allows all generations in a community or organization to contribute their unique perspectives and make recommendations for future action concerning a community issue or opportunity. The Intergenerational Dialogue is designed to break down barriers between the generations by intentionally listening to the values of each generation, then challenging the generations to work together intergenerationally to come up with action steps that can move their community toward common goals. The participants in this study were asked to describe the influence of the Intergenerational Dialogue Process one year after their participation in an Intergenerational Dialogue that took place in their community.

Literature specifically about the Intergenerational Dialogue process is limited, which provides a strong rationale for an exploratory qualitative study. There is a small amount of literature concerning community forums and intergenerational issues that relates to the Intergenerational Dialogue Process.

Context

The issues and challenges that exist in rural communities provided the context of this study. Two rural communities separated by 125 miles in the same Midwestern state permitted an opportunity to explore participants' perspectives about the influence of the Intergenerational Dialogue process. Both communities had concerns about their future, and in the fall of 2003, Intergenerational Dialogues were conducted. One year after their involvement in the Dialogue, a representative of each generation in each of the communities was contacted and interviewed for this research. The interviews were designed to help people reflect on the role of the Intergenerational Dialogue Process in bringing about change.

In the past few decades rural communities have been experiencing significant decline. Most rural communities have aging infrastructures that are becoming very expensive to maintain, coupled with a decline in available health care with aging and declining populations. The rural communities that were dependant on an agricultural economic base are having severe economic difficulties due somewhat to the decline of family farms. This decline often equates to the loss of jobs or a lack of job opportunities in rural communities. Without jobs, the dilemma is compounded because youth migrate from the areas where their productivity is most needed.

Rural communities experience youth out-migration because it is hard for young people to stay where they find it difficult to be employed. Often young people in a community are overlooked to fill leadership roles or are considered disinterested in community affairs. The fact that most rural communities are

aging societies presents a unique problem. Unless young people are involved in community problem-solving, allowing them to feel they are part of the community, the chances of young people remaining in those communities is going to be lessened

Rural areas obviously need more jobs, income, and better services than they presently have. Residents need increased access to resources for meeting their daily needs. Meeting those needs can serve as a foundation for “community” to emerge in the local society. Even though needed resources are distributed by factors beyond the control of local actors, most rural development schemes rely mainly on the efforts of local actors. While there are some success stories, rural development programs to date have produced remarkably little rural development (Powers & Moe, 1982).

Local issue forums are a new way for rural communities to identify their needs and preferences in relation to growth and the quality of life. These approaches tend to focus on the opposing positions of different interests and interest groups. Such methods tend to be adversarial, pitting one side against the other in a zero sum game (Hyman, 2000).

A less typical type of a local issue forum is the Intergenerational Dialogue Process. The originator of the Intergenerational Dialogue, James Gambone, was trained by the Peace Corps as a community developer/organizer and spent the last 25 years working mostly in rural areas addressing rural community issues. In his work he has used coalition building models, direct action models, and key stakeholder models of community organizing. The idea of the Intergenerational

Dialogue came from his experience as a community organizer and his belief that there was something missing in the forms of community organizing. Gambone wanted to make community discussion and organizing more inclusive and deeper, finding more meaning in the conversations that took place. Using his experience as an organizer, educator, historian and sociologist, he developed the Intergenerational Dialogue Process nearly 14 years ago. (J. V. Gambone, personal communication, February 21, 2005).

Gambone has facilitated over 155 Intergenerational Dialogues and trained over 2000 people to conduct the process. Based just on the Dialogues he has conducted, over 60% were in rural communities, 20% in core urban areas and 20% in the suburbs. The Intergenerational Dialogue has been conducted in every region of the United States (J. V. Gambone, personal communication, April 19, 2005). Gambone (2001) outlined six intended outcomes of the Intergenerational Dialogue process:

- 1) That people will have a better understanding of the gifts, talents, assets and liabilities of each generation.
- 2) To break down barriers between generations, to provide better communication and understanding in an atmosphere where people can work together to commonly solve problems identified, and to work on solutions they commonly come together to create.
- 3) To generate more respect, caring, and cooperation within a community then existed before the dialogue took place.

- 4) That people from different cultures and different races can bring the gifts of their own intergenerational experiences to a broader community because they are being invited as representatives of their generation as opposed to being invited as tokens into a community, or into a community development process.
- 5) That honest and frank communication take place in a setting based on respect, caring and cooperation.
- 6) That people will listen to each other (i.e. taking information and internalizing it), as opposed to just hearing each other.

The Intergenerational Dialogue Process is a four month-long civic engagement/community organizing process that can be used to resolve or explore rural community issues. The Intergenerational Dialogue planning process and one-day event is strategically designed to change attitudes and focuses on respect, caring, and cooperation allowing the five living generations to come together and create solutions to community issues (Southwest Minnesota Foundation [SMF], 2004). This approach differs from traditional issue forums because it does not focus on the opposing views and interests of the participants. Representatives of all five generations in the community are invited to participate. The Dialogue is intentionally intergenerational as it invites community members to present their generation's views on community concerns. The richness in diversity of participants guarantees the success of the Dialogue (Gambone, 2001).

Each of the generations in our society has a unique and important perspective on current personal, political, economic, religious, and cultural issues. Without the Intergenerational Dialogue in play, an important element of diversity is lost. If rural communities do not work together and cooperate across the generations, the problems they face today will become worse over the next fifteen to twenty years.

Participants in the Intergenerational Dialogue become motivated because they are able to temporally step out of the traditional role they play in their community to become a representative of their generation. They are also offered many opportunities to voice their generations' unique and valuable perspectives. Unlike traditional development models, the Intergenerational Dialogue process is totally driven by local content to address specific community issues. The process was created to allow local communities to solely focus on their individual concerns or opportunities. The Intergenerational Dialogue also respects the differing perspectives that are presented at the event. Using respect, caring, and cooperation, the Dialogue allows people to listen to and understand the perspectives of other generations and choose an action plan to help resolve a particular community issue. With all the living generations involved in the solution there is a higher degree of buy-in to the solution and more commitment to carry out that solution (J. V. Gambone, personal communication, January 21, 2004).

The purpose of this multiple case study was to describe selected community members' perspectives of the role the Intergenerational Dialogue Process served in changing residents' attitudes and strategies for working together. Approximately one year after their involvement, ten people (five from each community) were interviewed to describe how participating in the Dialogue changed their attitudes and behaviors toward seeking solutions that could resolve rural community issues.

Research Questions

The central research question that guided this study was:

How do community members describe their perspectives of the role the Intergenerational Dialogue Process served in changing residents' attitudes and strategies for working together toward resolving community issues or taking advantage of opportunities in their community?

Seven sub-questions were addressed in this study:

1. How did participants' perceptions of the perspectives of other generations change as a result of experiencing their community's Intergenerational Dialogue?
2. What knowledge did participants gain that could improve their effectiveness in building "community"?
3. How did participants use their knowledge of the different generations to influence their community's future?

4. How did the Intergenerational Dialogue help participants understand the importance of knowing the needs of other generations?
5. How did participants' methods of dealing with rural community issues change as a result of experiencing the Intergenerational Dialogue?
6. How did the participants' willingness to work together change as a result of attending their community's Intergenerational Dialogue?
7. How did participants' involvement in the Intergenerational Dialogue influence their approach to finding a solution to community issues?

Theoretical Framework

Often descriptive and exploratory qualitative studies do not have an apriori theoretical framework (Merriam, 1998). Though some qualitative studies, such as grounded theory studies, develop what Merriam (1998) calls a substantive theory that emerges from the data, that is not the intent of this study. However, this study could be positioned in the larger body of literature pertaining to intergenerational issues, rural community development, and group dialogues, because theories on intergenerational issues and dialogues can provide a theoretical foundation for this research.

Strauss and Howe (1991) defined a generation as a cohort group whose length approximates the span of a phase of life and whose boundaries are fixed by peer personality. Peer personality is a combination of 1) chronology (a person's age location in history), 2) attributes (beliefs and behaviors) and 3)

awareness (perceived generational membership). Strauss and Howe defined and named cohorts for the five living generations in the United States. These include the:

G.I. generation, born between 1901-1924

Silent generation, born between 1925 -1942

Boomer generation, born between 1943-1960

Thirteenth generation, born between 1961-1981

Millennial generation, born in 1982 to the present time

As generations move through time, each generation is impacted by social moments in history. A social moment is an era, typically lasting about a decade, when people perceive that historic events are radically altering their social environment. Each generation is shaped by these social moments, giving each generation its own values and perspectives (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Daniele (1998) conducted extensive studies with people who survived traumatic world events such as the Great Depression, Jewish Holocaust, Atomic bomb attacks on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, and events such as child abuse and spousal abuse. The studies were designed to understand how first, second and third generations were affected by the same event and how those events affected people of different critical ages.

It was Daniele's contention that traumatic world events shaped the different generations of people and influenced how those people viewed and

related to each other. Daniele believed that to truly understand people from different generations we must be aware of the normative and non-normative life events that they have passed through. To assume people from all generations have the same perspectives on issues or events would be a great error. Because people from different generations pass through their critical ages at different times in history, the same traumatic event could impact them very differently (Daniele, 1998).

Contemporary physicist David Bohm (1996) is developing a theory and method of “dialogue.” In dialogue, a group explores complex difficult issues from many points of view. Individuals suspend their assumptions but they communicate their assumptions freely. The result is a free exploration that brings to the surface the full depth of people’s experience and thought that moves beyond their individual views. Dialogue, according to Bohm, is a way of helping people to become more sensitive and to make it safe to acknowledge the incoherence in our thoughts, in dialogue people become observers of their own thinking.

The theories of Strauss and Howe, Daniele, and Bohm provide a theoretical base for the Intergenerational Dialogue. Imbedded into the Dialogue Process is a general theoretical framework that demonstrates why it is important to look at the world, or to look at a community through an intergenerational lens as opposed to other lenses. It is important to do work intentionally intergenerational as opposed to doing it any other way (James V. Gambone PhD, personal communication, February 21, 2005).

The Intergenerational Dialogue can be linked to the Self-help theory of community development created by Christenson (1989). The self help model includes some of the elements contained in the Intergenerational Dialogue. The common elements are:

- The change agent being a facilitator rather than an adviser or advocate
- An emphasis on process as opposed to emphasizing the task or outcome
- The basis of change is that all people involved with the situation can collectively identify and solve their own problems instead of using power or pressure
- The main problem addressed is the capacity of people to take collective action to solve a problem or take advantage of an opportunity
- The main goal is to build community capacity, not redistribute power in the community

The following Table 1 compares the Self- help Theory of Community Development to the Intergenerational Dialogue Process and displays their common elements.

Table 1: Comparison of the Self-help Theory and Intergenerational Dialogue

	Self-help Theory of Community Development	Intergenerational Dialogue Process
Role of the Change Agent	Facilitator, Educator	Facilitator, Educator
Task/process Orientation	Emphasis on Process	Emphasis on Process
Typical Clientele	Middle Class	All Inclusive
Image of Individual	Inherently good	A representative of their generation
Basis of Change	People can identify and solve problems collectively	Multigenerational members solve problems collectively
Core Problems Addressed	Capacity of people to take collective action	Capacity of people to work intentionally intergenerational to take collective action
Action Goal	Community capacity	Community capacity

Target Audiences of Study

Multiple audiences exist for any study (Fetterman, 1989). The results of this study will be useful to any person or organization interested in the process and outcome of the Intergenerational Dialogue. There are many dialogues or conversations that take place among different generations, but few are done intentionally. This study illustrated the use of a specific, unique, inclusive, and intentionally intergenerational model for facilitating meaningful dialogue across five generations. The use of an Intergenerational Dialogue is not restricted to those wanting to resolve rural community issues; because the process can be used where ever it is beneficial to understand differing perspectives of intergenerational stakeholders.

Definitions

The following terms were used in this study:

Five living generations

Participants in an Intergenerational Dialogue are categorized into five age cohorts, each cohort represents one of the five living generations. The specific birth years and names used in these age cohorts have been found by Dr. Gambone to be very effective in bringing the generations together for dialogue and common action. (Gambone, 2001). The birth years and names of the five living generations are the:

Civic Generation – Born between the years 1901-1931

Mediating Generation – Born between the years 1932-1944

Boomer Generation – Born between the years 1945-1963

Diversity Generation – Born between the years 1964-1981

Millennial Generation – Born between the years 1982-Present

Intergenerational Dialogue

The patented Intergenerational Dialogue process was originated about fourteen years ago by Dr. James Gambone. An Intergenerational Dialogue brings together the five living generations and reflects as much diversity as contained in the community or organization where the Dialogue is taking place. The Intergenerational Dialogue uses an issue of importance to the group hosting the event as its focus. It respects and values each generation's perspectives on the chosen topic. Through the Intergenerational Dialogue process, recommendations

for future action are made by all five generations. The Intergenerational Dialogue approach is based on two simple concepts:

- Each generation has a unique and valuable perspective that must be included in discussing any issue or opportunity.
- All generations need to be involved in solving community problems or creating community opportunities.

Community

The concept of *community* means more than a place or local activity and can be defined better as an experience than as a place. Individuals are bound together by emotional ties rather than by a perception of individual self-interest (Bender, 1978). In this study *community* is what Nisbet (1966) referred to as a fusion of feeling and thought, of tradition, commitment, interaction, and membership.

Rural Community

The American Heritage Dictionary defines *rural* as pertaining to the country as opposed to the city or relating to farming and agriculture. Wilkinson (1999) wrote that *rural* is a territorial concept, a geographic setting of social life, where local people can live and meet their daily needs.

A community involves a limited number of people in a somewhat restricted social space of network held together by shared understandings and a sense of belonging (Bender, 1976) For the purpose of this study, a *rural Community* will be a small town or village that is at least five miles from a larger city or town.