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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

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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

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Terry Waugh, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2006

Advisor: Leverne 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
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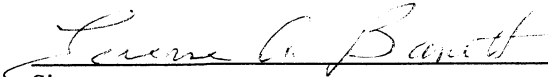
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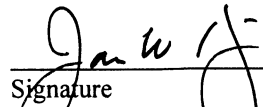
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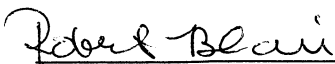
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Acknowledgments

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 than 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 a priori 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.

Delimitations and Limitations

Two delimitations are inherent in this study. First, the focus of this study was confined to two rural communities in one Midwestern state. Second, the focus of this study was confined to five participants in each of the two communities identified (total n = 10) representing each of the five living generations in each rural community.

Research has limitations, and four in particular may have impacted this study. First, due to the small sample size and focus on rural communities it is possible the findings of this study can not be generalized to all communities; second, due to the human and subjective nature of qualitative research, the data may be subject to other interpretations; third the findings of this study were based on the specific questions constructed for the interviews and may provide limited information; and fourth, the findings of this study may not be generalizable and applicable to other events of the Intergenerational Dialogue.

Significance of the Study

This study explored the changes in multigenerational rural community members' attitudes and behaviors that were the result of their participation in an Intergenerational Dialogue Process. This study is important because it provided insight into the role an Intergenerational Dialogue process had in bringing about change toward resolving community issues. Through the respectful and cooperative manner in which the Intergenerational Dialogue process was conducted, two rural communities were able to gain the ability to discover innovative and popular solutions to their community issues. The Intergenerational

Dialogue Process by its design is intentionally intergenerational and solicits the input of all five living generations. The Intergenerational Dialogue serves rural communities that have become stuck in their decision making process, thus building capacity for the transformation that needs to take place.

The data may substantiate the use of this tool as a viable way to solicit the input of community members not typically involved in local governance, allowing for more input on issues and more ideas to be generated. The increased buy-in by the youngest generation may encourage them to become involved in local governance and may help ease the out-migration problem. If greater opportunities are created for community involvement, new community leaders may emerge. Communities may decide that this tool is so effective they will implement the practice regularly as a solution to community issues that need to be addressed. It is quite possible that the Intergenerational Dialogue Process will enable community development to succeed where other community development processes have failed.

The findings of this research illustrate how including all generations in community problem-solving can influence a community's future. The findings of this study will describe how participants who experienced the Intergenerational Dialogues believe it changed attitudes and strategies toward working together. The findings of this study will demonstrate to communities that the Intergenerational Dialogue is a viable process for community organizing.

Chapter Two

Review of the Related Literature

Introduction

The literature review typically plays a minor role in qualitative studies. Researchers often review the literature to justify the need to study the research problem. In a qualitative study the literature is of secondary importance while understanding participants' views of a complex human phenomenon are of primary importance (Asmussen & Creswell, 1995). Sometimes a literature review may not take place until after data collection (Patton, 2002). I conducted a basic thematic review of the literature to justify the need to explore and understand participants' experiences of the Intergenerational Dialogue process. This literature review addresses six key themes in the existing body of knowledge related to the topic of this study: 1) the current situation in rural communities, 2) models of community development, 3) success of rural community development, 4) the use of community issue forums, specifically the Intergenerational Dialogue Process, 5) other types of generational dialogues, and 6) the meaning of discussion and dialogue. After themes were determined from data collected from the participants, the literature was incorporated that related to those themes in the implications section of this research.

Current Situation in Rural Communities

During the course of the last century, generations have become isolated, separated, and segregated from each other. Youth spend their days with youth, adults with other adults, older adults live in age-segregated housing, and children and older persons are cared for by age-segregated services. As a result, the gap widens and each generation tends to see itself separately rather than as a part of the larger community. The old don't trust the young and the young don't understand the old, which results in a general lack of respect and caring for members of other generations. In addition, tension rises between the generations as health and social programs for the youth and old are being reduced.

The study "Changing Faces—Intergenerational Issues and the Aging Rural Population" conducted in southwest Minnesota in 1995, states that Washington's budget cuts pit generations against each other by suggesting that one group is benefiting at the expense of the other. Paul Kerschner, a well-known gerontology expert responded by saying, "The watchword for the future is intergenerational. When all generations can experience each other in supportive ways, society wins in all ways (SMF, 2004).

Although the United States experienced prolonged periods of economic growth since World War II, there are still rural regions of the country that continue to stagnate and in some cases decline. It is troubling that many millions of people who live in these areas lack access to decent jobs, housing, and the types of social services that are taken for granted in much of urban America. Compared

to urban areas, rural areas have less than the national average per capita income, higher infant mortality rates, lower life expectancy, illiteracy is more prevalent. Even in prospering regions, one can find rural areas that have not kept pace with the region as a whole (Lyson & Falk, 1993).

Without a sufficient base of resources in the local area to meet primary needs, rural residents must do without or they must look outside their local territory for the resources they need. Rural people often travel great distances and to multiple centers to meet their needs for work, trade, education health services, recreation, and government services. Rural communities often become a place of residence only as relatives and neighbors who are strongly tied to one another have few mutual contacts outside the place of residence. A locality must have a comprehensive local society for “community” to develop fully. Rural communities often have major parts, such as employment, formal education, and other services, missing in their local societies (Wilkinson, 1999).

The unique problem of rural America has not been resolved and life has become more jangled and fragmented. No new form of community has been found. The small town has yet to greet its replacement (Oldenburg, 1999).

Models of Community Development

Any effective strategy of rural community development must address rural constraints to community development while retaining and building upon whatever advantages rural areas might have for community development (Ryan,

1971). Green and Haines (2002) wrote that there are some common issues and problems in the field of community development, but there is wide variation in how practitioners approach it. One way of conceptualizing these differences is the typology developed by James Christenson (1989), who identified three different models for community development: 1) Self-help model 2) Technical assistance model 3) Conflict model. The models are different in their role for the change agent, orientation, clientele, basis of change, image of the individual, core problem to be addressed, and action goal. Outside linkages and the planning process are important factors to change in all three community development models (see Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison of Christenson's Three Models for Development

	Self-help Model	Technical-Assistance Model	Conflict Model
Role of the Change agent	Facilitator, Educator	Adviser, Consultant	Organizer, advocate
Task/process Orientation	Process	Task	Process and task
Typical clientele	Middle class	Leaders, administrators	Poor, minorities
Image of individual	Inherently good, but goodness is suppressed	System-defined player of roles	Oppressed
Basis of change	People can identify and solve problems collectively	Science provides a means to solve problems	Power is the most basic of all resources
Core problems addressed	Capacity of people to take collective action	Capacity to harness science to solve human problems	Concentration of power in the hands of a few persons
Action goal	Community capacity	Technical problem	Redistribution of power

Source: Adapted from Christenson (1989). Theories of community development.

In the self-help model the process is more important than any task. The process is people within the community working together to make group decisions and take action to improve their community. This model is a process of change based on building community institutions and strengthening community relationships rather than to achieve any particular development objective. The self-help model is usually led by middle class members of the community and is a whole-community approach. This approach assumes that it is possible to motivate community members to participate in community affairs. Self-help focuses on the process rather than the outcome so wide participation is important. Even if the objectives of the project are not met, the success of the effort can be judged in terms of the extent of community involvement (Christenson, 1989).

Littrell and Hobbs (1989) identified some drawbacks to using a self-help model. The self-help model makes a number of assumptions about the structure of a community. If these assumptions do not apply to the community, the self-help model of community development will be difficult to use effectively.

The assumptions are:

1. Community members have a similarity of interest and that community development involves building consensus
2. Generalized participation and democratic decision making within the community are necessary and possible
3. The community has a degree of autonomy such that community members can influence the community's destiny.

Another drawback to the self-help model is that a general assumption exists that rural communities are homogeneous and consensus-based. The fact is that many rural communities have increasing disparities in income and access to other resources. Organizing may systematically bias development efforts away from the problems of the least advantaged citizens. Another obstacle to effective use of the self-help approach in rural towns is the fact that people know each other in many roles. There is a risk in taking a public stance which may result in disagreement with a boss, a customer, or a friend. This risk may seem too great in rural towns (Christenson, 1989).

Success of Rural Community Development

Rural areas will remain a collection of winners and losers. There is every indication that a pattern of uneven development will continue in farm-dependent rural areas. Rural communities each have a unique set of economic assets and liabilities. Because the U.S. and farm economies both are now subject to a complex set of global forces, different parts of the rural economy will respond to development efforts in different ways. There appears to be no rural economic tidal wave coming that will lift all boats. Instead, there will be a continual ebb and flow, some rural communities prospering, some declining, Not all of the rural communities in the 600-odd farm-dependent rural counties will survive (Drabenstott, 1991).

Rural community development is a process of local action, but a process less constrained by local factors than by factors at regional, national, and

international levels. It would be an error to expect the rural community to solve its own problems without recognizing constraints in the larger society, although we could also be wrong by ignoring the essential roles local actors and local associations must play in the process of community development (Wilkinson et al., 1983)

Informed and committed local leaders are needed to help cultivate the social relationship and shared identity that are the essence of community (Wilkinson, 1999). A key question is how can we address the rural constraints to community development while retaining and building upon the rural advantages for community development? Rural areas obviously need more jobs and income and better services than they presently have. Residents need increased access to resources for meeting daily needs, and meeting those needs will 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 community members, most rural-development schemes rely mainly on the efforts of local community members. Consequently, while there are some success stories, rural development programs to date have produced remarkably little rural development (Powers & Moe, 1982).

Rural development policy continues to be the province of state and local governments. That role occurs by default; no clearly defined federal rural policy appears likely. The United States has a farm policy; it has no rural policy. For more than fifty years, the U. S. has allowed farm policy to do the work of rural policy. As a result, farm policy has great inertia within Congress and U. S.

agriculture. Rural policy has little legislative momentum. Farm policy has too few rural people to achieve broad rural policy objectives (Drabenstott, Henry, & Gibson, 1987).

The Use of Community Issue Forums

The process of community development, whether in small towns and rural areas or in urban centers, is a local one. Policies of federal and state agencies can set the stage, but community development itself is an “inside job” a process of community-building by community actors and groups (Wilkinson, 1999).

Recently many rural communities have sponsored community forums. Local identity can be sharpened through open forums on community goals (Fitchen, 1991). 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. Traditional methods used by decision makers include political networks, personal relationships, phone calls, sample surveys, and reactions of people at public hearings. 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. Local issue forums are successful in attracting both citizens and leaders and can be used to move a community toward a consensus on issues of development (Hyman, 2000). A type of local issue forum that has been proven consistently successful in rural communities is the Intergenerational Dialogue.

The Intergenerational Dialogue Process

The Intergenerational Dialogue Process is four-month-long, civic engagement/community organizing process. Over the past fifteen years, the Dialogue has brought together representatives from all five generations, (thus serving all population cohorts) and utilizes. The Dialogue planning process and day-long event captures the unique perspectives and gifts that each generation brings to any issue or concern. During the four-month-long Intergenerational Dialogue & Action process, people of all ages and backgrounds listen to each other respectfully; and then work together to create a concrete, Intergenerational Action Plan that includes roles for all generations (J. V. Gambone, personal communication, February 21, 2005).

An Intergenerational Dialogue brings together between 50 and 75 or more individuals for five and a half hours. The group represents five generations and reflects as much diversity as contained in the community where the Intergenerational Dialogue is taking place. The Intergenerational Dialogue uses a real community issue or opportunity to kick off the discussion. It respects and values each generation's perspectives on the issue. All generations together make recommendations for future action (Gambone, 2001).

The Intergenerational Dialogue needs to be about something important to people. It includes all ages. It should feel fair, honor differences and not be partisan. It aims to establish broad bases for agreement. It should enliven and give hope. It should recognize politics but not be politicized. It can build consensus, recognize diversity, and encourage constructive change. People

should leave the Dialogue with a clear understanding that it is both their right and responsibility to take the intergenerational recommendations formed at the end of the Dialogue session and make them a reality in their community (J. V. Gambone, personal communication, February 21, 2005).

After years of organizing and producing successful Intergenerational Dialogues, Gambone (2001) put together some guidelines on how to create a Dialogue event. Every group is different, but you will find that these suggestions apply to nearly every group and situation. Gambone's ten basic considerations for a successful Intergenerational Dialogue Event:

- 1) Agree on principles of respect, caring, and cooperation. Everyone who participates in planning or conducting a Dialogue should agree on the basic principles of promoting respect, caring, and cooperation. If all of the people working to organize and conduct a "Dialogue Event" create an environment of respect, caring, and cooperation in the planning phase, there is an excellent chance that this spirit will carry through the actual Dialogue.
- 2) Form an Intergenerational Planning Committee made up of five generations and as much diversity as possible. The Dialogue process is useful for community groups, institutions, organizations, human service agencies, congregations, small businesses, corporations, and government agencies. Most Dialogues begin with an interested individual. This person brings together a Planning Committee representing as many generations as possible. The members of the Planning Committee become the co-sponsors for the

Intergenerational Dialogue. They will meet four times (once a month for four months) before the actual Dialogue event.

3) Set your Dialogue goal to include between 50–75, diverse intergenerational participants. An ideal group size for a Dialogue is 75, so aim to recruit 15 people from each of five generational groups. If you have a group of children under the age of 10, you may need to allow more time during the event itself. Any follow-up activities will come out of this initial Dialogue group. Therefore, your Follow-up group will be at least as diverse as your initial Dialogue group. Keep this fact in mind when inviting your participants.

4) Find a good Dialogue facilitator. The facilitator plays a key role in the process:

- Works with the Planning Committee throughout the entire planning process. If you use two facilitators, try to have a male and female from two different generations.
- Works with the Planning Committee to develop an authentic Scenario and a series of three to five questions for each of five generational cohorts.
- Develops a timeline with the Planning Committee to list pre-Dialogue Event tasks with milestones or completion dates to ensure the process gets done on time.
- Creates a clear and simple budget.

5) Recruit a committed team of co-planners/ organizers. You need people on the Planning Committee who are willing to make a four-month personal time commitment (about four hours per month). The normal planning time is

approximately four months from the time the decision is made to conduct a Dialogue to the event itself. The principal person organizing the Dialogue will probably need four months (15 to 18 hours per month) to organize a successful Dialogue.

6) Determine ability to cover expenses of both time and money.

7) Determine a compelling issue of sufficient interest to at least five generations. To find an issue of interest, it is important to have as many generations as possible represented on your Planning Committee. This will ensure that your issue will interest all generations. It will also ensure that your Dialogue will fairly represent all generations.

8) Choose an authentic scenario. It must be real, not made-up or theoretical. It must be drawn from real-life experience and be relevant to all generations.

9) Have a commitment to follow up. One goal of the Dialogue is to create specific intergenerational recommendations for action. The sponsors and Planning Committee should have a commitment to follow up the Dialogue with concrete actions. It is important to schedule at least one follow-up meeting after the Dialogue Event to allow the energy and ideas that come out of your Dialogue to take form.

10) Evaluate the Dialogue. In evaluating the Dialogue, the key information you are looking for is what people will do with the Dialogue information they have received after the Dialogue event. The real proof of the effectiveness of the Dialogue is if participants can answer the following questions affirmatively:

“Did the Dialogue change my current generational perspective?” “Did it stimulate me to action?”

J. V. Gambone (personal communication, April 6, 2006) outlined five major benefits to using the Intergenerational Dialogue Process:

- 1) The process can reduce the sense of helplessness and restore a sense of control for individuals, families, and communities by helping them find more answers to the question: “What can I do to help?” When citizens do not have a role in prevention and response, they feel more helpless and vulnerable.
- 2) The process empowers people from all age groups, races, and cultures to use their skills, experiences, and unique perspectives to assist professionals and other community leaders to develop appropriate responses to important community issues or concerns.
- 3) Participation in an Intergenerational Dialogue or follow up activities helps people learn from the experiences of all generations.
- 4) The process helps strengthen informal support systems and make them available to all age groups. Reducing social isolation and age segregation is particularly important for marginalized populations such as the elderly, adolescents, and minority communities.
- 5) The process can help recruit volunteers for mentoring, emergency prevention and response programs; senior centers, neighborhood watch, volunteer fire fighters, Red Cross etc.

Other Types of Generational Dialogues

There are other types of generational dialogues that use a different process. These types of generational dialogues have been used with varying degrees of success. In a project in Guinea (West Africa), The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) promoted a type of intergenerational dialogue between young girls and older women aimed at fostering mutual understanding of each other's problems and establishing a new relationship to sexuality and the diseases connected with it. The main aim of the intergenerational dialogue was to create a situation in which younger and older women could input their knowledge, experiences, and hopes in order to talk and listen to each other and outline common perspectives for the future. For women in Africa this is an urgent matter. The cultural breach between younger and older women results in a lack of communication between them and weakens further the already fragile position of women. The reaction of the people to this dialogue approach, compared to similar interventions in which they were accustomed to being lectured and preached to, was distinctly positive. The new readiness to talk openly about sexual issues also created an opportunity to call for the change in behavior patterns that is needed to combat the AIDS pandemic (Ronne, 2004).

This type of generational dialogue approach used two groups of people, younger and older women to counter mistrust and lack of communication. The most important result was the finding that the use of a dialogue can allow younger and older women to learn from and strengthen each other. The results of the dialogue raised hopes for the future (Ronne, 2004).

In a project of Communities of the Future (n.d.), a type of intergenerational dialogue conceived by Lewis Jaffe is used. This dialogue is based on the idea that networks of teams of seniors and young adults can help bridge the differences of each generation if time is spent listening to each other. One of the most successful tactics for building “capacities for transformation” in local communities is to network individuals and /or teams in dialogue that allow new ideas and innovations to evolve. This mechanism of social transformation is based on the idea that it takes time for true cultural innovations to evolve. There are two key needs for this process to be successful:

- Be open to each other in order to form an understanding of your commonalities and differences commonalities.
- Develop an interest in helping to network other teams over time, so that relationships between generations in each local community will grow in strength.

A key outcome of this idea is to insure that the two people in each team create a desire to help the other feel good about themselves, build a bridge between generations, and work together for the common good of both people and the community at large. It is expected that each person will become more competent and caring, a synergy will emerge which connects the talents and humanity of each team member to each other (Communities of The Future, n.d.).

The Meaning of Discussion and Dialogue

Physicist Warner Heisenberg remembered having conversations with associates that had a lasting effect on his thinking. Those conversations gave

birth to many of the theories for which his colleagues became famous.

Heisenberg's conversations illustrate the staggering potential of collaborative learning. Collectively, we can be more insightful, more intelligent than we can possibly be individually. The IQ of a group can be much greater than the IQ of the individuals. (Senge, 1990).

David Bohm (1996) contends there are two main types of discourse, dialogue and discussion. Discussion has the same root as percussion and concussion. It really means "to break things up" and emphasizes the idea of analysis, where there may be many points of view, and where everybody is presenting a different idea. Analyzing and breaking up has its value but will not get us very far beyond our various points of view. Discussion is almost like a ping-pong game, where people are batting the ideas back and forth and the object of this game is to win or to get points for yourself. Possibly you will take up somebody else's idea to back up your own, but the basic point is to win the game. A sustained emphasis on winning does not give priority to coherence and truth. Bohm suggests that what is needed to bring about such a change of priorities is "dialogue," which is a different mode of communication. In dialogue nobody is trying to win. Everybody wins if anybody wins. There is a different sort of spirit to it. By contrast with discussion, the original meaning of dialogue means "passing or moving through," a free flowing stream of meaning between and through people. This will make possible a flow of meaning in the whole group, out of which may emerge some new understanding.

The purpose of a dialogue is to go beyond any one individual's understanding. In dialogue, individuals gain insights that could not be achieved individually. People in dialogue are no longer in opposition, the goal is no longer winning, they are participating in a pool of common meaning which is capable of constant development and change. All people have had some experience in dialogues, in those special conversations that begin to have a "life of their own," taking us places where we could never have imagined or planned in advance. (Senge, 1990).

Conclusion

The quality of life in rural communities is at risk. Effective rural community development must address rural constraints while retaining advantages of rural areas. Community issue forums have been helpful in rural communities. The Self-help model is one of three development theories developed by Christenson, and can be used in community forums. The self-help model emphasizes the process instead of the task, and people within the community work together to make group decisions and take actions to improve their community. Although there are some drawbacks to using this model, it is the Self-help model that the Intergenerational Dialogue best relates.

The Intergenerational Dialogue is a type of local issue forum that overcomes the drawbacks of using traditional Self-help models of community development. Different types of generational dialogues do not include all the generations and have been used with varying degrees of success. Often older

people and younger people are not considered to have specific interests in community problem-solving, yet they really do, its just that other models have not looked at them that way. The Intergenerational Dialogue Process is the only community organizing model that intentionally reaches across all the generations in a community by involving representatives from all generations in effective dialogue to voice their unique perspectives in seeking solutions to community issues.

By engaging the full potential of the different perspectives in a community the dialogue process is more effective than the discussions offered by other community issue forums. This research is a valuable contribution to the theories that exist on intergenerational issues because the Intergenerational Dialogue is a process based on why we should look at the world through an intergenerational lens. While there is research on specific models of community development, much of what is written about the Intergenerational Dialogue is opinion or anecdotal in value. This research adds to the body of knowledge by providing research about residents' perspectives of the Intergenerational Dialogue Process from the perspectives of community members who were involved in the Dialogue and substantiates the use of this process in rural communities.

Chapter Three: Procedures

Rationale for a Qualitative Study

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) refer to qualitative research as an umbrella term to refer to several research strategies that share certain characteristics. The data collected have been termed soft, that is, rich in description of people, places, and conversations, and not easily handled by statistical procedures. Research questions are not framed by operationalizing variables; rather, they are formulated to investigate topics in all their complexity. Creswell (1998) defined qualitative research as an inquiry process that explores a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of participants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

This study used qualitative methods of research and a multiple case study tradition to describe participants' beliefs about the changes that occurred in personal attitudes and actions through the use of an Intergenerational Dialogue held in their rural communities. Two cases of the Dialogue were studied.

There are some main characteristics that are shared by qualitative studies. Merriam (1998) identified six key characteristics of qualitative research as:

- 1) Researchers are primarily interested in the process rather than outcomes or products (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative methods are used to explore and understand a complex human and/or social phenomenon (Creswell, 2002).

- 2) Researchers are interested in meaning, such as how people interpret their experiences (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative research methods are particularly suited to uncovering meanings people assign to their experiences (Polkinghorne, 1994).
- 3) The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, information is mediated through this human instrument (Merriam, 1998). The researcher interacts with participants (Stake, 1995).
- 4) Data collection involves fieldwork. The researcher goes to the setting, people, or site to observe behavior in its natural setting (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative research is used to study individuals in their natural setting and when the topic needs to be explored in detail (Creswell, 1997).
- 5) The research reported is descriptive. The researcher describes what is seen, or heard (Merriam, 1998). The results of qualitative studies can inform researchers and readers about how a sample views an issue and how diverse their views are (Creswell, 2002). In a qualitative study, the inquiry often begins with a broad “how” or “what” question so initial forays into the topic describe what is going on (Creswell, 1997).
- 6) The researcher uses an inductive process (Merriam, 1998). The thought process involves moving from the details to the general points, or perspectives, or generalizations, or themes. Qualitative studies clarify participants’ experiences; the methods used involve developing codes, categories and themes inductively rather than imposing predetermined classifications on the data (Creswell, 1997).

Merriam's six characteristics of qualitative research can be compared to key characteristics of this study. For this reason the use of a qualitative research design was appropriate. The key characteristics of this study are:

- 1) The focus of this study was not about the outcomes of the Intergenerational Dialogue, but about participants' perspectives of the role the Dialogue served in changing attitudes and behaviors.
- 2) This study was well suited to the qualitative approach because it allowed the exploration, and description needed to understand the participants' perspectives and experiences of the Intergenerational Dialogue. The initial research questions posed in chapter one of this study were broad questions that began with the word "how" so that initial attempts into the topic describe what is going on. The focus of the study was on participant's perspectives of what was important and the meaning they ascribed to their experiences with the Intergenerational Dialogue.
- 3) When I observed the Intergenerational Dialogues in the two rural communities and again when I conducted the interviews one year after the Dialogue, I was able to interact with the participants and be a human instrument collecting data and making observations.
- 4) The best way to collect data for this exploratory study was in the two rural communities, first by taking field notes and participating in conversations while observing the Dialogues, then by conducting face-to-face interviews with participants in their natural settings. I conducted the interviews in the home communities of the participants.

- 5) The findings of this study are presented in thick, rich narrative description that brings participants' voices to the discussion of the use of the Intergenerational Dialogue Process.
- 6) I made every attempt as a researcher to suspend my biases during data collection and analysis to allow key themes to emerge from the data.

Rationale for a Multiple Case Study

This study used a multiple case study tradition to describe ten participants' perspectives about the influence of an Intergenerational Dialogue that was held in their rural communities. This study explored two separate events of an Intergenerational Dialogue. Both of the Intergenerational Dialogues took place in Midwestern rural communities.

Three distinct characteristics of qualitative case study research are:

- 1) The use of a case study approach allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events (Yin, 1989). A case study is the description and analysis of a particular phenomenon such as an event, object, person group, institution, program, condition or process (Creswell, 1998).
- 2) A key characteristic of a case study is the study of a bounded system. A case study is typically bounded by space, time, participant criteria, or events (Creswell, 1997).

3) The researcher seeks to develop an in-depth understanding of the case or cases through the collection of multiple forms of data such as pictures, scrapbooks, videotapes, and e-mail. The researcher also uses multiple methods of data collection, such as interviews, observations, and reviewing relevant documents (Creswell, 2002).

These three characteristics of case study research can be compared to key characteristics of this study. For this reason the use of a case study research design was appropriate. The key characteristics of this study are:

- 1) This study explored community members' perspectives of the Intergenerational Dialogue Process and how they believed it changed their attitudes and the communities' capacity for working together.
- 2) The parameters of this research are the two rural communities in which the research was conducted. This case is bounded by time. The approximate one year of time between the day of the Dialogue event, and time when the participants were contacted to take part in this study. I chose the context of rural communities for this study because it allowed me to look through the lens of the participants interviewed and explore the unique challenges that exist, in those rural areas.
- 3) All three methods of data collection were used in this study. I observed the Intergenerational Dialogues that took place in these two rural communities and recorded field notes. I interviewed 10 participants one year after the Dialogues were conducted. I reviewed a number of

documents that contributed to my understanding of the communities and provided the context for this study.

Case study research may include multiple cases, called collective case studies or multiple case studies, in which multiple cases are described to provide insight into an issue or program (Creswell, 2002). Creswell, (1997) suggests that the more cases a researcher studies, the greater the lack of depth in any single case. Researchers who consider a large number of cases are often motivated by the idea of generalizability, a term that holds little meaning for most qualitative researchers (Glesne & Peskin, 1992).

Rather than study a single case I chose to study two cases to provide greater insight into residents' perspectives of the Intergenerational Dialogue. Since qualitative studies produce so much data, I limited the study to two cases to keep the study manageable.

Sampling Method

The sampling method for this multiple case study was a form of purposeful sampling, specifically called maximum variation sampling. In purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select "information-rich" individuals and sites that will help them understand the central phenomenon and increase the utility of information received from small samples. (Patton, 1990, Schumacher & McMillian, 1997). Schumacher and McMillan (1997) suggested that individuals are purposefully selected because they are knowledgeable and informed about the phenomenon of interest. They contend that the power and logic of purposeful

sampling is that a few cases studied yield many insights about the topic. There is nothing random or statistically representative about the sample and, typically, the intent is not to generalize to a larger population.

Ten participants were contacted who had participated in the Intergenerational Dialogue in their rural community and were willing to participate in this study. The participants were contacted nearly one year after the Intergenerational Dialogues was conducted. There are no guidelines for determining the size of the purposeful samples. The sample should be large enough to be credible given the purpose of the study, but small enough to permit adequate depth and detail for each unit in the case (Patton, 1988).

A characteristic of qualitative research is to present multiple perspectives of individuals in order to represent the complexity of the topic. The maximum variation sampling method is a strategy to build that complexity in the research. Maximal variation sampling is a purposeful sampling strategy in which the researcher chooses participants that differ on some characteristic (Creswell, 2002). In each community in this study, five people (one person representing each of the five living generations) were selected to participate in this study. As a representative of their generation, each participant brought their generations' unique perspective to this research.

A gatekeeper is an individual who provides entrance to a site, helps researchers locate people, and assists in the identification of places to study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). In each of the two Midwestern rural communities chosen as case sites for this study, a list of possible participants

was obtained from a gatekeeper nearly one year after the Dialogue took place. At both sites the gatekeepers knew who attended the Intergenerational Dialogues and who fit the necessary age cohorts to represent the five living generations. Use of maximum variation sampling allowed the perspectives of each of the five living generations to be described.

Data Collection Techniques

In this case study multiple methods were used to collect data in an attempt to provide a deep understanding and holistic perspective of residents' perspectives of the Intergenerational Dialogue Process.

Nearly one year before I interviewed the participants of this study, I observed the Intergenerational Dialogues in their community. At the Dialogue events, I recorded observations. I took field notes detailing the time, the setting, and peoples' reactions as the Dialogue took place. Data were also collected through face-to-face, in depth, semi-structured interviews with ten community members who had participated in the Intergenerational Dialogue. Five community members (one participant representing each of the five living generations) in two Midwestern rural communities, were interviewed nearly one year after the Dialogues were conducted in their community.

Guided by an interview protocol (Appendix D) the ten interviews were audio-recorded and lasted an average of forty minutes each. The interviews took place in the participants' natural setting. The Interview protocol consisted of six open-ended questions and were sequenced logically to explore the subject in

depth (Henerson, Morris, & Fitz-Gibbon, 1987). Each participant was asked an “ice breaker question,” then six open-ended interview questions that were designed to gather data for the research questions of this study. Probes were used for clarification or elaboration as the interviews developed. At the end of the interview I asked an open-ended question which allowed the participants to add any other information they wished to contribute to this study.

The ten interviews in this study were conducted after approval of the study was obtained by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board (Appendix B). Prior to the beginning of each interview, participants were asked to sign an IRB informed consent form (Appendix A). Participants were asked to choose a pseudonym for themselves and they were assured that the data collected in the interviews would be confidential. All participants were informed that participation in this study was voluntary and that they could leave at anytime during the interview.

Each of the ten audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim, yielding an average 17 pages of text per interview. Verbatim transcription allowed information to be accurately collected from each participant. Appendix H displays an interview matrix documenting the time and length of each interview.

Field notes were taken to describe the participants and the interview site during the course of the interviews. Informants provided detailed biographical information at the time of the interview. General biographical information was collected from everyone who participated in the Intergenerational Dialogue over one year before this research.

Data Analysis

In case study research, the analysis consists of constructing a detailed description of the case and its setting (Creswell, 1997). Stake (1995) recommended four forms of data analysis in case study research:

1. Categorical aggregation, where the researcher seeks a collection of instances from the data, hoping that issue-relevant meaning will emerge.
2. Direct interpretation, where the researcher looks at a single instance and draws meaning from it without looking for multiple instances.
3. Pattern identification, where the researcher identifies patterns that emerge in the data as he or she looks for a correspondence between two or more categories.
4. Naturalistic generalizations, where the researcher develops generalizations from analyzing the data, i.e., generalizations that people learn from the case.

To interpret the meaning of the data I used the six steps suggested by Creswell (2002) for data analysis in a case study:

- prepared and organized data for analysis;
- explored the data by carefully examining text segments;
- described and developed themes from the data;
- represented and reported the findings;
- interpreted the findings; and
- validated the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

I carefully categorized the ten transcribed interviews so I knew the time, location, and participant in each interview. I read through the interviews to get a sense of the whole. I coded individual transcripts, first using an in vivo coding process that identified key words or text segments in the margins, and represented participants' words as accurately as possible. I used the right hand margins of the transcripts to note questions or comments about potential emerging themes. The goal was to identify a manageable number of themes with potential sub-themes. I kept a master list of codes and emerging themes (Appendix J) as part of an audit trail.

To help organize the data, I copied the codes and text segments from each interview to separate colors of paper. I sorted each text segment and code into categories (Appendix I) that represented the three major themes and nine sub-themes of this research. The themes and sub-themes will be discussed at length in chapter five.

Verification Strategies

One goal for qualitative research design is to demonstrate internal validity (credibility-how does it match reality) as well as external validity (how findings can be applied to another situation).

Internal Validity

Several strategies may be used to demonstrate the credibility (i.e. internal validity) of a study. An extended period for data collection and the use of informants' actual words as data are some of the ways to establish internal

validity of qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). In order to convey the consistency and dependability of the results of the study, an emphasis on the importance of triangulation and member checking should be used (Stake 1995).

The specific strategies I used in this study to establish internal validity (the accuracy of the information) were triangulation and member checking.

Triangulation of Data.

I used two forms of triangulation in this study. 1) This study used multiple sources of data, i.e., multiple participants, which provided 10 different sources of data from two different locations.

2) I used multiple methods of data collection, including interviews, observations, and the use of relevant documents.

Member Checking.

All textual data and data analysis were offered to the participants to check for accuracy of information. Each interview was transcribed by the researcher and participants were asked to verify the accuracy of the information and to make changes if necessary. Each participant signed an interview verification form (Appendix F) verifying the transcript of their interview and were able to approve the transcript with or without changes.

External Validity

External validity in qualitative research refers to the extent to which the findings of a particular inquiry have applicability in other contexts of with other subjects (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). A procedure for establishing external validity in

a study is to describe the setting, participants and themes in a qualitative study in rich detail (Creswell & Miller, 2000, Denzin, 1989).

To establish external validity in this study, I described the setting of the intergenerational Dialogues and the settings for the interviews in detail. I collected demographic information from each participant in order to give the rich descriptions required of this study. This study explored a bounded system, and described the cases in depth, using thick texture in its description.

The concept of reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated (Merriam, 1998). In a qualitative study the issue of replication becomes problematic. According to Merriam, the qualitative paradigm cannot replicate the laws of human behavior. Researchers instead choose to seek to describe the world as those in the world experience it.

Qualitatively the issue is whether the findings are dependable. The key strategy I used in addressing this issue was leaving a clear audit trail that meticulously documents the methods, researcher activities, and discussions used in this research. Though this study is not able to be replicated, other researchers could replicate the study's methodology if they followed its clear audit trail.

Ethical Considerations

I submitted the research design for this qualitative study to the Institutional Review Board at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and received its approval. Creswell (2002) explained that participants should know the purpose of the study and how the research results would be used before they participate in any

research. Each participant signed an Informed Consent Form, (Appendix A) where I explained the purpose of the research and the requirements and rights of the participants.

Participation needs to be voluntary (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I explained to the informants about voluntary participation when I asked them to participate in this study. When I interviewed participants, I informed them about confidentiality and did not collect off the record information. I informed the participants that the audio-tapes of the interviews would be stored in a secure area and later destroyed. Researchers should remove from the analysis any information that would harm participants (Creswell). If participants shared information that would have been harmful to them, I deleted that information from the analysis.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher as a primary data collector predisposes the identification of personal biases at the outset of the study (Merriam, 1988). However, a qualitative design allows for the usefulness of such biases.

For the past seven years I have been studying community phenomena. The first three years I studied urban communities and neighborhoods. I was able to work with an agency that partnered neighborhoods together to pool needed resources so they could be better serve urban areas. Four years ago I began studying rural communities because I was interested in the unique challenges facing rural areas such as diminishing economies, aging populations and youth out-migration.

When I started working for a statewide initiative to resolve rural issues I was convinced that once a rural community started to experience decline, they were past a point of no return and would continue to diminish. When I began to study with my academic adviser, who works extensively with rural communities, I was introduced to the Intergenerational Dialogue Process. I had become interested in the Dialogue Process and shared the notion of using it as a community development tool with the director of the state wide initiative I was employed with. The director suggested I continue working with my adviser to explore the Dialogue and see if it produced any positive results.

After studying many theories of community development, I contend that there is no ABC formula that will work in rural areas. Rural community development is situational. In order for community development to be successful in rural areas, the community's unique situation must be understood. Any idea or notion of change in a rural community must be embraced by the residents or it will most likely fail. The Intergenerational Dialogue is a bottom up process that allows informal leaders to emerge and new ideas to be formed. The ideas or solutions to issues presented to the community are from the community itself and embraced by the majority of the residents. Being involved with the Intergenerational Dialogue has changed my mind about the future of rural communities.

I have acted as a facilitator and observer in rural communities where the Intergenerational Dialogue took place. My deep interest in understanding participants' perspectives of the Intergenerational Dialogue Process has led me

to this study; specifically to discover if rural residents think the Intergenerational Dialogue Process changed attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, the use of a researcher-as-the-human instrument provided the potential for the issues in this case study to be identified and for a holistic understanding of these issues. In the study, I took the stance of “empathic neutrality” (Patton, 1990) by relying on my personal experiences and a nonjudgmental approach when interpreting the data.

A qualitative approach should emphasize the researcher’s role as an active learner who can tell the story from the participants’ view rather than as an “expert” who passes judgment on participants (Creswell, 1997). To accurately represent the perspectives of the participants in this study, I attempted to suspend my personal feelings and biases to objectively as possible collect and analyze the data and describe the results.

Chapter Four

Two Intergenerational Dialogues: The Context of This Research

Introduction to the Communities

Two communities were used as case sites in this study. I chose these communities because I had observed Intergenerational Dialogues in both communities in 2003 and both communities were in rural areas. The communities of Central City and North East (pseudonyms) addressed similar community issues in their Intergenerational Dialogues.

Central City

Located in the central part of the state, Central City was incorporated in 1886. Central City is served by two state highways and is 65 miles from Interstate 80. The town is served daily by a short-line railroad, but is 60 miles from a major switching yard. There is a local use airport with a 4500 foot runway; however there is no local air service or aircraft maintenance at that facility. Central City is nearly 70 miles from an airport that offers limited air service or scheduled bus service. The nearest airport offering scheduled air service by major carriers is 225 miles from Central City.

Central City is nestled in a fertile and lush area. The city is laid out on flat land, but gentle rolling and wooded hills surround the town. In the city there are nine local churches, and four schools, as well as city and county services, a police department, and many local businesses. Recreation is a major attraction in

Central City with over 80 acres of parks, and a wonderful golf course. Central City is located near a large reservoir that can host any water sport and many other state attractions.

The community is very proud of its educational facilities. The public school system has an elementary school, a middle school and a senior high school. There is also a private elementary and middle school. The community's student population in 2004 was about 550 students with a 10 to 1 student-teacher ratio.

There is not a lot of ethnic diversity in Central City. Over 96% percent of the population is Caucasian while only 4% is Hispanic or another race. Most of the population is of German or Czech decent, followed by Irish, Polish and English. The median age of Central City's population is significantly above the state average. Nearly 60% of the population is above 50 years of age.

Central City has been consistently losing population for the last several decades. In 1980 the population was 2,658. In 1990 the population decreased to 2,481. In 2000 the population continued to fall to 2,269. Between the years 2000 and 2004 the population dropped by nearly 4% to 2,088. This population trend has many Central City community leaders and residents concerned about the future of their town. People under age 20 represent nearly 25% percent of the town's population and most of those people will more than likely leave after finishing school. Central City was looking for a way to reverse this trend and attract people to their city while retaining the young people who already live there.

Community leaders from Central City contacted the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) to help find a method of attracting and retaining people

in their community. In June of 2003 a professor from UNL, who had been facilitating the Intergenerational Dialogue process in rural communities, suggested to community leaders to engage their residents in finding a solution to this community issue by conducting an Intergenerational Dialogue. The community of Central City formed an Intergenerational Dialogue Planning Committee and an Intergenerational Dialogue was conducted on September 20, 2003.

North East

An expanding railroad came into the northern part of the state in 1880 and made an agreement with the state that the railroad would plat a town in exchange for right of way. In that same year the railroad recorded a map of North East in the county seat 19 miles away. North East is situated in the upper eastern part of the state and is located on top of a hill surrounded by some of the most beautiful farmland in the state.

The village of North East was served by two railroads, but both rail lines were abandoned by the early 1960s. In 1963 the railroad station closed permanently, leaving the community with no rail service. North East is served by two improved state highways. The nearest four lane highway is Interstate 29 which is 25 miles to the east of town. Interstate 80 is 30 miles from the community of North East. There is a local-use airport within 15 miles that has a 3,600 foot runway, but offers no transportation service or aircraft maintenance. The town has access to commercial air transportation with limited scheduled air

service and scheduled bus service 45 miles away. The nearest airport that is served by major carriers is 90 miles from North East.

The North East school system was merged with another nearby school district in 1982 and continues to maintain an excellent educational experience for its students. The merged public school system remains in the community of North East. There is an elementary, middle, and senior high school along with one private elementary school in town. There are 320 students registered in North East schools.

The population of North East peaked at nearly 1,000 in 1909. At that time the community was predominately of German and Scandinavian decent and contained seven churches, an opera house, schools, banks, and a complete array of businesses. The town also had a planing mill, flour mill, wagon makers, and a natural gas plant. By the year 2000 the population of North East had decreased by almost 50% to 520 residents. The village still has four active churches, the normal county and city services, a library, two elevators and a local grocery store and mini-mart. North East has nice recreation facilities for a town its size. There is a public golf course, four tennis courts, three public parks, and a swimming pool. Other recreation facilities are within a short distance of North East.

By the year 2004 North East lost another 4% of its citizens, bringing the total to 497 residents. While investigating this loss of population, the North East Village Board found that older citizens were leaving the community of North East, often to live in nearby communities. They discovered that when older residents

could no longer maintain their homes, the community did not offer enough places for them to live. The village board also found that newer or larger homes were not available in the town for younger people with families. The city could not retain older people and did not have housing for people who wanted to move into the community.

Much like the community of Central City, The North East Village Board contacted the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to help find a solution to their housing problem. A professor from UNL who had been working with rural communities in the state suggested conducting an Intergenerational Dialogue to focus on their community issues. He oriented the Village Board to the Intergenerational Dialogue process and the Village Board decided to use the process to organize and motivate their community. The UNL professor agreed to facilitate the Intergenerational Dialogue in North East and an Intergenerational Dialogue Planning Committee was formed. North East conducted an Intergenerational Dialogue on October 11, 2003.

Structure of an Intergenerational Dialogue Process

J. V. Gambone (personal communication, June 8, 2005) suggested not thinking of the Intergenerational Dialogue as just a forum or meeting; but to think of it is an event where something will happen. The Intergenerational Dialogue event is designed to last five to six hours and contains five essential elements. The five structural elements are: the Circle of Generations, the Scenario, the

Generational Panels, Intergenerational Work Groups, and the Recommendations.

The following sub-sections describe each of these structural elements.

Circle of Generations

This exercise helps organize the day's event and serves as a non-threatening ice-breaker where people meet each other informally. The Circle of Generations gives participants of every age represented an opportunity to feel that their opinions are equally valid and valued.

The oldest person and the youngest person in the group are asked to come forward and are introduced to the group. After the ages of the two people are identified, every person in the Dialogue is asked to form a circle oldest to youngest between them, forming a Circle of Generations. Before this exercise participants are instructed to write on an index card a single word that they believe describes their generation. All group members are also asked to write their ages in the corner of their index card. While standing in the circle, group members are asked to look around the circle and see the diversity, by age, culture, and race. Starting with the oldest person, all group members are asked to say the word they have written on their card that describes their generation. While the group is in the circle they are asked to count off (one through eight) and write their number down on their index card. This number is used for their Intergenerational Work Group in the afternoon.

The Scenario

The Dialogue facilitator uses information from the planning committee to create a scenario that outlines a version of a community issue. The scenario is

read aloud to the Intergenerational Dialogue participants to establish a focus for the discussion in the Dialogue. The scenario must be open-ended, compelling and interesting to the youngest and oldest person invited to the Dialogue. The scenario should not be over a few paragraphs in length and it is helpful if the scenario involves at least two or three generations.

To allow the audience to focus only on the story, the scenario is read aloud to the group from outside of the room, or from the rear of the room. The purpose is to allow participants' imaginations to visualize the scenario, which creates more personal ownership. Some key story elements may be purposely left out of the scenario so each of the generations present at the Dialogue will fill in those parts of the story. After the scenario is read a copy of it is given to all members of the group.

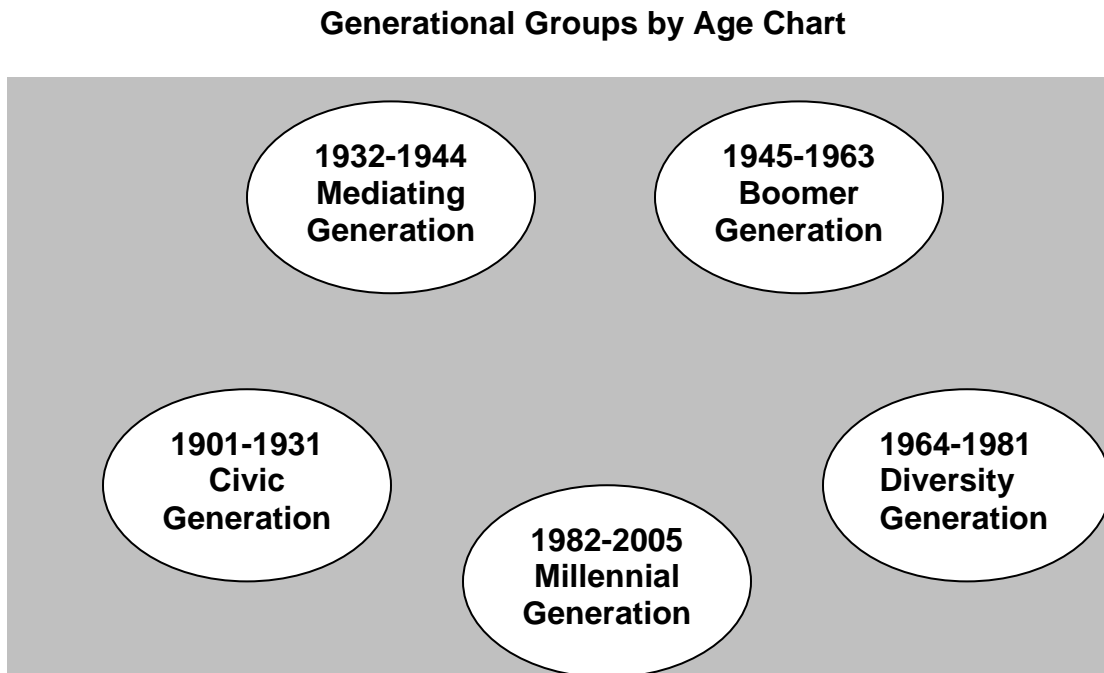
The Generational Panels

The facilitator introduces the Generational Groups by Age Chart (see Figure 1) and displays it in full view of the Dialogue group. The birth years of the age cohorts and the meanings of those groupings on the chart are briefly explained to the Dialogue participants.

Four or five volunteers from each of the five age cohorts are asked to come to the front of the room for the questions portion of the Dialogue. Facing the audience in front of the room, one age cohort at a time forms a Generational Panel that responds to the questions written by the facilitator. The questions are based on the scenario issue and designed to gain insight into each generation's

perspective of the issue. Each set of questions has the same theme but different specifics for each generation.

Figure 1: Generational Groups by Age Chart



Source: Adapted from Gambone (2001) Together for Tomorrow

The intention of the questions and answers is for members of the Dialogue group to gain a new appreciation for each generation's perspective as they listen to each generational panel respond to the questions. At the end of each Generational Panel's question and answer session, the Dialogue group is allowed to question the Generational Panels. After the five generational groups finish answering the questions and return to their seats, the facilitator recounts for the group some of the answers given by the different generations. The facilitator can present the similarities and differences that occurred between the generations during the questions and discussion.

Intergenerational Work Groups

After the facilitator is finished commenting on the generational questions portion of the Dialogue, the group is instructed to assemble into small groups based on the numbers that they were given in the Circle of Generations. These Intergenerational Work Groups ideally should contain at least one member of each generation. Each group is given several large pieces of paper and a marker to record their final recommendations.

Each Intergenerational Work Group then develops three positive solutions to the issue described in the scenario. Everyone in the work group gives one recommendation or comment while keeping in mind the perspectives shared from each generation. The work groups must record three recommendations on their paper to present to the Dialogue group.

Recommendations

All Intergenerational Work Groups present their intergenerational recommendations to the Dialogue group, and then post their recommendations for all to vote on. When all the groups have finished their presentations and posted their recommendations for the entire group to view, the facilitator rereads the recommendations and combines recommendations when possible. Everyone is instructed to vote on the recommendation or recommendations they believe will best solve the issue. Participants are allowed two votes and can vote twice on the same recommendation. The facilitator tallies the votes and announces the top recommendations. With an initial listing of over 20 recommendations for action, the Dialogue group ends up with a prioritized list of the top three or four

recommendations. The Dialogue group's top rated recommendations represent their intergenerational response to the issue. The facilitator helps the group organize an action plan based on the top recommended solutions. Members of all the generations are encouraged to attend future meetings in order for progress to continue. Table 3 contains a sample agenda for an Intergenerational Dialogue.

Table 3: Sample Agenda of an Intergenerational Dialogue

Time	Agenda Activity
9:00 a.m. - 9:10 a.m.	Welcome and Introductions
9:10 a.m. - 9:40 a.m.	Circle of Generations
9:40 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Why have an Intergenerational Dialogue
10:00 a.m. - 10:05 a.m.	Reading of Scenario
10:05 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Generational Dialogue Panels
11:00 a.m. - 11:10 a.m.	Break
11:10 a.m. - 11:40	Generational Dialogue Panels
11:40 a.m. – Noon	Learning about the Generations
Noon – 1:00 p.m.	Working Lunch
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Action Planning In Intergenerational Groups
2:00 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.	Intergenerational Recommendations for Action
2:45 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Evaluation and Concluding Remarks

Source: Adapted from Gambone (2001) Together for Tomorrow

The Central City Intergenerational Dialogue

Central City conducted an Intergenerational Dialogue on Saturday, September 20, 2003. A professor from UNL, who was trained by Dr. Gambone to facilitate the Intergenerational Dialogue, led the Dialogue event. I was one of two graduate students who assisted the facilitator. The Intergenerational Dialogue was held at the Central City Country Club, which is located on the north edge of town. The country club was large enough to accommodate the event and was equipped with banquet tables and kitchen facilities. The Central City Chamber of Commerce and the Intergenerational Dialogue Planning Committee performed the logistics and provided coffee, juice and pastries in the morning session of the Dialogue and lunch in the afternoon.

People began to filter into the meeting room at 8:30 a.m. and were instructed to write their name on the sign-up sheet that represented their generational cohort. When the meeting started about 50 people had signed up on the sheets and were seated on one side of the banquet tables facing the front of the room. After friends and families greeted each other informally and sat down, a member of the Intergenerational Dialogue Planning Committee announced that the Dialogue would begin. A member of the Chamber of Commerce introduced the facilitator and graduate assistants. The facilitator thanked everyone for taking an active role in their community's future, and reinforced the purpose of the Intergenerational Dialogue. He introduced the Central City Intergenerational Dialogue Planning Committee to the group and thanked the members for their hard work. After the facilitator finished the introductions, he explained each

agenda item and the process for the day. The day's agenda was posted on the wall in full view of the group.

The group was instructed to move to the rear of the room where there was a large, open space. The oldest person in the group, who was 90 years of age, and the youngest person in the group, who was 14 years of age, were asked to come to the front of the open space where they were introduced to the rest of the group. The other people in the group were asked to fill in between the two people, oldest-to-youngest, and form a Circle of Generations. While in the circle everyone was instructed to write a single word they believed best described their generation. The facilitator then asked everyone to record their age in the corner of that same index card. All in the Circle of Generations were asked to hold their index card in front of them and speak the word they had written on their index card. Starting with the oldest person in the circle, one person at a time said aloud the word they felt described their generation.

I observed that as people in the circle spoke their descriptive words, the rest of the group listened carefully and remained very quiet. It was apparent that the group was interested in the variation of the words. People looked at each other, communicated nonverbally, and understood why the people who were speaking chose their descriptive words. After all present had said their descriptive word, they were instructed to look around the circle and notice the diversity in the people and the words they used to describe their generation. It appeared to me as if the different generations assembled in this Dialogue exercise had already started to understand and appreciate each other. Table 4

identifies the descriptive words used in Central City's Circle of Generations and the ages of the participants.

Table 4: Central City Descriptive Words X Age X Generation

Descriptive Word	Age	Generation Represented	Descriptive Word	Age	Generation Represented
Great	90	Civic	Dynamic	45	Boomer
Energy	78	Civic	Free Spirit	43	Boomer
War	76	Civic	Materialistic	43	Boomer
Tired	75	Civic	Care Free	42	Boomer
Aggressive	74	Civic	Driven	42	Boomer
Cautious	72	Civic	Driven	41	Boomer
Relevant	70	Mediating	E-Mail	38	Diversity
Adjustable	69	Mediating	Outgoing	37	Diversity
Experienced	68	Mediating	Energetic	36	Diversity
Blessed	65	Mediating	Independent	35	Diversity
Reserved	65	Mediating	Busy	32	Diversity
Sandwich	62	Mediating	Social	31	Diversity
Boomer	62	Mediating	Change	28	Diversity
Friendly	60	Boomer	Busy	27	Diversity
Fun Loving	57	Boomer	Resourceful	26	Diversity
Achievers	55	Boomer	Self Driven	25	Diversity
Activities	55	Boomer	Independent	18	Millennial
Groovy	54	Boomer	Diverse	18	Millennial
Satisfied	54	Boomer	Different	17	Millennial
Large	54	Boomer	Technology	16	Millennial
Rebellious	53	Boomer	Independent	14	Millennial
Rock & Roll	48	Boomer	Out Spoken	14	Millennial
Transition	46	Boomer			

When the Circle of Generations exercise was finished, the facilitator explained to the group why it is important to approach issues intergenerationally and gave a brief background of the Intergenerational Dialogue. Using the

information given to him by the Dialogue Planning Committee, the facilitator explained that some people in the town were concerned that Central City did not appear to be a friendly place to live. He explained that this could be a cause for the decline in population in their city and was one of the issues used in the scenario as a focus for the Intergenerational Dialogue. The facilitator reminded everyone that different generations may view the issues cited in the scenario from different perspectives. He encouraged participants to try to view the issues through the lens of the different generations.

To establish the focus of the Intergenerational Dialogue, a scenario was written using the information given to the facilitator by the Dialogue Planning Committee. The issues in the scenario were important to everyone present at the Dialogue. I read the scenario from the rear of the large room; the Dialogue group had been instructed to listen to the scenario and try to visualize the issues being described. The issue used in the scenario was the attraction and retention of citizens. I read the following verbatim scenario:

When the Jensen family moved into town two years ago they thought that the small town atmosphere Central City offered would be open and welcoming. Even though they have children in school and were active volunteers, the family has had a difficult time feeling accepted within the community even after two years. Caroline Jensen confided this to her neighbor who had also recently relocated to town. The neighbor lady did not notice the “outsider feeling”, but commented that the in-laws and husband grew-up in Central City and had just returned after serving in the military.

Jim Green, a prominent senior, local businessman, had noticed that many of the families left Central City for larger communities. When he asked them why they were moving they responded that the area did not have much career diversity or high quality jobs that could meet their needs. The younger people that worked for Mr. Green had mentioned numerous times that, "There was nothing to do in town" and that, "They could not wait to leave." When Green looked at the town's website he noted that in the last twenty years the town had lost nearly four hundred people, leaving the city with a population of 2,200 residents. These comments and statistics left Mr. Green feeling discouraged and he wondered what he and others could do to attract and retain families within their community (end of scenario).

As I read the scenario I could see some of the people nodding their heads as if the issues in the scenario were recognized by them. Some people looked at each other and others just folded their arms or looked down as they listened to the familiar issues being read.

When I finished reading the scenario, the facilitator introduced the Generational Groups by Age Chart (see Figure 1). While displaying the chart in the front of the room he clarified the meaning of the different age cohorts and their groupings. The facilitator explained what would take place during the Generational Panels portion of the Dialogue. Each generation was represented by the formation a panel of five volunteers from each generational cohort. Each of the five generations was instructed to form Generational Panels of five people.

One Generational Panel at a time came to the front of the room and sat at a table facing the Dialogue group and answered the questions prepared specifically for that generation by the Dialogue Planning Committee and the facilitator. The mediating generation was first to be questioned, followed by the millennial, diversity, civic, and then the boomer generation. Each time a Generational Panel had finished answering their questions the Dialogue group could ask questions of the panel or comment at an open microphone. Group members chose not to comment after the mediating and millennial generations finished, but did comment after the diversity, civic and boomer generations. Questions, responses, and open microphone comments from the five Generational Panels are presented in the following tables. Table 5 displays the generational questions and responses of the Mediating Generational Panel.

Table 5: Central City Mediating Generational Panel Questions

Questions Mediating Generation (1932-1944)	Responses
<p>Q1: If your grandchild, or a young niece or nephew asked you directly, "Why should I live in this area and raise my own family," what would you tell them?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautiful area to live • Good water and clean air • Nice people • Low crime rate / feel safe • Good school system and many services • Good place to start business • Many activities like golf or hunting / many school activities for youth • Lack jobs that pay a livable wage • Not much ethnic diversity • Town not as friendly as we would like

Table 5 (continued): Central City Mediating Generational Panel Questions

Questions Mediating Generation (1932-1944)	Responses
<p>Q2: Many people say that small communities need to change or they could become an endangered species. How do you feel when others say, "We like it just the way it is, why change?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People that were raised here are sad to see how the town has changed • Town needs to be more progressive to keep up with other communities • Needs more than just money • It took many years for me to feel accepted and part of the community • Know we need to change but afraid to ask others to get involved • Reluctant to turn over the reigns to different people, Central City has a hard time with change • We are seeing a difference with the younger people getting involved • Businesses will not come here until we make needed changes to accommodate them
<p>Q3: What do you see as roadblocks to change in rural communities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow-mindedness of citizens • Way we have always done it before • Lack of communication between the residents of the town • Not wanting to find out what others are thinking • Oldest way is the best way / not wanting to try anything else
<p>Q4. We know changes such as adding new activities for youth or recreational areas cost money. How should these things be paid for?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Method of paying would depend on what the activity is and who will use it • There is a problem in that groups are not inclusive to others • Some older people do not want to pay for something they are not able to use • We could increase taxes to pay for activities • Pass a bond issue, although older people may not like that idea, they must remember someone paid off bonds for them and their children

Table 5 (continued): Central City Mediating Generational Panel Questions

Questions Mediating Generation (1932-1944)	Responses
Q5. If you could give a message right now, what would you say to help influence the decisions needed in this community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need more cooperation and we need to work together • Need to support what we currently have and encourage new businesses • Other states seem to be more successful in bringing manufacturing to the small towns, Why can' our state?
Q6. How can people of your generation help new residents feel more accepted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We could include people and invite them to our organizations • Residents should make effort to meet their neighbors • The chamber hands out a welcome packet to new residents, we should follow up • Residents should make themselves available to others • Greet people and make them feel welcome

After the mediating generation finished their responses to the facilitator's Questions, the Dialogue group did not take advantage of an invitation to comment at an open microphone. It is possible the group was still a little shy as no questions were asked from the Dialogue group to the mediating generation. The Millennial Generational Panel was the next to be questioned. The millennial generation's questions and responses are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Central City Millennial Generational Panel Questions

Questions Millennial Generation (1982-2005)	Responses
Q1. If young people were going to move into Central City, what would you tell them to expect?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to find a group to belong to in this town than other towns because there are so many to choose from • I would advise people coming here to get involved and mingle with everyone • There are a lot of cliques and groups here that do not mix • Be open-minded and give people a chance
Q2: What are things you do for fun on a weekend?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of us are involved with the leadership workshops on Saturday mornings • Along with church, and church group activities, I like to sleep • School activities, 4-H, and horse shows, independent learning projects, family and friends • We also like to support our friends who are involved in sports • Play golf and do homework • I bowl in winter.
Q3: What does it take for someone in your age group to be accepted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be accepted here you must be involved in sports, music or some other school activity • A person should involve themselves in some type of activity and make an effort to meet others.
Q4: What would it take to make you think about coming back or staying in this area and raising a family?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before I could stay here and raise a family I would need more job opportunities and better technology • I want to raise a family in a small town, but will need a job that pays well • Our generation can not support themselves in this community unless changes are made to accommodate our needs • I know everyone here and really enjoy it here, yet we must make the community better • Technology based jobs must be available in Central City or we will have to leave

Table 6 (continued): Central City Millennial Generational Panel Questions

Questions Millennial Generation (1982-2005)	Responses
<p>Q5: How can young people help the community be successful; how can they be involved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can get involved in our leadership groups • A good way to get involved is volunteer for things that need done • If we let people know we want to be involved or help, maybe they will consider us • Take the initiative and involve yourself • I was surprised to be invited to speak at this meeting, usually people do not want to know what we care about, this is a good step in involving us.
<p>Q6: What do you think is lacking in this community that you would be interested in or looking for?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with other generations has never been done before today • Our leadership groups give us opportunities to lead and learn from others' mistakes • This community needs more technology and technology based jobs • We need a youth center, an exercise center that we can use • They expect us to use the small one that the older generations use • Our community needs to be more open-minded about change

When the millennial generation had finished responding to the questions some people in the Dialogue group made comments about the good job the younger people did in their generational panel. The Dialogue group was asked if any of them wanted to comment to the rest of the group or ask the members of the millennial generation any questions. Members of the diversity generation were the next generational panel to come to the front of the room for questioning. The diversity generation's questions and responses are exhibited in Table 7.

Table 7: Central City Diversity Generational Panel Questions

Questions Diversity Generation (1964-1981)	Responses
<p>Q1: How do you think we can create a community that encourages younger people like yourself to return and raise families here?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most businesses in our community are family owned and have 2-3 people working • We must find a way to help people purchase businesses and bring in new people • We have to maintain our great school system • People need to feel welcome here, we need to make them feel comfortable • That is something this city does not do well • Central City lacks child care; we have good quality child care, just not enough for more families. and this takes time
<p>Q2: What programs should the school have to interest new families and students?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our schools have tons of things to get involved in, we are good in that area and there are a lot of programs for little kids • Our music programs are outstanding, we have great talent • We have a good school with many computers.
<p>Q3: What sort of things would you look for when thinking about moving a business into a rural community?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A business owner would have to know the consumer base • Would have to find a community that they could afford to go into, maybe multiple sources of funding • Available people to hire at the base level as well as college educated people • Depending on the type of business, if the average age in the community is older, they may not buy as much • Young people tend to shop out of town while older people shop in town • Would want to understand the supply and demand before bringing a business here

Table 7 (continued): Central City Diversity Generational Panel Questions

Questions Diversity Generation (1964-1981)	Responses
Q4: What does a family in your age group look for in order to feel accepted by a community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A family here should find a good church to get involved in • Find people your own age or take advantage of volunteer opportunities • Invite people into your life and share things with them • I have had a friend who has lived here three years and doesn't know people even though she is involved in school and golf • As a mother who works full time, it takes a long time to get out of the mother/worker role and meet other people • Keeping up with schedules is difficult
Q5: What kinds of recreational activities do you think are needed in this community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A town near here has a nice new pool and a recreation center, why can't we do that in Central City • Instead of building new things, I think we should improve the things we have • We need a community center, especially in the winter • We need a community center with indoor pool and fitness center, but will the rural people get to use it? • We need ways for families to get together.

When the Diversity Generational Panel had finished responding to the facilitator's questions the Dialogue group members were invited to make any comments or questions to the diversity generation. Some members of the Dialogue group responded to the invitation and made several comments. All of the open microphone comments are displayed below in the order they were made followed by the name of the generation that made the comment.

Open Microphone Comments

We have other child care options if we included schools and churches (diversity).

Big employers should provide child care (diversity).

The nursing home and hospital could provide intergenerational opportunities for child care (civic).

This community needs a recreation center, it offers a safe place for people to go and meet others (diversity).

Older and younger people could use a recreation center; it could host family activities (boomer).

We might be able to come up with the money to build it but who would maintain it (civic)?

If we need methods of financing we could check with other communities who have done it (diversity).

The current wellness center is under used, how do we know people will use a recreation center (civic)?

The current wellness center is not a very nice place to spend time with my friends; I would never go there (millennial).

When the number of comments started to diminish the facilitator gave one last invitation to the group. The Civic Generational Panel was the next to be questioned. The civic generation's questions and responses are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Central City Civic Generational Panel Questions

Questions Civic Generation (1901-1931)	Responses
<p>Q1: How do you feel when you hear others say, "We like it just the way it is, why change?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our community will either go ahead or go backwards • Change is going to happen • We must make plans for change to take place.
<p>Q2: Just like I asked a generational group earlier, we know changes such as new activities for youth or recreational areas cost money. How should these things be paid for?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We could apply for a grant or raise taxes • Our town could hold a promotional fund drive • User fees are a good way to pay for and maintain a facility • Someone else made this community good for us, it is our job to help advance the community for the next generations • We could ask community members to leave the town money in their wills and hope it stays in the community
<p>Q3: Are there things we could be doing to encourage residents to invest dollars into the local economy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't know how to persuade old people to do anything • We always have good support with community raffle tickets • We could ask for donations • Community support is always good here
<p>Q4: How can people of other generations make your age group feel accepted within the community?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They could go to our churches or get acquainted with us • Other generations could be friendly and get to know others • People could serve in the hospital, senior center, or nursing home • They do a lot for us, I do not know if we carry our share • The wellness center and high school track are both underutilized; we want families to use them.

Table 8 (continued): Central City Civic Generational Panel Questions

Questions Civic Generation (1901-1931)	Responses
Q5: How can this community develop more “community pride?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We could support each other, togetherness is good. Keep the town pretty • We have excellent newspaper articles • The EMTs and firemen are very helpful • We want younger generations to come back to Central City, we must have good jobs • Sometimes we need to make an attitude adjustment • Appreciate people who have stayed here after retirement
Q6: How can this town become more inviting so there will be continued growth?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make needed changes and keep up to date • Obtain new technology • We worked hard to get DSL in town, now need in country • Make the town look inviting to people as they come into town with flowers, banners, Christmas decorations, store front of the month, remind business owners to keep things looking nice.

When the civic generation had finished their responses the Dialogue group participants were invited to ask any questions to the civic generation. Many people elected to speak and some of those exchanges were rather lively. All of the open microphone comments are exhibited below in the order they were made followed by the name of the generation that made the comment.

Open Microphone Comments

Why do people back the recreation center in meetings and then not fund it later (millennial).

We are slow to donate because we do not know how much it will cost to take care of ourselves (civic).

Money was hard to get we do not want to part with it (civic).

What can younger people do to help the civics (millennial)?

Appreciate what you get (civic).

Need a list of young people who want to volunteer and in what area (civic).

Get on your feet and do well, make us proud (civic).

What don't you understand about our generation (millennial)?

Why you do not take your hat off in a room (civic).

Intergenerational opportunities are greater in a small town, I can think of older people who influenced me and want to live up to those values (boomer).

I do not see why you all sit on the courthouse steps, I think it looks bad (civic).

We like to sit there and talk after school (millennial).

There is really no other place to hang out without buying something (millennial).

You should meet somewhere else; I do not like walking past people waiting there (civic).

You want us to stay in this town, and you wonder why we would want to leave, then you tell us that we can not even sit on the courthouse steps because you don't want to walk past us (millennial).

I can understand why they would want to leave (boomer).

We should bring in new businesses; if we had good jobs everything else would follow (mediating).

How are drugs and alcohol peer pressure with the younger group (boomer)?

Yes it is there, but most do not use (millennial).

Why do the young people play their music so loud (civic)?

Maybe to bother other people, more likely to attract other younger people (boomer).

I was surprised to see so many people comment. When the Dialogue group stopped making comments the facilitator instructed the Boomer Generational Panel to get ready for their questions. The generational questions and responses of the Boomer Generational Panel are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Central City Boomer Generational Panel Questions

Questions Boomer Generation (1945-1963)	Responses
<p>Q1: Knowing what you know about this community, how would you describe it to young people who are considering moving here?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are not very many jobs here. It would be tough to find a job in Central City that you could support a family with • Central City is a comfortable place to live compared to other towns, it is a low stress place to live • It is difficult to move back here with a young family • The cost of living is much lower in Central City • We want young people to move back here and appreciate what we have
<p>Q2: Before they make their final decision to move into this community, what advice would you give parents who have children living at home?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This community has a good school system and lots of recreation • The people here will be a good influence on your children, many role models • This is a hard place to move with a family

Table 9 (continued): Central City Boomer Generational Panel Questions

Questions Boomer Generation (1945-1963)	Responses
Q3: How can this community better promote the positive aspects of the rural setting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let people know that the scenery and countryside here is beautiful • Their kids can enjoy themselves and run free in a safe place • Kids like to be with their families, they can work together as a family • Small communities are a good secret, it is scary to have more people here
Q4: List the ways that your generation can make new and current residents feel more accepted. What are the road blocks to helping people feel like they belong?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make an effort to go to the homes of new people and welcome them • Pre-judging is a roadblock • We resist people who differ from us • Older people need to talk with the younger people
Q5: What are the things people of all ages in this community can do to be more “tourist” friendly?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are interested in the history of Central City, we should promote our heritage • We are unique and should accentuate what we have here • We could promote the scenery, the hills and the chalk mines • Horseback riding should be made available to experience the scenery, however there is a liability issue
Q6: What else can we do to be inviting and encouraging to potential new business owners?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established businesses here need to help new businesses get started instead of closing them out • Stop looking out for #1 • Look at the big picture • Help new businesses with financing.

The Boomer Generational Panel was the last panel to respond to the facilitator’s questions. When the boomer generation had finished, members of the

Dialogue group were asked to speak any comments or questions. Several people made comments to the boomer generation or to the Dialogue group. All of the comments are displayed below in the order they were made followed by the name of the generation that made the comment.

Open Microphone Comments

We are a mobile society, people will come to Central City if there is something unique, such as a B&B, craft center, shops, rafting, canoeing, or camping. We could sell it on the internet (boomer).

We need to capitalize on the area around us (mediating).

We should have goodwill ambassadors to greet campers and visitors with information about our town (mediating).

We need to let people know we want them here (diversity).

We are going to have a trail; it is in the planning process (civic).

How about dinner trains (mediating)?

What can our generation do (millennial)?

Say no to drugs and mentor the little kids (boomer).

Volunteer and be our ambassadors (mediating).

The young people here today were just great, I am so glad the teens joined the group and talked to us (boomer).

Your generation can keep communicating with us (mediating)

You young people are the best entertainment in town, 4-H, speech, drama, sports, and even the courthouse steps, we love you all (mediating)

It was awesome to see the entire town come and support Central City at state volleyball and at the away football games; this means so much us (millennial). We are glad you come and see us, after all we try to play well and be successful to make you proud of us, we play for our community (millennial).

When the boomer generation had finished responding to their questions and the final open microphone session was finished, the facilitator highlighted some of the questions and answers that were discussed. Many people were surprised to see the similarities in the generational responses. The facilitator introduced his assistant who gave a slide presentation describing some of the different characteristics of the five generations. The presentation also demonstrated how historical events shaped the perspectives of each generation. When this presentation was finished we took our lunch break.

I had purposely positioned myself in the rear of the room during the Generational Panels sessions because I wanted to record observations of the Dialogue group as the Generational Panels responded to their questions. One of the first things I noticed was the significant amount of tension between the civic and millennial generations. One civic participant commented openly that he was annoyed when a young person did not remove his hat. Another said the millennial generation shows no respect. Some civic participants commented that it looked bad and they did not like it when young people gathered on the courthouse steps. I found it interesting that when the civic participants described the future of the community they worried about keeping the youth from leaving.

One young person asked the Dialogue group why they should stay when they can not even gather on the steps.

In the final open microphone session, after the boomer generation had responded to their questions, the millennial generation and the civic generation made reference to participating in sports and drama activities. Both groups viewed these activities as the millennial generation representing their community. This part of the Dialogue was very emotional and touching. Many people had tears in their eyes as the young people described the pride they had for their community and how they wanted to make the community proud of them. The younger people told the Dialogue group the reason they worked so hard in sports and school activities was to represent their community in a good way. The civic participants explained to the millennial generation that the older people attended their sporting events because they are proud of their younger citizens. The civic generation realized the younger people cared about their community and the millennial generation realized how much the civic generation valued their younger people. The tension I had witnessed between these two groups was no longer observable.

When the Generational Panels had talked about the proposed recreation center their attitudes toward the younger millennials started to soften. I think they realized they have a duty to provide something for the young people. When a civic participant said the current wellness center was under-used, someone said they did not use the exercise equipment because it was in the medical center

with sick people. This made people realize that it would not be a very nice place for young people to spend their time.

The civic participants realized they could do more to secure the future for the younger generations of the community. At the beginning of the generational questions sessions it seemed that the civic participants did not recognize the millennial generations' views as being important. By the end of the generational questions session the civic participants were praising the young people and thanking them for taking part in the Dialogue. The Generational Panels were a good way for the different generations to exchange their unique perspectives. These generational groups connected on some level and were beginning to understand each other.

After lunch the number in the Dialogue group had grown by 15 more people. The facilitator gave a brief summary of the outcome of the Generational Panels and described the issues in the Dialogue scenario. He started to prepare for the Recommendations portion of the Dialogue by dividing the group into nine small Intergenerational Work Groups. Ideally these groups have 5 -7 people with each generation represented in all the work groups. There was enough diversity in the Central City Intergenerational Dialogue to have work groups with equal generational representation. The Intergenerational Work Groups were instructed to recommend three solutions to the community issue of attracting and retaining people in Central City. All of the work groups were instructed to select their favorite solution and present it to the entire Dialogue group. The groups were reminded to listen to every generation's perspective as they sought a solution. All

of the work groups presented their favorite solutions and displayed them on poster paper in front of the room. After all the Intergenerational Work Groups presented, the entire Dialogue group voted to choose the top recommended solution. Out of the nine solutions recommended by the Intergenerational Groups there was one solution that received 26 votes, which was more than twice as many votes than any other recommended solution. The solution that received the most votes became this Intergenerational Dialogue's response to the issue of attracting and retaining people in Central City. The top recommended solution and the Intergenerational Work Group's reasoning in that solution are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10: Recommended Solution to Central City's Community Issue

The Solution	Build a New Recreation and Community Facility
The Reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build it and they will come and they will stay • Everyone in town could enjoy the facility • A new facility could be used for meetings or a recreation facility • It could be used for exercise or educational programs • It would attract others to events held here
How It Can Be Accomplished	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain wide-base community consensus • Get a lot of people on board • Involve youth, teach them to build and fund a community project • Use technology
Obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biases, about who will use it, who will need it • The history of present facilities • Look at how projects were done in past and know why they failed

I watched as the nine Intergenerational Work Groups worked together to find a solution to their community's issue. When I say "worked together" I mean together intergenerationally, where each generational representative in the small work group was contributing. This part of the Dialogue is fun because people are only able to interact with others in their small group, which forces them to work intergenerationally as many of them never have. It was exciting to see the small groups appear to come to life as they generated their own energy when they were listening to and seeking out each others' perspectives on the issue. Before the Dialogue, members of these groups may have not been on speaking terms, as this event ends they are valuing each others' ideas. To witness this cooperation and respect for each other, it becomes clear that the solutions found in the Intergenerational Dialogue are of secondary importance. Learning the value of working across generations and understanding multigenerational perspectives is the purpose of the Intergenerational Dialogue. The important end result is the process not the outcome.

Participant Feedback

Before the Intergenerational Work Groups recommended their solutions, evaluation forms were distributed to the Dialogue participants. Participants were asked to fill out the forms and return them at the end of the Dialogue. Thirty-seven people returned their completed evaluation forms.

All of the evaluations rated the following as "excellent" or "superior":

- The relevance of understanding the five generations
- The quality of using dialogue to hear the varying perspectives

- That their questions and comments were valued and respected
- That the Dialogue was very well prepared

36 of the 37 evaluations (97%) indicated that the information presented gave them new information regarding:

- Understanding the conditions that create and foster listening to others
- Understanding the need for including everyone in finding solutions for communities
- Reasoning, listening and understanding as a valuable part of leading change
- Becoming aware of their own behaviors
- Identifying ways to use the information in leadership activities
- Identifying strategies to improve effectiveness in building community

The biggest impact participants noted was in terms of their own interpersonal behavior. Participants ranked their interpersonal behavior before and after the event.

- 24 of 37 (65%) indicated that they were now more able to lead and understand others' perspectives on issues than before the Dialogue
- 27 of 37 (73%) indicated they could use their knowledge of all generations to influence their community's future after attending the Dialogue event
- 30 of 37 (82%) felt they now have more strategies to plan for community involvement than before the event
- 26 of 37 (70%) were more comfortable working with all generations

The North East Intergenerational Dialogue

The Community of North East hosted an Intergenerational Dialogue on Saturday morning, October 11, 2003. The facilitator and two assistants who conducted the Intergenerational Dialogue in Central City also led the Dialogue in the community of North East. The Village Board and the North East Betterment Association worked together with the North East Intergenerational Dialogue Planning Committee to handle the logistics of the Dialogue Event. The Village Board offered the use of their meeting hall to host the event. The hall was in the lower level of the board's main building and was just large enough to hold the meeting. The room had twelve large, six foot long tables and a well equipped kitchen with a serving counter. Coffee and sweet rolls were provided to the Dialogue group in the morning and lunch was served in the afternoon. When we arrived at the site of the Dialogue, the Planning Committee had already set up the tables and chairs and the room looked well prepared for the days' event.

This Intergenerational Dialogue followed the same agenda as the one used in Central City, but some small changes were made in this Dialogue that I will note as they happened. We provided five participant sign-up sheets near the front entrance of the room. Each sheet had a heading with the five different generational birth years and the names of their corresponding generations. This allowed the facilitators to calculate the number of participants in each generational cohort. After everyone had arrived and exchanged greetings the Intergenerational Dialogue began. The facilitator introduced himself and the

Intergenerational Dialogue Planning Committee. He thanked the committee for their contributions of time and resources. He introduced me and the other graduate student who assisted him and told the group a little about each of us. There were about 30 people in the room when the Dialogue started. The facilitator thanked the Dialogue group for the nice turn out. When the facilitator's introductions were finished he explained the items on the day's agenda and how we would conduct each exercise. A copy of the agenda was given out to everyone in attendance. The agenda used in North East was very similar to the agenda seen in Table 3.

The facilitator explained the Circle of Generations exercise and what we would be doing before the group moved to the open space in the rear of the room. This was different from the previous Intergenerational Dialogue because there was not as much space in the room and people need to know what to expect. We gave index cards to all the participants and they wrote down the word that they believed described their generation. The Dialogue group was instructed to move to the rear of the room. The oldest person, who was 86 years of age, and youngest person, who was 15 years of age, had already taken their place when the facilitator introduced them to the group. Group members started to fill in between the oldest and youngest persons to make the Circle of Generations. In this Dialogue we did something different than the previous Dialogue. After the oldest person said their descriptive word they were instructed to move clockwise, inside the circle. While holding their word in front of them, they moved around the circle and viewed the descriptive words of the other generations. One by one,

oldest to youngest, they followed each other clockwise inside the circle. After each person completed the circle, they took their place and the next person took a trip around the inside of the circle to view others descriptive words.

This method of the exercise seemed more effective than the method we had used in the previous Dialogue. There was less personal distance between people as they looked at each others' words. Often they smiled or touched each other as they passed inside the circle. This exercise seemed to bond the group together but demonstrated that differences did exist in the generations. The ages of the participants in North East's Intergenerational Dialogue and the words they used to describe their generation are displayed in Table 11.

Table 11: North East Descriptive Words X Age X Generation

Descriptive Word	Age	Generation Represented	Descriptive Word	Age	Generation Represented
Interested	86	Civic	Family Oriented	34	Diversity
Wise	78	Civic	Workers	32	Diversity
Doctor	75	Civic	Active	31	Diversity
Informed	75	Civic	Involved	28	Diversity
Mature	73	Civic	Technology	25	Diversity
Experience	70	Mediating	Uninformed	17	Millennial
Relaxed	69	Mediating	Unruly	16	Millennial
Set in Ways	68	Mediating	Conflicting	16	Millennial
Open Minded	65	Mediating	Busy	16	Millennial
Worker	54	Boomer	Individuality	15	Millennial
Me First	43	Boomer			
Overwhelmed	42	Boomer			
Independent	40	Boomer			
Own Thing	40	Boomer			

When the Circle of Generations exercise was finished, the facilitator gave a brief background of the Intergenerational Dialogue and explained why it is important to approach issues intergenerationally. Using the information given to him by the Dialogue Planning Committee, the facilitator explained some of the issues facing the community of North East. He explained that few citizens participated in the open Village Board meetings. For the Board to work effectively it must be aware of what the citizens want in their community. It is important that citizens participate in the process. He also pointed out that the community is losing many of its older citizens because the older citizens have no housing options when they can no longer take care of their own homes or farms. The senior housing in North East is good but there is not enough to meet the community's need. If older citizens come to a point in their life where they can no longer take care of their property, they are forced to move away to another community that can meet their housing needs. A housing shortage also exists for families who want to move into North East. If someone wanted to move to North East and build a house there was no land available in town to build on. This community was losing people and one reason may be the availability of adequate housing.

The issues of this Dialogue were important to all five generational groups of North East. The seniors needed assisted living or a smaller place to take care of while younger families needed a place in town to raise their families. The generations in the middle wanted an improved tax-base with enough people to hold their community together. The issue of housing was the issue used in the

scenario as the focus of the North East Intergenerational Dialogue. I read the following verbatim scenario:

When the Timms family relocated they looked for a home within the city limits of North East so their children could have easy access to school and extracurricular activities. Rachel, who was 14 years old, Conner 9, and Jesse 6, were excited to live in a place where they could be involved in all the activities offered for youth.

Upon their arrival, they found that the only homes available within the town were too small for a family of their size or were in an advanced state of disrepair. The family decided to purchase a home outside of town knowing that much of their time would be spent in “taxi” service to connect family members with activities in town. Because of scheduling conflicts with parents’ and children’s activities, they have decided to cut back on those programs. Tension is building among family members and Mr. and Mrs. Timms are debating about leaving their new community for a larger city in order to better meet the needs of their family.

As a senior citizen in North East, Mrs. Adair wishes to sell her large home and move into the local retirement community. Since her husband passed away, the care of the home and yard has become overwhelming. She wants to stay in the town that holds so many great memories for her, but since the small retirement community is full, she is considering moving to a nearby town that has retirement living available (end of scenario).

The participants were seated at their tables facing forward as I read the scenario from the rear of the meeting room. The participants exchanged looks or listened

quietly as they listened to the community issue. After I read the scenario, the participants reflected on the issues for a few moments. Then I noticed some of the dialogue participants talking quietly to each other. I overheard some of their comments about the severity of the housing issue. Some people were already voicing ideas about what they could do to remedy the housing problem or commenting on what other communities had done to improve their housing.

The facilitator introduced the Generational Groups by Age Chart (see Figure 1) and explained its meaning as he did in the previous Dialogue. As the Intergenerational Dialogued transitioned into the Generational Panel sessions, volunteers from the five generational cohorts assembled into the Generational Panels. One at a time, each of the five Generational Panels came to the front of the room and faced the Dialogue group as they answered questions prepared specifically for their age cohort by the facilitator and the Dialogue Planning Committee. When each Generational Panel finished answering the facilitator's questions they were asked questions from the Dialogue group. The mediating generation was the first Generational Panel to answer the questions followed by the diversity, millennial, civic, and boomer generations. Questions and responses from the Generational Panels are exhibited in the following tables. Table 12 displays the generational questions and responses of the Mediating Generational Panel.

Table 12: North East Mediating Generational Panel Questions

Questions Mediating Generation (1932-1944)	Responses
<p>Q1: Describe how someone older or younger than you might describe the housing situation in North East.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This community needs more housing for elders • There is also a need for all types of housing in North East • There is a special need for low rent apartments for older people • Older citizens are leaving North East in search of housing
<p>Q2: What does your generation currently do to assist in addressing the housing issue?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way our generation assists is to help find land that is suitable for building houses or a facility
<p>Q3: What is your generation most proud of in North East? How can this pride be expanded?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think our generation is most proud of the community's schools and churches • We think our teachers are among the best in the state • We can be active and support our young people by attending their sporting events or contributing toward textbooks and technology
<p>Q4: How can a housing project be funded in North East?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing projects could be funded by raising money locally and help from government grants • Our town should realize we need to start with some local money • I think fund raisers would help provide some of the needed money • We could involve all the generations in a fund raiser.

Table 12 (continued): North East Mediating Generational Panel Questions

Questions Mediating Generation (1932-1944)	Responses
Q5: As a senior citizen where do you want to live? Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone in this group indicated they want to remain living in North East • I want to stay here because my roots are here • My parents were from here and my kids like visiting North East • I want to stay, but do not see any way for me to do so
Q6: Where do you turn to if you have a housing issue?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would approach the North East Betterment Association • The Village Board may be able to help

When the Mediating Generational Panel had finished responding to the facilitator's questions, the Dialogue group was invited to question members of the mediating generation. The one question that was asked by the Dialogue group to the mediating generation is displayed below.

Question from the Dialogue Group

Q: What can citizens of North East do to help acquire housing grants?

A: You could donate money or donate land, or help buy land. Talk to people you know who may own land and persuade them to sell.

After the mediating questions and responses had finished, the Diversity Generational Panel seated themselves for questioning. The generational questions and responses for the Diversity Generational Panel are presented in Table 13.

Table 13: North East Diversity Generational Panel Questions

Questions Diversity Generation (1964-1981)	Responses
<p>Q1: What can your generation do to improve the housing situation in North East?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We could improve the housing issue by acquiring land and come together as a community to work as one group on one issue • People often will not sell land and retain lots even though they do not live in our community • Possibly fix up some of the houses in town that need repairs
<p>Q2: How does your generation describe the housing situation in North East?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The housing here is in bad shape • Housing in North East is small and run down • For some reason people own many houses and do not live in our town • These folks will not sell their land
<p>Q3: If you described your town's atmosphere to someone who has never been here, what would you say?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would describe North East to others as neighbor centered • I do not know what I would do without my good neighbors • We have good quality schools • It is safe for our kids to play here • We have a nice community, great people, although it is hard to be accepted here • Our main street looks nice • Our parks are great.
<p>Q4: If you had grant money to invest in housing for North East, what would be your priorities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we had money to invest, we would buy land and build houses • First we would build for our older people, then others • An assisted living facility would be one of the priorities, then our older people could stay • We definitely need better housing for older people if they want to stay in North East

Table 13 (continued): North East Diversity Generational Panel Questions

Questions Diversity Generation (1964-1981)	Responses
Q5: What housing options are available for single adults? Single parents?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a shortage of housing for single adults • Many younger people must share houses or apartments • Teens often live together as well as single parents • There is no low cost housing available to single parents
Q6: What Generations are most impacted by the housing issues in your community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The younger generations and the oldest generation are most affected by the shortage of housing here • The older and I guess the younger ones can not find local housing to fit their needs, it just doesn't exist

Members of the Dialogue group asked only one question to the Diversity Generation. The question from the dialogue group to the diversity generation is exhibited below.

Question from the Dialogue Group

Q: Where do you turn for help with the housing issue?

A: We are applying for CBDG grants. The Board is trying to buy land. We all must take a part in a solution for our housing because it is in bad shape.

It seemed to me that people were a little shy to speak. When invited to question the Generational Panels or make comments to the Dialogue group, few people would say anything. The facilitator encouraged the group to ask any questions, or make comments. The Millennial Generational Panel was the next

panel to be questioned. The questions and responses of the Millennial Generational Panel are presented in Table 14.

Table 14: North East Millennial Generational Panel Questions

Questions Millennial Generation (1982-2005)	Responses
Q1: Why do people not address housing projects?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People here avoid the issue and think it might be ok by itself. Maybe they don't think there is a problem
Q2: As a youth, where would you like to live?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would want to live here in North East, it is a nice place. • A small town with low crime, but a little bigger than here • I like a small town where I know everyone; it makes me feel safe • I want a bigger town than here with a little bit more to offer young people • I have always wanted to live in a town with at least one traffic light • I might go away for a while then come back here and live
Q3: When you are a single adult where do you want to live?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In North East, I like it here. A bigger city with more opportunities for jobs • I want to live where I can get a good job and have a home • Another city will have more jobs and housing and apartments • Will live where I could afford a family
Q4: What are the benefits to living in North East?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everything is close together so you can walk to anything you need • Housing here is not that great; many houses should be torn down but people still live in them • It is nice to know everyone and have people look out for each other

Table 14 (continued): North East Millennial Generational Panel Questions

Questions Millennial Generation (1982-2005)	Responses
Q5: What image would your generation select to represent North East?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a nice safe place to raise kids • There is no doubt that if I need help most anyone in this community would help me • Our teachers are good • Towns nearby have many more things to do
Q6: How does your generation show community pride?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We volunteer for all the fundraisers. • We show it in by participation in school sports • Through our school and youth group activities

After the Millennial Generational Panel was finished responding to the facilitator's Questions, he invited the Dialogue group to question the millennial generation or make any comments. The Dialogue group asked two questions to the millennial generation and made several comments that are displayed below.

Questions from the Dialogue Group

Q: What do you think needs to be done to help with the housing issue?

A: Money needs to be raised to buy land. We need land before we can build anything. Maybe tear down some of the old building and use that land.

Q: What are some things that shaped or influenced your life?

A: School security, I guess after Columbine there is no place that is guaranteed to be safe. Participating in sports and preparing for college is what I think *about* most.

The following comments were said by different generational representatives in the Dialogue group to the millennial generation.

Comments to the Millennial Generation

We are so glad that you kids are here today (mediating).

It would be nice if you would stay here but will understand if you leave (civic).

I am surprised that we were invited to this meeting (millennial).

The facilitator introduced the Civic Generational Panel after the Dialogue group had finished their making comments. The questions and responses to the Civic Generational panel are exhibited in Table 15.

Table 15: North East Civic Generational Panel Questions

Questions Civic Generation (1901-1931)	Responses
<p>Q1: What housing options are available to seniors? Are they adequate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior housing is not available in North East • If you need a smaller place you must leave here and go somewhere else • North East does not offer any apartments for seniors • There are no assisted living facilities in North East.

Table 15 (continued): North East Civic Generational Panel Questions

Questions Civic Generation (1901-1931)	Responses
Q2: Where would you choose to live if you have the option?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I want to live here where I have lived my whole life; but I can't stay. I am very sad about the thought of leaving my friends and my church • I think this is a nice place to live but I am ready to move to a little bigger town with housing and a drug store • It would be nice to stay here, but without assisted living I will move in with one of my children • I am active in our senior center and like the social activities there. If I can stay here I will
Q3: How can the current housing options be improved in North East?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We could form a coop and build our own facility • Work and improve existing houses • Fund raisers may help
Q4: What are the roadblocks to improving the housing here?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people talk about it but nothing ever gets done • We have no land to build on, nothing is for sale • After talking to some people here today; I do not think they realized there was a problem
Q5: How does this issue impact your generation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I worry about where I am going to live • I do not want to move where I do not know anyone • It never occurred to me that when I became old I could not live in North East • My house is too much to take care of; but I have no where else in town to go

The room was almost quiet when the Civic Generational Panel had finished responding to the questions. People were surprised when they heard how concerned their older citizens were about their future. Many people made comments to each other but did not ask questions to the civic generation or make

any comments. The Civic Generational Panel made it very clear that unless something changes in the housing situation they will have to leave their community. The boomer generation was the last group to be questioned. The questions and responses of the Boomer Generational Panel are displayed in Table 16.

Table 16: North East Boomer Generational Panel Questions

Questions Boomer Generation (1945-1963)	Responses
<p>Q1: As an adult with children, where do you choose to live?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I enjoy it here, a great place to raise kids • It would be nice to move to a bigger town with more medical facilities • There are not very many things to do with your family here in town • A family must spend a lot of time in the car going somewhere else
<p>Q2: What are the housing difficulties in your town?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I must say that I am very surprised, maybe even a little embarrassed because I had no idea that our seniors had this problem with housing • I always hear what the younger people want but have little contact with the seniors; I had no way of knowing • The problem is having the money to buy land and the inflated cost of land that is for sale • One of the problems is people here like large lots Many have a house on many building lots • Yes, a lot of us do not want neighbors close by, kind of a in town acreage • We do enjoy low density housing

Table 16 (continued): North East Boomer Generational Panel Questions

Questions Boomer Generation (1945-1963)	Responses
Q3: How does the issue of housing impact this town and surrounding towns?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to bring in younger families but there is no place for them here • Our senior citizens are leaving here and moving to nearby towns that have senior housing • If people are leaving here because of housing situation our town's economy is also affected.
Q4: What roadblocks do you see in improving the housing situation here?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of time and energy to work on this problem • We need to stay focused on the issue and follow through on proposals that are made or opportunities that exist • Not realizing how this issue is affecting our older people
Q5: What is your generation doing to help other generations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are working and contributing to our local economy • We volunteer and serve as mentors to young people • Often I work at the senior center and help plan events or offer rides to local events • We volunteer a couple of times a year to clean up trees or yards of our seniors • Donate time for school activities • Help the school provide money for fieldtrips, provide for bake sales

I sat in the rear of the room to have a good vantage point while I observed the Generational Panels responded to their questions. The room was small enough to allow me to hear most of the comments the Dialogue group made to each other as they listened to the different generations respond to the questions.

In this Dialogue there did not seem to be the tension between the generations that I had witnessed in Central city. In fact it seemed like some people in the Dialogue group did not realize there were different generational perspectives. One person, while participating in the Generational Panel, admitted he was embarrassed he did not realize the older people were facing such uncertainty about where to live. He was aware there was a shortage of housing for new families but did not consider how the situation affected senior citizens in the community. Often when a generational panel finished answering the questions, group members exchanged comments with each other because they had not realized how the housing issue affected each generational cohort.

I found it interesting that all the generations knew there was a housing problem in North East, but most did not realize the issue affected each generation in a different way. The Dialogue group started to realize that community members appeared more aware of each other's needs than they really were. It appeared the Dialogue group began to understand why they needed to work together to fix the housing problem in their community. The Dialogue group learned a lot about each generation's unique perspective on this issue through the responses of the Generational Panels.

A slide presentation describing the different generations was presented to the Dialogue group. The facilitator gave a brief summary of the issues given to him by the Dialogue Planning Committee including the issue of housing that was used for the scenario. He divided the group into Intergenerational Work Groups as he had done in the previous Intergenerational Dialogue.

This Dialogue group consisted of 24 people, but had an even distribution of people from each generational cohort. The Dialogue group was divided into five Intergenerational Work Groups. Four of the groups had a representative from each generation while one of the groups had only four of the generations represented. The five small work groups gathered in isolated spaces in the room, and were given large poster paper and markers.

The work groups were instructed to list three solutions to the community issue in the scenario. The groups were told to prioritize their solutions and present their favorite recommendation to the Dialogue group and post their recommended solution for the Dialogue group to see. The Dialogue group was told it would view all the recommendations and vote to choose the best solution.

The five Intergenerational Groups worked hard to come up with their recommendations. They were careful to solicit input from people who were shy or slow to contribute. In each of the five small groups there seemed to be equal contributions from all of the generations. Each Intergenerational Work Group decided on their favorite solution and presented that solution to the Dialogue group. After the work groups finished presenting their solution they displayed it on poster paper in the front of the room. When all of the work groups were finished presenting their recommendations, everyone voted to choose the solution that would become the action plan of this Intergenerational Dialogue.

The North East Intergenerational Dialogue's response to the housing issue is displayed in Table 17.

Table 17: Recommended Action Plan for North East

The Solution	Provide housing for the elderly in North East
The Reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People can stay in their community • When seniors move their homes will come up for sale and meet another housing needs • Retain people in our community instead of them moving somewhere else
The First Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a community meeting to educate the citizens of North East about the housing problem • Find available land for sale, then ask for donations and search for a lender to purchase the land • Making a survey to see what the community think about backing such a proposal
Obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the facility will be built and how it will be paid for • Communication between the members of this community
Who Will Get It Done	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens of all ages will help the Village Board • The people in our community will ask a developer what is needed • Form a North East Housing Committee
Time Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six to eighteen months to find land for sale and apply for grants and loans
How We Will Get Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help citizens understand how this issue is affecting the older people of the community • If people understood how this issue affected the economy of our town they would back the proposal to build senior housing • Explain the situation to our citizens and ask for their help • Educate the community on all aspects of the issue

It was interesting to see the people of this small community work together on a community issue. As they worked on the issue they appeared to discover a lot about the needs of the other generations in their community. As a result of the Dialogue they started to think intergenerationally. One Dialogue participant from the diversity generation talked to me at lunch and addressed the issue in the scenario. She had small children and thought the issue should be a new swimming pool. She learned in the Dialogue that the tax-base is shrinking in their community and there was not enough money to build a swimming pool. Then she realized that if the community could provide housing for the elderly the elderly could stay in the community. If the elderly moved into new housing other people could move into their houses. The population of the city would stabilize and the tax-base would grow, and maybe there would be enough money for a swimming pool in the future. She realized that by providing one generation's need may also give another generation what it needs.

The process of the Intergenerational Dialogue is more important than the outcome. The intention of the Dialogue is to remove the barriers that exist between the generations to enable people from different generations to work together intergenerationally. I do not want to minimize the process of the Dialogue, but there was an interesting outcome to this Dialogue worth mentioning. One of the community issues the North East Planning Committee identified was the fact that citizens seldom attended the Village Board meetings. It makes it very hard to establish open communication about community issues if people do not attend the meetings. I found out from a Village Board member that after the

Intergeneration Dialogue, the Dialogue group had been attending Village Board meetings. On one night of the Village Board's monthly meeting the room had overflowed, and people were sitting in the hall. The Dialogue group had formed the North East Housing Committee and had moved forward with the action plan they designed in the Dialogue to provide housing for the elderly in their community.

Participant Feedback

We intended to pass out evaluation forms before the Intergenerational Work Groups made their presentations. However we had neglected to bring the necessary forms with us. The facilitator distributed small sheets of paper to the participants and instructed them to write their thoughts or suggestions regarding the Intergenerational Dialogue event. We picked up those sheets after the Intergenerational Group presentations. Fourteen people turned in the hand-written evaluations. The only less-than-positive evaluation said the questions were repetitious. To illustrate participants' feedback the following are sample evaluations from each generational cohort:

From a representative of the civic generation.

This meeting was important, if we want to keep our community. We need to keep in mind we are an Ag based community. As farms get larger supplies tend to come through wholesalers instead of local retailers, forcing people in or working for local businesses to either move to where the work is, or commute back and forth to work. Many would move back here if housing was

available. It never occurred to me that younger people might move here if they had the housing.

From a representative of the mediating generation.

Today was important for future growth of our community and we should keep our new school in mind also. It has been an eye opener although I knew there had been a problem for years. Our young people were wonderful and there were great presentations of ideas from the groups. Keep on praying daily and fervently.

From a representative of the boomer generation.

I thought it was very informational. I think we can work and get this done if we work together. It was an intriguing experience.

From a representative of the diversity generation.

I thought the meeting was very informative, about knowing the different outlooks of the generations. The questions got a little repetitious after a while. It was good overall. I hope we can work together now.

From a representative of the millennial generation.

I thought this meeting was very useful and our citizens of North East will get a lot accomplished. With a lot of community help we will get the housing we need. This meeting was very well organized. Awesome!

From another millennial representative.

This was the first time I have ever been asked to take part in our community. It was cool to be treated like someone wanted to know what I thought. Good meeting.

Chapter Five: Findings

Introduction to the Participants

Nearly one year after participating in their community's Intergenerational Dialogue, ten participants were contacted and asked to participate in this research. All of the participants were still living in the same Midwestern state at the time of the interviews. Five of the participants lived in the community of Central City; the other five participants lived about one hundred miles away in the community of North East. All the participants in this study are Caucasian and share a similar socioeconomic status. Following is an introduction to the ten participants in this research.

Participants from the community of Central City

Sarah.

Sarah was an involved and civic-minded eighteen year old female who was born and raised in Central City. She was a high school senior and wanted to live in Central City after finishing college. Her father and grandparents were also born in Central City. Sarah and her family lived on an acreage just outside of town. She liked living in a smaller community where she felt safe and everyone knew each other. Sarah served on the Youth Leadership Team, Principal Advisory Council, Student Council, Honor Roll, Merit Honor Roll, Catholic Youth Group, 4-H, and school sports. She was also a member in a group of young people who had started to work with the Chamber of Commerce to better their community. She enjoyed singing in swing choir and dancing. Her goal was to

attend college the next year and come back to Central City to teach and coach at the high school. Sarah represented the Millennial Generation in this study.

Norma.

A positive and optimistic twenty-seven year old female, "Norma" lived on a farm two miles south of Central City. Norma earned a B.S. degree in Consumer Science and had worked as a certified nurse assistant and waitress in Central City. She was introduced to her husband in college nine years ago. They were married and had been living on his family's farm for seven years. Norma had kept very busy as she took care of their home and children since having their first child five years ago. She had a five-year old and a two-year old who took up much of her time. She babysat at her home sometimes and cleaned the church. Norma enjoyed scrap booking and was very involved in her church's activities. Her family's involvement with church kept them involved in the community of Central City. Norma thought that the church and community complimented one another, if the church benefited from a program or event, the community benefited also. Norma represented the diversity generation in this study.

Jacob.

Jacob was a tall and strong forty-three year old male who had been a resident in the Central City area for over twenty-five years. He was raised in a near-by community then moved away after finishing college, then moved back to Central City ten years ago to raise his three children. Jacob was a banker and a real estate broker. Jacob believed that to be successful in his line of work, he must be aware of the perspectives of multi-generational stake-holders, because

he must be able to understand the needs of every generation. He was very interested and involved in the community of Central City. He served on the Chamber of Commerce, school board, Community Beautification Committee, and many other community committees where his bank was involved. Jacob married right after earning his B.S. degree in finance. When he and his wife were going to have their first child, they wanted to move to a place that they felt was safe for raising a family. Jacob remembered how much fun he had as a child and wanted to move back to the area around Central City. He was in the banking field at that time in a large city, so when an opportunity came up in Central City, he took it. Jacob and his wife had three boys and were very active in their community. Jacob was interested in rodeo, horses, and anything sports related. Their family attended their boys' sporting events and school activities. Jacob represented the boomer generation in this study.

Frank.

Frank was a slim and weathered man who enjoyed good health; however one look at him revealed that he had spent a lot of his sixty-six years working out in the elements. Frank was a horse trainer for over forty years. He started training horses with one of the best known quarter horse breeders in the state about fifty miles from Central City. After working for a breeder for eight years Frank started his own business two miles north of Central City. He had been an involved member of Central City for thirty-two years. Frank and his wife raised three children who all lived in or near Central City. He enjoyed his work training horses so much that his hobby was showing his own horses around the area. He

was considering retirement in the near future but would most likely live outside the city limits. Frank represented the mediating generation in this study.

Abe.

An articulate, interesting, and civic minded seventy-eight year old male, "Abe" lived on a small acreage one mile south of Central City. Abe had been a widower for over ten years after losing his wife to cancer. He and his wife had fourteen children. Abe was an electrical engineer who had lived in Central City for fifty-five years. He was transferred to the area to build power lines and substations in the north central part of the state. He and his wife had a child who was ready to start school so they decided to purchase the farm near Central City where he farmed and continued to do electrical work for the power company until 1976. The land he lived on was part of the original farm he purchased in 1950. He said living alone on the farm was at times lonely and a little too much to take care of, but there were too many memories for him to leave. Abe and his wife liked the people in the area so much that they could never leave to take advantage of other employment opportunities. He had farmed full-time, as well and maintained his duties as an electrician, served on the state's Recommendation Board, served as a state senator, as Water Quality Board Chairman, and seriously considered running for governor in the late sixties. He continues being active in community meetings. Abe represented the civic generation in this study.

Participants from the community of North East

Alex.

Alex was a very busy and outgoing eighteen year old male who attended North East high school and was trying to decide which college had offered him the best scholarship. Alex enjoyed the small community of North West, but was very excited about attending college the next year. He wanted to experience some of the world and planned to return to a small town or village to live and work. Alex and his sixteen-year old sister had lived in North East their entire life. Their parents were from a larger city and moved to North East to take jobs and raise their family in a rural area. Alex was involved in his church youth group, bible study, high school sports, and academic clubs. He had some type of activity planned on most any evening. He became interested in community affairs after he attended city council meetings as part of a school project. His entire family belonged to the North East Betterment Organization. Alex liked to think of himself as a successful young man. He worked as a groundskeeper for a landscaping company on weekends and summers. His hobbies were fine arts, and athletic activities. Alex represented the millennial generation in this research.

Marne.

Marne was a contemporary thirty-seven year old female who stayed busy with her two teenage daughters. Marne and her husband belonged to the North East Chamber of Commerce and their community's Betterment Organization. Her two kids were involved in high school sports, speech and many other activities that kept their family on the run. Marne worked part-time as a florist and as a

receptionist at a radio station. Her hobbies were her award winning garden and watching all the school activities her kids are in. She met her husband while she was earning her degree in mass communication. After college she married and moved to North East where her husband started a new Job. Marne had been a resident in the community of North East for seventeen years and represented the diversity generation in this study.

Mathew.

An intense and soft-spoken forty-three year old man, "Matt" was an administrator in the North East School System. He first came to the school system as a teacher and then was promoted to principal. After he served several years as a principal their school merged with another school system and he was promoted to an administrator. Mathew had been in the North East community for twenty-three years. He met his wife while he attended graduate school. After he earned his Ph.D. in education he and his wife moved to North East to raise a family. Mathew enjoyed living in a small town and working with families who care so much about their community. He did not feel he had the time to have many hobbies but enjoyed reading and attending their two teenage children's activities. Mathew represented the boomer generation in this study.

Abigail.

Abigail was an active sixty-eight year old female who retired from her job as a certified nurse assistant three years prior to this research. She had lived just outside of North East with her husband on a small farming operation. Abigail raised five children in North East and was still involved in the community. She

had served as an organist at her church for twenty-three years. Her hobbies included photography and vegetable gardening, growing flowers, music, and organ playing. She enjoyed the company of her husband and friends and liked to attend the school activities of her eleven grandchildren. Abigail had a deep faith in God and believed he held her family together through the hardships her family faced in the farm crisis of the 1980s. She had lived in the community of North East for fifty-five years and hoped her children and grandchildren could continue to live and work in the area. Abigail represented the mediating generation in this study.

Russell.

Russell was a humorous and playful seventy-seven year old man who enjoyed his retirement in the community of North East. He had lived in the community for his entire life except for the four years he had served in the Air Force from 1950 – 1954. He said he was usually happy and enjoyed the company of his grandchildren. Russell had farmed in the area most of his working life and was a retired mail carrier. At one time he and his wife thought about leaving the area but believed their three children would benefit by living in a community like North East. He loved music and played his accordion and sung in a local band. He took part in local music jams, enjoyed gardening and maintaining his property. Russell liked to keep busy and wanted things to look neat and well cared for. He built and maintained many of the flower containers that were placed in the city park and around town. Russell represented the civic generation in this research.

Table18 provides a visual description of ten participants.

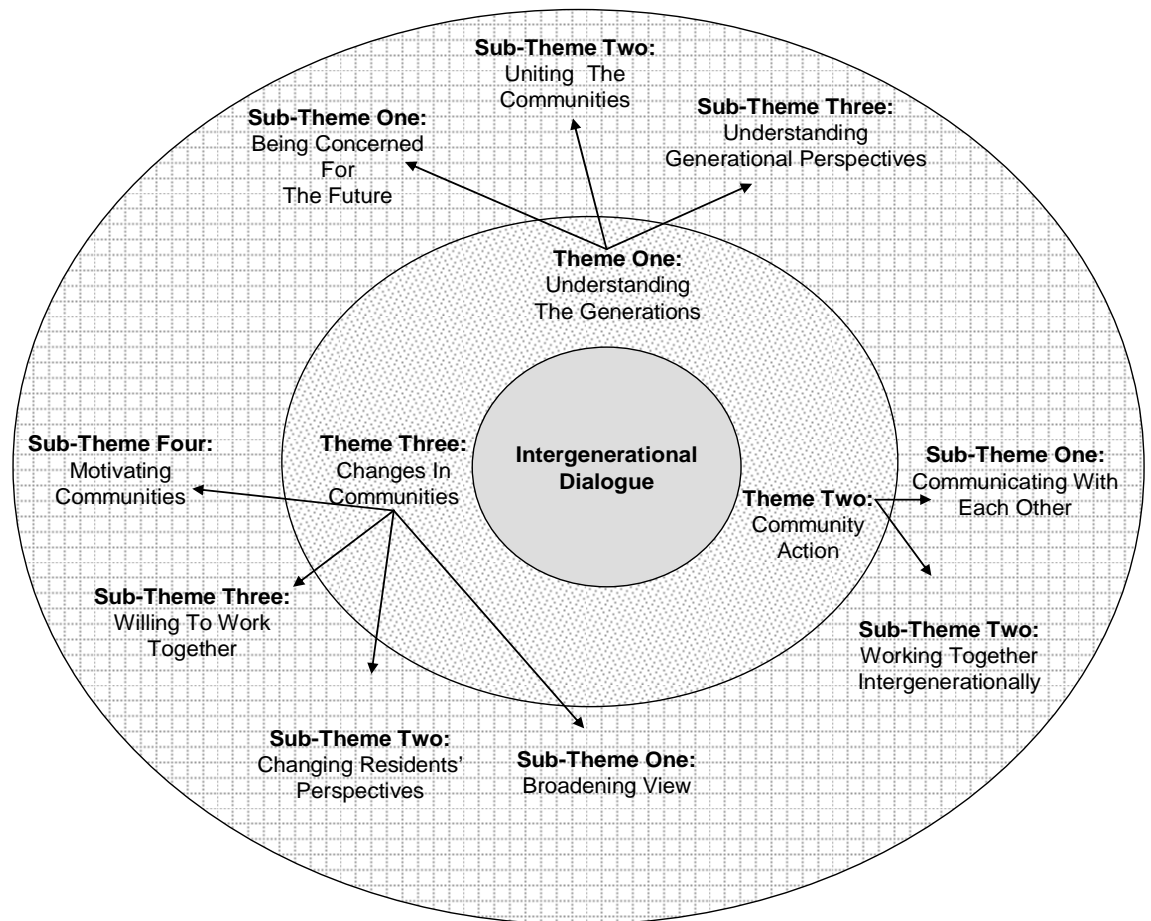
Table 18: Introduction to Participants

Generation Represented	Community of North East	Community of Central City
Millennial Generation 1981 – Present	Alex Male – 18 DOB – 1987 Student Resident 18 years	Sarah Female – 18 DOB – 1987 Student Resident 18 years
Diversity Generation 1964 – 1981	Marne Female – 37 DOB – 1968 Flower shop Married 2 children Resident 17 years	Norma Female – 27 DOB – 1978 Homemaker Married 2 children Resident 7 years
Boomer Generation 1945 – 1963	Mathew Male – 43 DOB – 1962 Teacher Married 2 children Resident 23 years	Jacob Male – 43 DOB – 1962 Banker Married 3 children Resident 25 years
Mediating Generation 1932 – 1944	Abigail Female – 68 DOB – 1937 Retired CAN Married 5 children Resident 55 years	Frank Male – 66 DOB – 1939 Horse trainer Married 3 children Resident 32 years
Civic Generation 1901 -1931	Russell Male – 77 DOB – 1928 Retired post office Married 3 children Resident 74 years	Abe Male – 78 DOB – 1927 Retired electrician Widower 14 Children Resident 55 years
Total n = 10	n = 5	n = 5

Presentation of Themes

Text segments and codes from the participants' interviews were arranged into several categories then sorted into three major themes. The three major themes developed in this research were: 1) understanding the generations, 2) community action, and 3) changes in communities. As I thoroughly examined the data contained in the three major themes, each theme was divided into sub-themes that emerged (Appendix I). Using a narrative and participant's quotes the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the research are discussed in detail. Figure 2 contains a visual presentation of the themes and sub-themes.

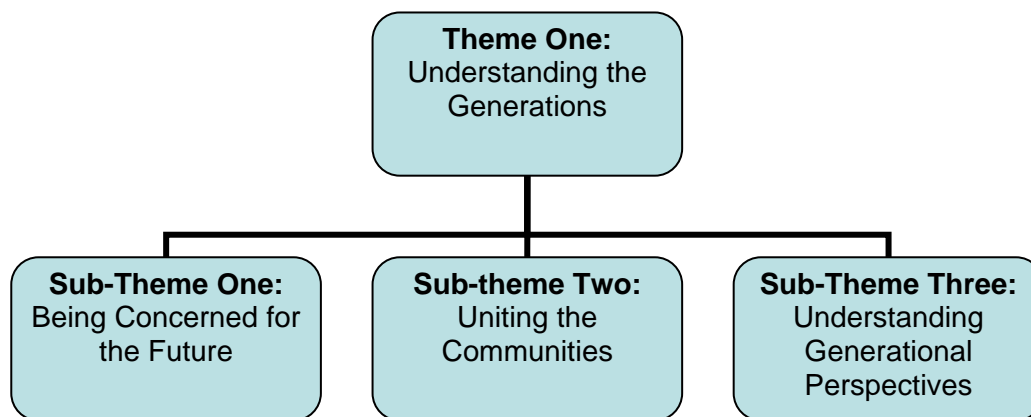
Figure 2: Visual Display of Themes and Sub-Themes



Theme One: Understanding the Generations

The first theme that emerged in this study was understanding the generations. This theme had three sub-themes. The first sub-theme was being concerned for the future. The second sub-theme was uniting the communities. The third sub-theme was understanding generational perspectives. Figure 3 displays theme one and its sub-themes.

Figure 3: Visual Display of Theme One and Sub-Themes



Sub-Theme One: Being Concerned for the Future.

Nearly every participant, 90%, in this research spoke of having concern for the future of their community. Participants realized while all the generations had concern for the future, the specific concerns of the generational groups were sometimes different. Some of the younger people said they could not stay in a town where there were few employment opportunities. Alex from the millennial generation indicated, "I want to come back here and raise a family if I can find a job where I can support a family" he thought the knowledge people gained at the Dialogue helped his community work toward achieving their goals. In both

intergenerational Dialogues and in nearly every interview people were concerned about youth leaving because they could not find adequate employment.

Sarah from the millennial generation wished the older generations would do more to help preserve the future of their community. Sarah spoke about other young people in her community, “We don’t even know if we are going to have a town in five years. Its kind of hard to make plans to stay here, it might be gone.” In her opinion the town needed more amenities to retain younger people and attract new residents. Sarah explained her concern:

The older people in this town were once the future and worked hard to get things the way they are now. They seemed to work against us because they tried to keep things the way they are. We have been trying to get a new activity center, but the older people were an obstacle. During the Intergenerational Dialogue we talked about that and I think the older people started to realize we are the future and they could help us get what we need to keep us here. If all of us leave, this community has no future.

Marne from the diversity generation, worried about the future of the town. Marne said, “The Intergenerational Dialogue showed us how we need to work together to insure the future of our community.” She felt that community members needed to encourage each other to get the perspectives of all generations. Marne explained, “Younger people will feel more ownership by being included and then hopefully they will come back some day.” It was Marne’s belief to secure the future of the community the residents should include youth in community development projects and implement some of their ideas.

The younger people were not the only ones who had concerns about the future of their community. Matt from the boomer generation was moved by the

testimony of the older people at the Dialogue. He had not realized the seniors had such concern for their future. Matt spoke about what he heard:

One area I wasn't aware of were the ideas and the concerns of the older people, the ones that are getting close to retirement age. I don't hear their point of view in my daily interactions with people. Hearing what some of the older people were going through made me realize that what I wanted was not so important. Our seniors should be looking forward to these last few years of their lives. Their situation made me aware of what is community should be working on. Our seniors are worried that they must leave town when they can no longer stay in their homes.

Until Matt and others at the Dialogue heard the testimony of the senior citizens, they thought only the younger generations had concerns about the future. The community was surprised by the civic generation's concern. Norma, from the diversity generation said, "The older people's view really surprised me, I realized we need to help our older citizens."

Frank from the mediating generation had different concerns for the future of the community. He thought the community should be doing more economic development. Frank said, "We should bring new businesses to our town. Many of the older business owners are getting ready for retirement and nobody is going to continue in their place." Frank's concern was if the town loses their small shops, people will trade elsewhere and the town will die.

Russell a representative of the civic generation, shared the same concerns of most other members of the civic generation in his community:

If our community is going to survive we must be able to attract new families and there is no housing available in this town. When people my age get to the place where they can no longer take care of their house and property we have no place to go. We must leave here to some place that has a facility for us. I knew the situation for the older people here, but did not think about the housing problem for the younger people until I heard

them talk at the meeting. We need to provide housing for younger and older people.

I found it interesting that before the Intergenerational Dialogue Russell's concern for the future was housing for the elderly. At the Dialogue he was surprised to hear other generations express the same concern. Russell had not realized the younger generations were experiencing housing issues similar to the seniors.

Sub-Theme Two: Uniting the Communities.

Participants thought community residents felt closer to each other since attending the Intergenerational Dialogue. Frank from the mediating generation explained, "Because the Intergenerational Dialogue involved people from every age group, we were exposed to age groups we normally would not have interaction with." As people shared and listened to each other at the Dialogue, they learned to understand the differences between the generations and felt closer to each other. Through this experience they started to value each other's ideas. Alex from the millennial generation was happy to be treated like an adult and that people actually listened to him. Alex said:

I have lived my whole life here and no adult has ever invited me to anything before. I was surprised that people really cared what I had to say. This was the first time I really felt like part of the community.

Both of the millennial participants said they felt like people in the community treated them differently since the Dialogue. Sarah said, "They ask me real questions now and actually listen to the answers without correcting me."

Norma from the diversity generation thought the Intergenerational Dialogue changed the way people interacted with each other and the way they regarded each others' point of view. Norma said:

I felt like at the Intergenerational Dialogue we were all on the same page. It is better here; the Dialogue gave me a new impression of those people. I feel we are on the same side. I feel like we know each other better.

Norma thought that the Dialogue played a role in helping the community become closer to each other. The Dialogue participants felt closer to other community members because they understood them.

Matt felt that the all-inclusiveness of the Intergenerational Dialogue knit the community together by involving people who would not otherwise be invited to take part in a community development process. Matt said:

We are working together and getting a lot accomplished. If it weren't for the Intergenerational Dialogue I don't know whether some of the people would've been involved but that Dialogue brought people together that we probably wouldn't have even thought of asking to be in the group. The Dialogue kind of unified our goals instead of each of us wanting to do something different.

Participants from both communities said were interacting with people they have never talked to before. They felt the experience of the Dialogue bonded them together. Jacob from the boomer generation said, "Younger people that attended the meeting are coming up and talking to me; they have never done that before." Younger people felt like they are more a part of the community than they did before the Dialogue. Jacob explained how the Dialogue unified the group:

I think the younger ones maybe got exposed to people and issues they never considered. Some of the older people never were asked questions like that before. Everybody came away from that day with a feeling, no matter what you discussed everybody was able to talk, it broke down the invisible barriers between the age groups.

Participants established a link between understanding each other and feeling closer to each other. Frank who represented the mediating generation articulated that point nicely:

I think the better that you get to know someone, the closer you become to them. This Dialogue let us get to know each other and understand each other. We all knew each other a lot better when it was finished. I think all of the people who took part in it feel closer, like you can talk to people now.

Abe from the civic generation thought the key to the success of the Dialogue was the fact that it included people who would not likely be brought together to work on solving a community issue. Abe said, "People from different backgrounds and families, with different interests were there. We were all listening and then understood each other. The Dialogue meeting united this community."

Sub-Theme Three: Understanding Generational Perspectives.

Originally I had categorized data into a fourth sub-theme that emerged generational similarities. After I considered and analyzed the data in sub-theme four, I came to the conclusion that data from sub-theme three and four could be merged into the same theme. I thought the realization that generations have similarities is part of understanding generational perspectives. I do think it worth mentioning that several participants commented on the similarities they saw in each others viewpoints.

Sarah and Alex who were from the millennial generation said they were surprised to see the oldest generation and their generation had some views that were similar to their perspectives. Sarah commented, "I figured they would be the group we disagreed with the most. When they asked us questions they totally agreed with us and we understood each other, we kind of connected."

Jacob from the boomer generation saw his generation was shaped by different world events than the older generations but they were able to agree on some of the ideas presented. Jacob realized many of the views presented were

similar to his, “I was surprised seeing the thinking was similar to mine. I saw their philosophies were shaped by events that were different than mine, but we still had similar philosophies.” Frank represented the mediating generation realized some of the generational perspectives were similar, “I saw that we, all the generations, may have a little bit different way of thinking, but we are more alike than not. It was kind of like the way they thought was kind of like the way we thought too.” Abe had worked with people and groups all his life but was surprised at what he learned about the younger generation:

The most astounding thing to me was the youngest generation. It seemed like the youngest generation was very similar to the way I thought and it's almost like something goes around will come around. It was interesting to here what they had to say.

Seven of the participants commented on the similarities they saw in the views of different generational groups.

All of the participants said they use the information they learned about different generational perspectives and felt they were more likely to make the effort to understand people from different generations after experiencing the Intergenerational Dialogue. Participants thought they learned how to give and take between the groups. Many participants gave up their ideas after they realized another generation's idea may yield more benefit for the community. Sarah and her other young friends came to the Dialogue because the kids wanted a new ball field and activity center. They came to voice their generation's perspective. After hearing other generational perspectives Sarah changed her mind, “I went to the Dialogue because kids my age wanted a new ball field. Half way through the meeting I realized why the other generations wanted something

different. I understood why their needs were more important to the community than what I had wanted.” No one had ever explained to her the other needs of the community. When she understood why other generations wanted something different than she wanted, it was easy for her to give up her idea.

Alex learned about the other generations, “I learned a lot about the other age groups. It was interesting to see what everyone else wanted and what everyone else was thinking and finding out some of the routes they wanted to take to achieve their goals.” The Dialogue helped participants understand why different generations may have different needs or ideas on how something should be done. Norma thought that learning about the history of the generations was an important step in understanding them:

The Dialogue showed us how important our background is in forming our opinions on issues. It is important to understand where people are coming from. If you have that understanding you can figure out what they need.

Matt and other participants had not realized the housing problem in their community had such an affect on the civic generation. Participants saw how an issue like housing could affect different groups in a different way. Matt explained:

I was surprised at the older people, the kids' views I knew of, I know what they want. I was surprised that the needs of the older people were expressed very loudly. I could see where they were coming from and why it would be a priority for them. I didn't realize the older generations' were facing such uncertainty in their lives. It was good for me to see that and it opened my eyes that I should look closer to understand others' needs that may be more important than mine. Maybe there are other generations' needs that I never have thought about.

Matt, Abe and Norma thought understanding the perspectives of the civic generation motivated the community to do something about the housing issue.

People were aware of a housing issue, but had not realized the unique perspectives of the civic generation until they heard them at the Dialogue.

Participants learned that the five generations had different perspectives on some issues but were willing to consider the needs of other generations. Abigail did not realize that the younger people thought about the older generation's needs. Abigail from the mediating generation was surprised when people from the younger generations made the effort to understand her situation:

Their wants were completely different than ours. When they realized what we needed they just quit talking about what they wanted and started thinking of a way to provide us with what we needed.

Abe from the Civic generation thought the Intergenerational Dialogue made him aware of why people from different generations sometimes had a hard time understanding each other. He realized that different generations came from different timeframes and their views were shaped by different events. Abe voiced his thoughts:

After learning their histories, It would be kind of silly to think they could come into a room and just agree on something without exchanging thoughts and ideas. It was interesting, surprising or whatever you want to call it that, coming from different timeframes defines how we might approach something and so forth.

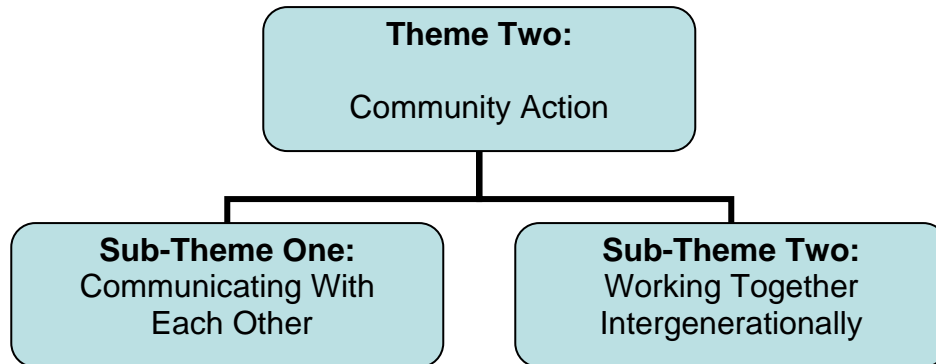
Every participant felt the importance of understanding the different generational perspectives was the main role the Intergenerational Dialogue served in their community. Community members thought if they understood each others' perspectives, the path was clear for them to work together.

Theme Two: Community Action

The second theme that emerged in this study was community action. This theme had two sub-themes. The first sub-theme was communicating with each

other. The second sub-theme was working together intergenerationally. Figure 4 exhibits theme two and its sub-themes.

Figure 4: Visual Display of Theme Two and Sub-Themes



Sub-Theme One: Communicating With Each Other.

All of the participants recalled how the Intergenerational Dialogue emphasized the importance of listening and communicating with each other. Participants from North East and Central City realized their town's inability to communicate with each other as a problem that required immediate action.

Sarah from the millennial generation viewed communication with each other as a necessary step toward understanding the needs of the community.

Sarah explained:

We need to listen to each other because we might change our mind on what we feel is important. We then would finally understand each other and maybe work together. If we want to get something done we need to talk to them and show them what we think and how it affects each of us.

Norma from the diversity generation did not normally communicate with some of the other age groups. After realizing the importance of listening to each other, Norma changed her attitude toward communicating with other generations.

Norma described how she changed her strategy:

I've learned to talk to them and hear their ideas. I got to know them and what is important to them. I think we learned about listening and hearing what the other groups are saying. I guess it was giving value to other people's opinion which really helped me understand other generations. I learned to encourage others to give their point of view and how if our community is going to grow we need to listen to each other.

Matt from the boomer generation had become a spokesman in his town for communication between generations. He was impressed by what he learned from other generations by attending just one Intergenerational Dialogue. Matt commented, "Now I try to encourage everybody to see the points of view from all generations and explain to people how our community will benefit by listening to each other." Matt thought the community realized how poorly they communicated with each other and took action to improve it. Matt stated, "We learned to value each others' opinions and we communicate a lot better now. If you try to cooperate, you'll be respected and listened to." He was encouraged the generational groups had made progress and were willing to listen to each other.

Jacob from the boomer generation agreed that communication with each other had improved in their community, "I think we have learned to talk and listen to each other." He added, "It is important to show your willingness to listen to others and not be a dictator with your own idea, no matter how good you think it is." Jacob emphasized communication as a two part process, listening and speaking. He thought many people tended to leave out the listening part.

Frank from the mediating generation felt learning the importance of listening to each other was the most helpful part of the Dialogue. He knew that people in his town did not communicate well but did not realize the failure to communicate was impeding progress in his community. Frank explained:

I think the biggest thing we learned is that you really need to listen. You need to listen to everyone that cares to speak and try your best to listen with an open-mind because they are going to come up with some pretty good things. I learned not be afraid, to go ahead and talk to people about issues. A lot of things we talked about that day we did not dare talk about normally. We needed to get into that situation where people would just open up.

Frank felt the community has made substantial progress on improving their communication with each other and the effort had helped considerably.

Abe from the civic generation thought the Intergenerational Dialogue reinforced good listening skills. Abe learned in order for people to talk and contribute; they must feel it is safe to do so. To feel safe people wanted to know they would be listened to and their input was welcome.

Abe spoke about the concept of active listening:

To get someone to share their ideas you must show you are going to listen to them. If they realize you are going to listen they feel a lot better about trying out their ideas on you. The Dialogue reinforced how important it is to be a good listener. This is important because if you don't listen, you can not get people to talk or say anything about the issues. We gave everyone a chance to be heard and everyone felt they could speak; it kind of leveled the field. You cannot solve anything without an idea for a solution; everybody there gave an idea for a solution to the issue.

The Intergenerational Dialogue demonstrated to the participants that communication with each other needed to improve before they could work together on community issues; subsequently both communities improved their ability to communicate with other generations.

Sub-Theme Two: Work Together Intergenerationally.

Every participant realized and commented on the importance of working intergenerationally. Participants often interchanged the terms, working together, working across generations, working intergenerationally, and working together

intergenerationally, which would indicate these terms were synonymous. The participants agreed that working together intergenerationally was something their communities should do to benefit as many people possible. When generational cohorts worked together to seek a solution to an issue, the result would most likely be embraced by the community. Sarah from the millennial generation understood the futility in trying to work alone:

We found out that if you try to do something in a community without involving other people, it probably will not come together because you are just satisfying one group. You need everybody's opinion and try and make it mutual, neutral, so you can get a lot of input on the issue. A community is like a sports team, you have to work together.

Alex from the millennial generation agreed, "It's a given, when people work together things get done. It takes manpower, resources, and cooperation to design a solution that would meet the needs of a community." Both representatives of the millennial generation thought changes in the community would more likely happen if people from all generations were involved in the process.

Norma felt working together in the Dialogue taught people how to communicate and work with each other. Norma explained, "It helped me see the younger people wanted to be involved but were rarely invited to take part in anything, the older people felt the same way. We learned to invite them to be involved." She described how working together has had positive results in her community:

What was needed was not just a group of 40 and 50 year olds trying to do it. Now we have 20 to 80 year old people working together and we are getting things done. I mean they came together there for the first time and wouldn't have if they did not meet at the Dialogue meeting.

Norma learned when communities work intergenerationally there was more agreement on the solution because every generational perspective on the issue had been considered.

Jacob from the boomer generation found out when communities work together everybody wins. Jacob explained the benefits of working together, "Any time people work together it is a win-win situation. It is so much better when everybody is working towards a common goal, everybody gets some benefit out of it." When the community worked intergenerationally, more people were satisfied with the results.

Abigail from the mediating generation thought working together promoted positive attitudes and improved relationships between community members.

Abigail explained why she thought working together was important:

When people work together, it gives everyone a sense of hope and pride to know that many of us want the same things. You get improvement of our town and positive attitudes. You have to have a positive attitude toward what you are working on. Ideas may begin with one person, but it takes many hands to put them together.

Many of the participants agreed with Abigail by making similar comments. They thought working together in the Dialogue improved their attitudes and made people realize what they could accomplish.

Frank from the mediating generation felt people had to work together for the community to succeed. Frank said, "We saw that none of us can get it done by ourselves; we absolutely have to work together. If we do work together we have a chance to realize our goals." Russell and Frank agreed that working together intergenerationally was absolutely necessary. Russell saw no reason to

approach a community issue in any other way. Russell from the civic generation stated:

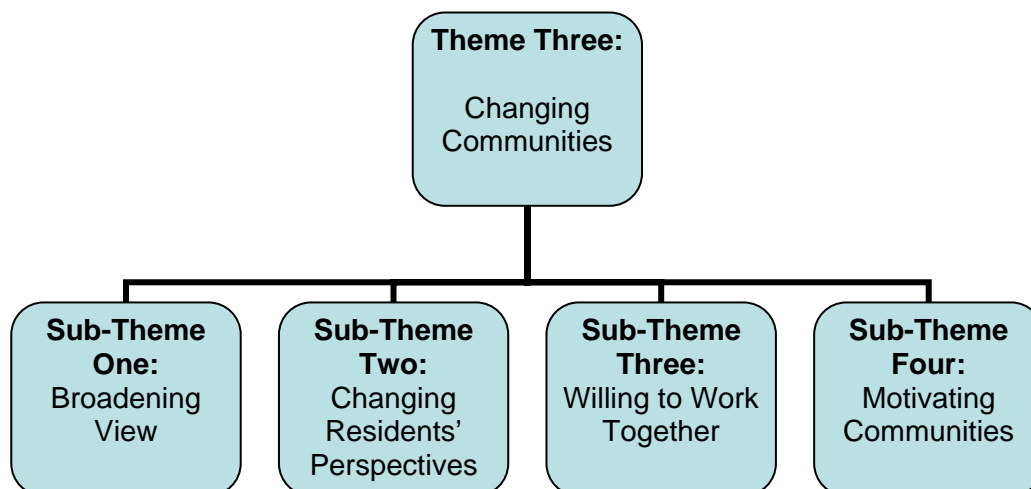
Now if I am involved in something, if I served on something, and I had a desire to do the best job I could do, I would work intergenerationally to understand everyone's perspectives. That is the only way I think you could make a community project successful.

Every participant agreed that working together across the generations was the preferred action for a community to take in order to generate a lot of ideas and find appropriate solutions to community issues. At the time of the participant interviews in this study, both communities were still working together intergenerationally.

Theme Three: Changes in Communities

The third theme that emerged in this study was changing communities. This theme had four sub-themes. The first sub-theme was broadening view. The second sub-theme was changing residents' perspectives. The third sub-theme was willing to work together. The fourth sub-theme was motivating communities. Displayed in Figure 5 below is theme three and its sub-themes.

Figure 5: Visual Display of Theme Three and Sub-Themes



Sub-Theme One: Broadening View.

When sorting through the data I discovered many text segments that made reference to expanding the participant's views, becoming more open-minded, or deepened their understanding. There was enough support for a theme to emerge that I called it broadening view. Every participant said the Intergenerational Dialogue expanded their understanding of other generations and taught them to be more open-minded to the ideas of other generational perspectives.

Many participants learned to consider why another generation's idea may be more important than their own idea. Alex from the millennial generation learned to consider things he never thought about before. Alex commented:

It makes you open your eyes to see, you know, we all tend to see things just through our own eyes; we see what we want to see. When you hear other people's beliefs and thoughts it makes you stop and think, maybe there are things out there that are more important than what I want.

Alex understood that looking through the lens of another generation could give him a different perspective of an issue.

Norma from the diversity generation learned how having dialogue with each other could remove what was formally an obstacle to progress. Norma described how a tense situation was defused:

I learned to be more open-minded. To me, the generations that hit me the most were the young and the old. They really got me, we were able to put ourselves in their shoes and see what they needed. This type of talking to each other helped them iron out what was between them. Just by being open to other viewpoints we learned so much.

At the Intergenerational Dialogue in Norma's community there was a lot of tension between the civic and millennial generations. After actively listening to

each other for a short time, the tension dissipated, and the two groups were embracing each other's ideas while praising each other. Both generational groups learned to value each other's perspectives and taught the entire Dialogue group the importance of listening to each other.

Marne from the diversity generation learned the value in considering more than one group's perspective. She thought the Dialogue introduced many ideas for consideration. Marne described what she learned:

Hearing the older generation's concerns really opened my eyes to what this community needed. It opened me up to ideas other than my own, you know, made me see that this is something we need and I would not have seen that if I did not attend that group meeting.

After he participated in the Intergenerational Dialogue, Matt from the boomer generation became more open to considering the perspectives of other generations. Matt explained his thought:

I think I am more open to ideas of other people, where before I may have considered only my own ideas. I have learned to give value to other ideas. I did not realize how strong they felt about theirs, like I do about mine. I want to say, I am more open-minded.

Abigail from the mediating said "It broadened out my view of other generations."

She agreed with Matt and realized other people were just as attached to their ideas as she was to her ideas. Abigail described how her community learned to cooperate with each other:

Cooperating with each other does not mean giving in to someone, we are working together to set priorities, nobody loses in this process. I think the people here are working together and trying to be open to adopting other ideas. We listen to ideas and develop plans instead of holding on to preconceived plans that we may have brought with us. We understand one groups needs are as important as another groups needs.

The participants learned that being more open-minded about other generations' perspectives gave the community a larger understanding of the issue they were considering. People realized their idea might not benefit the community as much as another person's idea. When they were more open-minded and cooperated with each other, they learned about perspectives they never considered before.

Sub-Theme Two: Changing Residents' Perspectives.

All of the research participants indicated they had changed the way they would approach a community issue. Most of the participants, 90%, said they learned to value the input of all generations or changed the value they attached to the opinions of other generations.

Sarah and Alex from the millennial generation discovered the older generation had a lot more experience with community issues than they did. Both Sarah and Alex gained a new respect for members of the civic generation. Sarah remembered her experience at the Dialogue:

It became clear to me that their experience played an important part in their choice of what was best for our town. I understand now that people from different generations may have different needs. We should look at everyone's needs and set priorities in what we should provide.

Alex changed the way he viewed the civic generation after he heard their presentation at the Dialogue. Alex commented:

I saw the input of the older generation as helpful because their ideas are based on experience. I used to think the older people just became useless. The Dialogue helped me realize how narrow my viewpoint was.

Sarah felt that after the civic and millennial generations communicated with each

other they learned to understand and value each other. Sarah recalled both generations giving up their preconceived ideas about each other:

I thought they hated us and did not care about our opinions. When we answered the questions at the Dialogue they really listened to us; they never did that before. They saw we care about the town and they respected us and we started to listen to them. My approach to solving a community issue has changed; we must get input from all the age groups.

Norma from the diversity generation realized there were other generations that cared about the town. She was glad the community gained the ability to work together. Norma said, "When we were together at the meeting, I felt we could make a difference; I know a lot of others felt the same way. I have not felt that for a long time; I am more hopeful." Many people were encouraged and started to believe the community could be successful.

Matt from the boomer generation discovered the importance of working intergenerationally when he realized the community neglected to recognize the needs of the civic generation. Matt Explained:

I guess it is interesting to me that we were not even thinking about the needs of our seniors. We are always worried about getting new houses for young people to keep our school population up and things to keep our town growing. Unfortunately we neglected to consider the people who are finishing up their life here. Now we are including them and making them feel like part of the process, like they have a say in their town.

Matt's community understood how important it was to include all the generations in the process because they had not realized the civic generation was experiencing such difficulty in finding housing.

Frank from the mediating generation changed his perspective on listening to the other generations' ideas. Frank explained how he changed:

I think I learned to listen more to what people are saying. I think a person really needs to listen more and not be so narrow-minded about what we

need to do. I tended to be one of those people who thought they had a good idea and would not give it up. I look at others ideas now and am more willing to give up my ideas.

Abe from the civic generation learned to value input from other generations and changed his perspective on dealing with community issues. Abe described his change in attitude:

The forum changed the way I would approach a community issue. In solving a community issue you must understand what all needs are. You must try to get as many ideas as possible in order to fully understand the issue. My generation's ideas may not be the best ones out there. I would consider the needs of all the generations to get as many ideas as I could.

The participants agreed their attitudes toward other generations had improved and they now valued the perspectives of other generations.

Sub-Theme Three: Willing to Work Together.

Participants believed their participation in the Intergenerational Dialogue helped clear the obstacles that prevented them from working together in their community. At the Dialogue they learned they could work together and experienced some positive interaction. Norma from the diversity generation described her experience at the Dialogue, "We all worked pretty well together in our groups and came up with some good ideas. It worked because we were willing to work together." Marne from the diversity generation agreed with Norma and thought the Dialogue provided an environment that was conducive to working well together and it included everyone in the process. Marne explained:

Everybody is more willing to work together because there are not as many hurt feelings. It was a very positive group to work with and we were open to other people's ideas. When you listen to each other and understand each other, it makes it much easier to work together.

Jacob from the boomer generation thought people learned to value each others' opinions at the Dialogue. He felt the people's attitudes toward one another had improved and are more willing to work together because they learned they need each other. Jacob spoke about the change in attitudes:

People in this town are talking to each other that have never talked to each other before. I think we realized how much more we can get done if we work together instead of competing for the limited resources that we have. Attitudes have really changed.

Frank from the mediating generation felt when people learned their participation was valued, they were more willing to get involved in a community project.

Frank said, "I think we have a lot more people that are ready to get involved because of the Intergenerational Dialogue. People respect each others' ideas more and are more willing to help out where they can." Many participants agreed with Frank and made similar comments. They felt the Dialogue provided a place for people to learn from each other and learn about each other.

When participants recalled their involvement in the Intergenerational Dialogue, they remembered the positive experience of working together in their intergenerational groups. Every participant said their Dialogue group worked well together and generated many ideas. The positive experience of working together in intergenerational groups at the Dialogue demonstrated to the community residents, they had the ability to work together intergenerationally. The participants agreed their communities must work together intergenerationally and were more willing to do so after the Dialogue.

Sub-Theme Four: Motivating Communities.

Participants felt the Intergenerational Dialogue motivated their communities to continue their work together. In the past community groups had started projects and soon failed when participants lost interest or became frustrated. The participants credited the communication skills and the understanding of generational perspectives they learned at the Dialogue for the success they were experiencing. Both communities continued to work intergenerationally.

Sarah from the millennial generation indicated the Intergenerational Dialogue influenced people from the millennial generation to share their experiences with others, “After the Dialogue we set up a meeting to inform other young people in our community how they could become involved.” Alex from the millennial generation thought the Dialogue helped generations understand each other by showing them how to communicate with each other. Alex explained:

The Dialogue helped us understand what our community needed to do in order to work together. We are continuing to build on what we learned. We are still working with people from all the generations.

Residents in Alex and Sarah’s communities continued to work intergenerationally and taught others what they learned in the Intergenerational Dialogue.

Norma from the diversity generation described how their community had worked together and remained motivated:

The Intergenerational Dialogue fired people up and motivated them. People from the Intergenerational Dialogue were able to work with other groups and get some things done. We feel motivated and have been applying for some grants. The willingness to work together is still there and we are still working together and making progress.

Matt from the boomer generation was encouraged that his community had moved forward with a recommendation plan that had been presented at the Dialogue. Matt explained:

I like the direction our community is taking because the Intergenerational Dialogue motivated us and then we found our own way. We have formed a community task force to help keep things moving. We have added many people to that group. The majority of our original group is still going strong.

Abigail from the mediating generation agreed with Matt. She said the ideas generated at the Dialogue were just a beginning for the generational groups in her community. Abigail described what their community had accomplished:

They had designed surveys to hand out. We folded the papers, stuffed envelopes and stamped them for mailing. We got a lot of answers to find out how the community feels. We are moving toward our goals.

Abe from the civic generation thought the younger people in his community involved themselves in community projects because they were motivated by the Intergenerational Dialogue. Many more people from Abe's community became interested in helping the community. Abe commented, "I see a lot more people at community meetings and many young people are getting involved." The participants from both communities felt the Intergenerational Dialogue played a major role in motivating community residents of all ages to become involved in community projects. At the time of this research both communities continued to work together intergenerationally.

Chapter Six

Summary, Implications, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of this case study was to describe participants' experience of the Intergenerational Dialogue Process. The study explored community residents' perspectives of the role the Intergenerational Dialogue Process served in building a community's capacity for change. The grand tour 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? The findings were based on qualitative data from personal interviews, observations of two Intergenerational Dialogues, and examining relevant documents. The reported findings were from themes that emerged from interviews incorporating extensive use of participants' own words. To summarize, the following findings were revealed, as the participants:

- Realized all generational cohorts had concerns about the future.
- Learned each generation had a specific concern that affected their future.
- Understood why differences exist between generations.
- Started to value each others' ideas as they learned to listen to each other.
- Felt the Dialogue experience made them feel closer to each other.
- Thought the community resident's attitude toward each other improved.

- Cooperated with other generations and valued other opinions.
- Participation in the process of listening, caring and sharing taught residents to understand and respect other generational perspectives.
- Thought understanding each others' perspectives removed some of the barriers between the generations and cleared the path for them to work together.
- Believed the Dialogue expanded their understanding of generations and taught them to be more open-minded and respect other generations.
- Felt being more open-minded about other generations' gave the community a larger understanding of the issues they were considering.
- Changed their strategies for dealing with community issues.
- Learned the importance of including people of all ages in any community process.
- Agreed that working intergenerationally was the preferred action to take when approaching a community issue.
- Felt more people were willing to become involved in community projects.
- Believed the Intergenerational Dialogue motivated and encouraged the community by providing a positive experience of working together.
- Commented that both communities remained motivated and continued to work intergenerationally.

Implications

Implications for the three themes described in the findings section – understanding the generations, community action, and changes in communities were examined.

Understanding the Generations

In both Intergenerational Dialogues participants spoke of being concerned for the future of their community. Representatives from every generation revealed their concern during the questioning of the Generational Panels portion of the Dialogue. In their personal interviews for this research, participants remembered each of the generations expressing those concerns. What impressed the participants was the fact that generational representatives spoke of concerns that were specific to their generational needs. Some examples would be: the millennial generation was worried about finding employment, the diversity generation was concerned about maintaining schools, and the civic generation expressed concern over housing. Most of what people heard was not new to them; what was different was the context in which they were hearing these concerns. Hearing the different generations testify to what they needed and why they needed it helped the Dialogue participants understand why their ideas for the community were so different and aided the community residents in understanding different generational perspectives.

Some of the participants were surprised when they realized many of their perspectives were shared by other generations. If you accept that we form our core values sometime between the ages of 8-15 (Daniele, 1998), you can see

how an 80-year-old would have different core values from a 20-year-old. However, the 20-year-old and the 80-year-old shared at least 20 years together. Given the inundation of media and basic human nature, it is not surprising that people across generations share different things in common.

Community residents knew with the resources in these small communities being very limited at best; it would be impossible to implement the ideas or accommodate the needs of every generation. The Dialogue served as a medium for the community residents to establish a priority as to who's need to service first. Because every generation had a chance to share their concern for the future, people were able to understand how the needs in many cases were interconnected and why one idea might benefit the community more than another.

The foundation of the Intergenerational Dialogue uses respect, caring, and cooperation to create an environment that is conducive to listening while someone shares their generation's unique perspective. This type of environment was successfully created at the Dialogues in North Central City and North East. Readers might ask themselves, when was the last time you attended a public forum of any kind where five generations listened to each other with respect and caring? When do young people in particular have the opportunity to speak directly to four other generations from their community? The inclusiveness of the Dialogue made everyone feel welcome, particularly the oldest and youngest generation who are often not invited to these types of forums. Dialogue participants opened up to each other because they felt it was a safe place to speak and they would be listened to. Frank from the mediating generation said,

“People talked about things they would not dare talk about anywhere else.” They would not express themselves before coming to the Dialogue because they felt no one would listen. After the Dialogue participants listened to each other, they began to understand each other’s perspectives. When the Dialogue participants shared and understood each others perspectives, they felt closer to each other.

The participants in both communities felt the Dialogue bonded the community together. This bonding was apparent in the Central City Dialogue where there was a noticeable amount of tension between the younger people of the millennial generation and the older citizens of the civic generation. The two groups made unkind comments about each other until they had the opportunity to listen to each others’ perspectives. Once they took the effort to listen to one another they were able to understand why their perspectives differed, and they began to value each other. These two generations discovered they were more similar than they were different. After the generational questions at the Dialogue, they praised each other and truly connected. This type of interaction was common in both Dialogues.

The research participants believed the Dialogue improved the attitudes of the community residents and made them feel closer to each other. Actively listening to each other at the Dialogue allowed participants to treat each other as they would like to be treated, creating a safe positive atmosphere. The “good feeling” experienced between generational participants had lasted long past the Intergenerational Dialogue and was still present over one year later. Understanding the generations served as a means to unite these communities.

Before their involvement in the Intergenerational Dialogue, participants had never met to specifically listen to other generational perspectives. After listening to each other, the participants changed the way they interacted with people from other generations. They learned why other generations might have different ideas and why an idea that seemed beneficial to some generations might affect people from other generations adversely. Strauss and Howe (1991) and Daniele (1998) believed as generations moved through time, each generation was impacted by social moments in history or world events. These social moments were when people believed that historic events were greatly changing their environment. Every participant used the information they learned about generational groups to understand each other.

If the participants had not made the effort to gain the information about generational groups, they would not have been able to make any progress toward solving their community issues. After they understood other generational perspectives, they began to value the input from other generations and cooperated with each other instead of competing with each other for scarce resources. Understanding and cooperating with each other breaks down some of the barriers between generations so they can work together; gaining the ability to work together is the main purpose of the Intergenerational Dialogue (Gambone, 2001). The participants thought that being able to understand the generational perspectives cleared the path for them to work together.

Community Action

This theme included the sub-themes of communicating with each other and working together intergenerationally. The participants recognized communication and working together as actions the community needed to take in order to accomplish their goals. The themes are closely related in that to work together effectively you must first communicate with each other. To communicate effectively you must first understand each other.

There is wide-spread misconception about communication in rural areas. Often people hold the belief that because rural areas are typically small the residents know each other and interact with each other on a regular basis. Residents of rural areas often travel over a large territory to meet their daily needs. Where this occurs, residents tend to have fewer intimate relationships or strong social ties. Many residents of rural towns have strong social ties to distant urban centers, but few social ties in their rural communities (Bender, 1978). Rural location can influence community interaction by influencing the probability of interpersonal contacts within the local population.

The lack of social ties in rural towns has come to be recognized as a serious barrier to the development of community in rural areas (Wilkinson, 1999). A typical example of having a lack of social interactions in their local community was Matt from the boomer generation. He was embarrassed that he did not normally interact with citizens from the older generation. Matt's job involved the youth and their parents so he never communicated with the civic generation and was not aware of the seriousness of their concerns. Dialogue participants

realized they were not as close as they believed they were. They learned a lot about each other and truly understood their differences after the Dialogue. The participants found the lack of communication was a major barrier that prevented them from working together.

Participants realized that they needed to work together intergenerationally to accomplish their goals. Many times in the past a community project would fail when people would lose interest or become frustrated with the process. It seemed that the community could not agree on their priorities or a method of getting a project finished. People were often suspicious of another's ideas. Individual efforts in community building often become self-seeking and fragmented (Ryan, 1971). Working together through dialogue a group can explore complex difficult issues from many points of view. Individuals suspend their assumptions and bring to the surface the full depth of people's experience and thought that moves beyond their individual views (Senge, 1990).

The self-help model of community development designed by James Christenson (1989) uses a bottom-up approach that involves community members in building capacity to take collective action. This approach has been successful because of the high degree of buy-in from community members. People will more likely embrace an idea that is generated inside the community rather than someone from outside the community. There is a downside to using the self-help model in small towns. People know each other in many roles and there may be a risk in taking a public stance which may result in disagreement with a boss, customer, or colleague.

The Intergenerational Dialogue is a form of the self-help model that uses a bottom-up approach to build capacity for change and generate solutions to community problems. This method allowed community members to decide the priority of the community projects and the methods they used to accomplish their task. One of the reasons for the success of the Dialogue Process is the high degree of buy-in by community residents. There is a high degree of buy-in because the Dialogue participants designed a recommendation or solution using input from all the generations in their community. With the high amount of input there is a wide-spread understanding of the different perspectives of the issue at hand. Unlike Christenson's model, the Intergenerational Dialogue is ideal for use in small communities because participation in the process poses no threat to community residents. Participation in the Dialogue requires participants to step out of their everyday roles and become representatives of their generation. Because social stratification is eliminated and everyone is there to represent their generation, the playing field is level. The Intergenerational Dialogue demonstrated through the use of its Generational Workgroups that these communities did have the ability to work together successfully.

Changes in Communities

Participants felt their experience in the Intergenerational Dialogue expanded their understanding of other generations and taught them to be more open-minded to the perspectives of others. The participants believed the Dialogue played a major role in removing the obstacles that prevented them from working together by changing the way they interacted with other generations and

increased the value they attached to the perspectives of others. Because they now possessed the ability to work together successfully, participants changed their strategies for dealing with community issues and were willing to work together intergenerationally. The experience of working together successfully motivated the communities to continue their work together intergenerationally.

Participants contended that their involvement in the Intergenerational Dialogue Process changed their perspectives of other generations, improved relationships between community members, and motivated their communities to work together. The experience of the Dialogue Process was so powerful the participants were able to recall their experience in great detail over a year after the Dialogue took place. It truly made a lasting impression on the participants. Communities are networks of relationships and relationships are a series of conversations. Therefore the most powerful vehicle communities have for transforming their norms, values, policies, purposes, and ideologies is the act of dialogue (Dowling, 1999). Warner Heisenberg (as cited in Senge, 1990) remembered having conversations that illustrated the staggering potential of collaborative learning. Collectively, we can be more insightful, more intelligent than we can possibly be individually. The participants felt successful when they could work through their differences and find solutions to community issues that were embraced by the community.

In the two rural communities of this study, the Intergenerational Dialogue Process worked where other models of community development had failed. Participation in the Intergenerational Dialogue allowed some of the barriers to be

removed that prohibited people in these towns from working together. The communities were able to make needed changes and continued toward attaining their goals. The data in the findings of this study substantiated the use of the Intergenerational Dialogue Process as a viable community development tool and suggest it should be initiated in community development or community organization interventions.

Recommendations to Target Audiences

- The Intergenerational Dialogue Process is a one day event; however the successful Intergenerational Dialogue Process requires four months of planning. I want to caution anyone who decides to conduct the Intergenerational Dialogue to follow the guidelines outlined by Gambone.
- To insure the success of an Intergenerational Dialogue a properly trained facilitator should be used.
- When planning an Intergenerational Dialogue, plan for a follow-up Dialogue within the same year to keep things moving.
- Communities or organizations wanting to facilitate the Intergenerational Dialogue Process should receive training and clear instructions or obtain training materials by contacting Dr. James Gambone <http://www.pointsofviewinc.com/> .

Recommendations for Future Research

- I would like to see more research identifying the reasons the Intergenerational Dialogue is so powerful. The Intergenerational Dialogue contains 5 essential elements: *the circle of generations, the scenario, the Generational Panels, the Intergenerational Work Groups, and the recommendations*. Are any of these elements more useful than the others? Does any one of these elements give the power to the Dialogue? Must a facilitator use all five of these elements for the Dialogue to remain so powerful?
- It would be interesting to conduct this study using participants who experienced the Intergenerational Dialogue in urban areas. Would a study in urban areas produce similar findings as the one in rural areas? Would urban groups react differently to any of the 5 elements in the Intergenerational Dialogue?
- Design a research project using indicators that can measure the amount of change in communities as a result of the Intergenerational Dialogue.
- Design a follow-up study on the people from the millennial generation who attended the Dialogue to see if their lives changed as a result of being listened to respectfully.
- I would like to see a follow-up study five years after the original Intergenerational Dialogue in the same two cities to see if they accomplished their goals.

- There is a need for longitudinal studies, both qualitative and quantitative on the Intergenerational Dialogue Process.
- This research suggests that more Intergenerational Dialogues should be funded as part of rural community economic development programs with money set aside for evaluation and follow-up research.

Chapter Seven

Journal Article for Research Study

Sample Journal Article

Written for *Journal of the Community Development Society*

Note: This sample article follows the format and guidelines for submission to the *Journal of the Community Development Society*.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS' PERSPECTIVES OF THE
INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE PROCESS:
A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY IN TWO RURAL
MIDWESTERN COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

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 Process, 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 Process.

Keywords: Intergenerational Dialogue Process, rural community development, community organizing, civic participation

INTRODUCTION

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. 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 than 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.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used qualitative methods of research and a multiple case study tradition to describe participants' beliefs about the changes that occurred in personal attitudes and actions through the use of an Intergenerational Dialogue held in their rural communities. Two cases of the Dialogue were studied. Creswell (1998) defined qualitative research as an inquiry process that explores a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed viewpoints of participants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

Data Collection Techniques

In this case study multiple methods were used to collect data in an attempt to provide a deep understanding and holistic perspective of residents' perspectives of the Intergenerational Dialogue Process.

Nearly one year before I interviewed the participants of this study, I observed the Intergenerational Dialogues in their community. At the Dialogue events, I recorded observations. I took field notes detailing the time, the setting, and peoples' reactions as the Dialogue took place. Data were also collected through face-to-face, in depth, semi-structured interviews with ten community members who had participated in the Intergenerational Dialogue. Five community members (one participant representing each of the five living generations) in two Midwestern rural communities, were interviewed nearly one year after the Dialogues were conducted in their community.

Each of the ten audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim, yielding an average 17 pages of text per interview. Verbatim transcription allowed information to be accurately collected from each participant.

Sampling Method

The sampling method for this multiple case study was a form of purposeful sampling, specifically called maximum variation sampling. In purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select "information-rich" individuals and sites that will help them understand the central phenomenon and increase the utility of information received from small samples. (Patton, 1990, Schumacher & McMillan, 1997). Schumacher and McMillan (1997) suggested that individuals are purposefully selected because they are knowledgeable and informed about the phenomenon of interest. They contend that the power and logic of purposeful sampling is that a few cases studied yield many insights about the topic. There is nothing random or statistically representative about the sample and, typically, the intent is not to generalize to a larger population.

Ten participants were contacted who had participated in the Intergenerational Dialogue in their rural community and were willing to participate in this study. The participants were contacted nearly one year after the Intergenerational Dialogues was conducted. In each community in this study, five people (one person representing each of the five living generations) were selected to participate in this study. As a representative of their generation, each participant brought their generations' unique perspective to this research.

Data Analysis

In case study research, the analysis consists of constructing a detailed description of the case and its setting (Creswell, 1997). To interpret the meaning of the data I used the six steps suggested by Creswell (2002) for data analysis in a case study:

- prepared and organized data for analysis;
- explored the data by carefully examining text segments;
- described and developed themes from the data;
- represented and reported the findings;
- interpreted the findings; and
- validated the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

I carefully categorized the ten transcribed interviews so I knew the time, location, and participant in each interview. I read through the interviews to get a sense of the whole. I coded individual transcripts, first using an in vivo coding process that identified key words or text segments in the margins, and represented participants' words as accurately as possible. I used the right hand margins of the transcripts to note questions or comments about potential emerging themes. The goal was to identify a manageable number of themes with potential sub-themes. To help organize the data, I copied the codes and text segments from each interview to separate colors of paper. I sorted each text segment and code into categories that represented the three major themes and nine sub-themes of this research.

TWO INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUES: THE CONTEXT OF THIS RESEARCH

Introduction to the Communities

Two communities were used as case sites in this study. I chose these communities because I had observed Intergenerational Dialogues in both communities in 2003 and both communities were in rural areas. The communities of Central City and North East (pseudonyms) addressed similar community issues in their Intergenerational Dialogues.

Central City

The median age of Central City's population is significantly above the state average. Nearly 60% of the population is above 50 years of age. Central City has been consistently losing population for the last several decades. In 1980 the population was 2,658. In 1990 the population decreased to 2,481. In 2000 the population continued to fall to 2,269. Between the years 2000 and 2004 the population dropped by nearly 4% to 2,088. This population trend has many Central City community leaders and residents concerned about the future of their town. People under age 20 represent nearly 25% percent of the town's

population and most of those people will more than likely leave after finishing school. Central City was looking for a way to reverse this trend and attract people to their city while retaining the young people who already live there.

Community leaders from Central City contacted the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) to help find a method of attracting and retaining people in their community. In June of 2003 a professor from UNL, who had been facilitating the Intergenerational Dialogue process in rural communities, suggested to community leaders to engage their residents in finding a solution to this community issue by conducting an Intergenerational Dialogue. The community of Central City formed an Intergenerational Dialogue Planning Committee and an Intergenerational Dialogue was conducted on September 20, 2003.

North East

The population of North East peaked at nearly 1,000 in 1909. By the year 2000 the population of North East had decreased by almost 50% to 520 residents. By the year 2004 North East lost another 4% of its citizens, bringing the total to 497 residents. While investigating this loss of population, the North East Village Board found that older citizens were leaving the community of North East, often to live in nearby communities. They discovered that when older residents could no longer maintain their homes, the community did not offer enough places for them to live. The village board also found that newer or larger homes were not available in the town for younger people with families. The city could not retain older people and did not have housing for people who wanted to move into the community.

Much like the community of Central City, The North East Village Board contacted the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to help find a solution to their housing problem. A professor from UNL who had been working with rural communities in the state suggested conducting an Intergenerational Dialogue to focus on their community issues. He oriented the Village Board to the Intergenerational Dialogue process and the Village Board decided to use the process to organize and motivate their community. The UNL professor agreed to facilitate the Intergenerational Dialogue in North East and an Intergenerational Dialogue Planning Committee was formed. North East conducted an Intergenerational Dialogue on October 11, 2003.

Structure of an Intergenerational Dialogue Process

J. V. Gambone (personal communication, June 8, 2005) suggested not thinking of the Intergenerational Dialogue as just a forum or meeting; but to think of it is an event where something will happen. The Intergenerational Dialogue event is designed to last five to six hours and contains five essential elements. The five structural elements are: the Circle of Generations, the Scenario, the Generational Panels, Intergenerational Work Groups, and the Recommendations. The following sub-sections describe each of these structural elements.

Circle of Generations

This exercise helps organize the day's event and serves as a non-threatening ice-breaker where people meet each other informally. The Circle of Generations gives participants of every age represented an opportunity to feel that their opinions are equally valid and valued.

The oldest person and the youngest person in the group are asked to come forward and are introduced to the group. After the ages of the two people are identified, every person in the Dialogue is asked to form a circle oldest to youngest between them, forming a Circle of Generations. Before this exercise participants are instructed to write on an index card a single word that they believe describes their generation. All group members are also asked to write their ages in the corner of their index card. While standing in the circle, group members are asked to look around the circle and see the diversity, by age, culture, and race. Starting with the oldest person, all group members are asked to say the word they have written on their card that describes their generation. While the group is in the circle they are asked to count off (one through eight) and write their number down on their index card. This number is used for their Intergenerational Work Group in the afternoon.

The Scenario

The Dialogue facilitator uses information from the planning committee to create a scenario that outlines a version of a community issue. The scenario is read aloud to the Intergenerational Dialogue participants to establish a focus for the discussion in the Dialogue. The scenario must be open-ended, compelling and interesting to the youngest and oldest person invited to the Dialogue. The scenario should not be over a few paragraphs in length and it is helpful if the scenario involves at least two or three generations.

To allow the audience to focus only on the story, the scenario is read aloud to the group from outside of the room, or from the rear of the room. The purpose is to allow participants' imaginations to visualize the scenario, which creates more personal ownership. Some key story elements may be purposely left out of the scenario so each of the generations present at the Dialogue will fill in those parts of the story. After the scenario is read a copy of it is given to all members of the group.

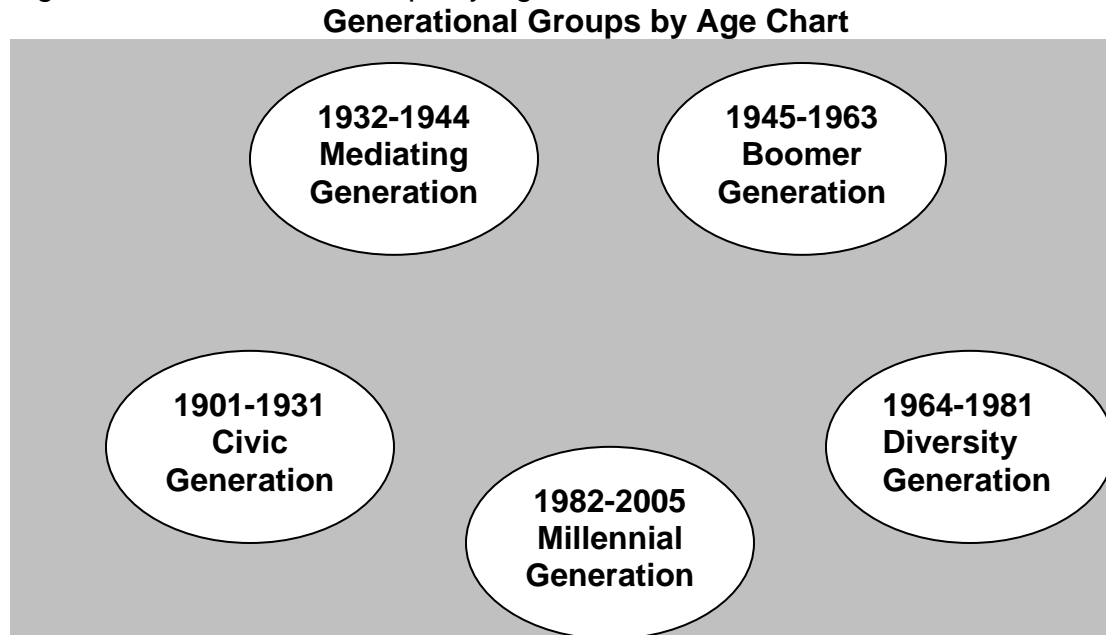
The Generational Panels

The facilitator introduces the Generational Groups by Age Chart (see Figure 1) and displays it in full view of the Dialogue group. The birth years of the age cohorts and the meanings of those groupings on the chart are briefly explained to the Dialogue participants.

Four or five volunteers from each of the five age cohorts are asked to come to the front of the room for the questions portion of the Dialogue. Facing the audience in front of the room, one age cohort at a time forms a Generational Panel that responds to the questions written by the facilitator. The questions are based on the scenario issue and designed to gain insight into each generation's

perspective of the issue. Each set of questions has the same theme but different specifics for each generation.

Figure 1: Generational Groups by Age Chart



Source: Adapted from Gambone (2001) Together for Tomorrow

The intention of the questions and answers is for members of the Dialogue group to gain a new appreciation for each generation's perspective as they listen to each generational panel respond to the questions. At the end of each Generational Panel's question and answer session, the Dialogue group is allowed to question the Generational Panels. After the five generational groups finish answering the questions and return to their seats, the facilitator recounts for the group some of the answers given by the different generations. The facilitator can present the similarities and differences that occurred between the generations during the questions and discussion.

Intergenerational Work Groups

After the facilitator is finished commenting on the generational questions portion of the Dialogue, the group is instructed to assemble into small groups based on the numbers that they were given in the Circle of Generations. These Intergenerational Work Groups ideally should contain at least one member of each generation. Each group is given several large pieces of paper and a marker to record their final recommendations.

Each Intergenerational Work Group then develops three positive solutions to the issue described in the scenario. Everyone in the work group gives one recommendation or comment while keeping in mind the perspectives shared from each generation. The work groups must record three recommendations on their paper to present to the Dialogue group.

Recommendations

All Intergenerational Work Groups present their intergenerational recommendations to the Dialogue group, and then post their recommendations for all to vote on. When all the groups have finished their presentations and posted their recommendations for the entire group to view, the facilitator rereads the recommendations and combines recommendations when possible. Everyone is instructed to vote on the recommendation or recommendations they believe will best solve the issue. Participants are allowed two votes and can vote twice on the same recommendation. The facilitator tallies the votes and announces the top recommendations. With an initial listing of over 20 recommendations for action, the Dialogue group ends up with a prioritized list of the top three or four recommendations. The Dialogue group's top rated recommendations represent their intergenerational response to the issue. The facilitator helps the group organize an action plan based on the top recommended solutions. Members of all the generations are encouraged to attend future meetings in order for progress to continue. Table 3 contains a sample agenda for an Intergenerational Dialogue.

Table 3: Sample Agenda of an Intergenerational Dialogue

Time	Agenda Activity
9:00 a.m. - 9:10 a.m.	Welcome and Introductions
9:10 a.m. - 9:40 a.m.	Circle of Generations
9:40 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.	Why have an Intergenerational Dialogue
10:00 a.m. - 10:05 a.m.	Reading of Scenario
10:05 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	Generational Dialogue Panels
11:00 a.m. - 11:10 a.m.	Break
11:10 a.m. - 11:40	Generational Dialogue Panels
11:40 a.m. – Noon	Learning about the Generations
Noon – 1:00 p.m.	Working Lunch
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Action Planning In Intergenerational Groups
2:00 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.	Intergenerational Recommendations for Action
2:45 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Evaluation and Concluding Remarks

Source: Adapted from Gambone (2001) Together for Tomorrow

Findings

Introduction to the Participants

Nearly one year after participating in their community's Intergenerational Dialogue, ten participants were contacted and asked to participate in this research. All of the participants were still living in the same Midwestern state at the time of the interviews. Five of the participants lived in the community of Central City; the other five participants lived about one hundred miles away in the community of North East. All the participants in this study are Caucasian and share a similar socioeconomic status. Following is an introduction to the ten participants in this research.

Participants from the community of Central City

Sarah was an involved and civic-minded eighteen year old female who was born and raised in Central City. She was a high school senior and wanted to live in Central City after finishing college. Sarah represented the Millennial Generation in this study.

Norma, a positive and optimistic twenty-seven year old female, lived on a farm two miles south of Central City. Norma represented the diversity generation in this study.

Jacob was a tall and strong forty-three year old male who had been a resident in the Central City area for over twenty-five years. Jacob represented the boomer generation in this study.

Frank was a slim and weathered man who enjoyed good health; however one look at him revealed that he had spent a lot of his sixty-six years working out in the elements. Frank represented the mediating generation in this study.

Abe an articulate, interesting, and civic minded seventy-eight year old male, lived on a small acreage one mile south of Central City. Abe represented the civic generation in this study.

Participants from the community of North East

Alex was a very busy and outgoing eighteen year old male who attended high school. Alex represented the millennial generation in this research.

Marne was a contemporary thirty-seven year old female who stayed busy with her two teenage daughters. Marne represented the diversity generation.

Mathew, an intense and soft-spoken forty-three year old man, was a school administrator. Mathew represented the boomer generation.

Abigail was an active sixty-eight year old female who retired from her job as a certified nurse assistant three years prior to this research. Abigail represented the mediating generation in this study.

Russell was a humorous and playful seventy-seven year old man who enjoyed his retirement. Russell liked to keep busy and wanted things to look neat and well cared for. Russell represented the civic generation in this research.

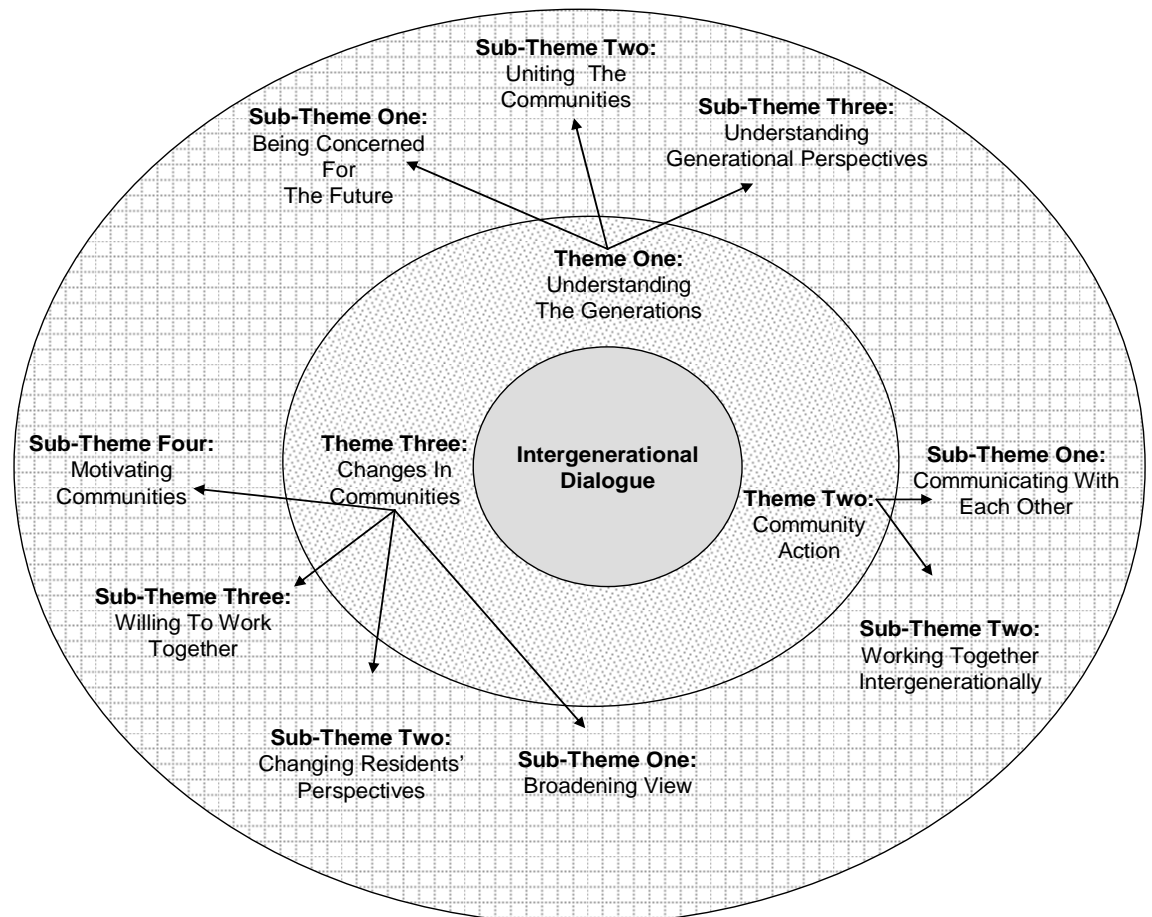
Table 2 provides a visual description of ten participants.

Table 2: Introduction to Participants

Generation Represented	Community of North East	Community of Central City
Millennial Generation 1981 – Present	Alex Male – 18 DOB – 1987 Student Resident 18 years	Sarah Female – 18 DOB – 1987 Student Resident 18 years
Diversity Generation 1964 – 1981	Marne Female – 37 DOB – 1968 Flower shop Married 2 children Resident 17 years	Norma Female – 27 DOB – 1978 Homemaker Married 2 children Resident 7 years
Boomer Generation 1945 – 1963	Mathew Male – 43 DOB – 1962 Teacher Married 2 children Resident 23 years	Jacob Male – 43 DOB – 1962 Banker Married 3 children Resident 25 years
Mediating Generation 1932 – 1944	Abigail Female – 68 DOB – 1937 Retired CAN Married 5 children Resident 55 years	Frank Male – 66 DOB – 1939 Horse trainer Married 3 children Resident 32 years
Civic Generation 1901 -1931	Russell Male – 77 DOB – 1928 Retired post office Married 3 children Resident 74 years	Abe Male – 78 DOB – 1927 Retired electrician Widower 14 Children Resident 55 years
Total n = 10	n = 5	n = 5

Presentation of Themes

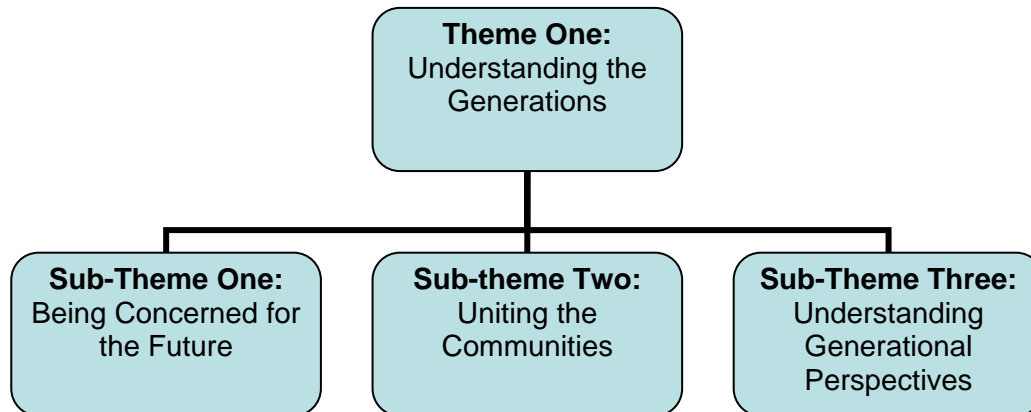
Text segments and codes from the participants' interviews were arranged into several categories then sorted into three major themes. The three major themes developed in this research were: 1) understanding the generations, 2) community action, and 3) changes in communities. As I thoroughly examined the data contained in the three major themes, each theme was divided into sub-themes that emerged (Appendix I). Using a narrative and participant's quotes the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the research are discussed in detail. Figure 2 contains a visual presentation of the themes and sub-themes. Figure 2: Visual Display of Themes and Sub-Themes



Theme One: Understanding the Generations

The first theme that emerged in this study was understanding the generations. This theme had three sub-themes. The first sub-theme was being concerned for the future. The second sub-theme was uniting the communities. The third sub-theme was understanding generational perspectives. Figure 3 displays theme one and its sub-themes.

Figure 3: Visual Display of Theme One and Sub-Themes



Sub-Theme One: Being Concerned for the Future.

Nearly every participant (90%) in this research spoke of having concern for the future of their community. Participants realized while all the generations had concern for the future, the specific concerns of the generational groups were sometimes different. Some of the younger people said they could not stay in a town where there were few employment opportunities. Alex from the millennial generation indicated, "I want to come back here and raise a family if I can find a job where I can support a family" he thought the knowledge people gained at the Dialogue helped his community work toward achieving their goals. In both intergenerational Dialogues and in nearly every interview people were concerned about youth leaving because they could not find adequate employment.

Marne from the diversity generation, worried about the future of the town. Marne said, "The Intergenerational Dialogue showed us how we need to work together to insure the future of our community." She felt that community members needed to encourage each other to get the perspectives of all generations. Marne explained, "Younger people will feel more ownership by being included and then hopefully they will come back some day." It was Marne's belief to secure the future of the community the residents should include youth in community development projects and implement some of their ideas.

The younger people were not the only ones who had concerns about the future of their community. Matt from the boomer generation was moved by the testimony of the older people at the Dialogue. He had not realized the seniors had such concern for their future. Matt spoke about what he heard:

One area I wasn't aware of were the ideas and the concerns of the older people, the ones that are getting close to retirement age. I don't hear their point of view in my daily interactions with people. Hearing what some of the older people were going through made me realize that what I wanted was not so important. Our seniors should be looking forward to these last few years of their lives. Their situation made me aware of what is community should be working on. Our seniors are worried that they must leave town when they can no longer stay in their homes.

Until Matt and others at the Dialogue heard the testimony of the senior citizens, they thought only the younger generations had concerns about the future. The community was surprised by the civic generation's concern. Norma, from the diversity generation said, "The older people's view really surprised me, I realized we need to help our older citizens."

Sub-Theme Two: Uniting the Communities.

Participants thought community residents felt closer to each other since attending the Intergenerational Dialogue. Frank from the mediating generation explained, "Because the Intergenerational Dialogue involved people from every age group, we were exposed to age groups we normally would not have interaction with." As people shared and listened to each other at the Dialogue, they learned to understand the differences between the generations and felt closer to each other. Through this experience they started to value each other's ideas. Alex from the millennial generation was happy to be treated like an adult and that people actually listened to him. This was the first time I really felt like part of the community.

Norma from the diversity generation thought the Intergenerational Dialogue changed the way people interacted with each other and the way they regarded each others' point of view. Norma said:

I felt like at the Intergenerational Dialogue we were all on the same page. It is better here; the Dialogue gave me a new impression of those people. I feel we are on the same side. I feel like we know each other better.

Norma thought that the Dialogue played a role in helping the community become closer to each other. The Dialogue participants felt closer to other community members because they understood them.

Participants from both communities said were interacting with people they have never talked to before. They felt the experience of the Dialogue bonded them together. Jacob from the boomer generation said, "Younger people that attended the meeting are coming up and talking to me; they have never done that before." Younger people felt like they are more a part of the community than they did before the Dialogue.

Sub-Theme Three: Understanding Generational Perspectives.

Sarah and Alex who were from the millennial generation said they were surprised to see the oldest generation and their generation had some views that were similar to their perspectives. Sarah commented, "I figured they would be the group we disagreed with the most. When they asked us questions they totally agreed with us and we understood each other, we kind of connected."

All of the participants said they use the information they learned about different generational perspectives and felt they were more likely to make the effort to understand people from different generations after experiencing the Intergenerational Dialogue. Participants thought they learned how to give and take between the groups. Many participants gave up their ideas after they realized another generation's idea may yield more benefit for the community. Sarah and her other young friends came to the Dialogue because the kids

wanted a new ball field and activity center. They came to voice their generation's perspective. After hearing other generational perspectives Sarah changed her mind, "I went to the Dialogue because kids my age wanted a new ball field. Half way through the meeting I realized why the other generations wanted something different. I understood why their needs were more important to the community than what I had wanted." No one had ever explained to her the other needs of the community. When she understood why other generations wanted something different than she wanted, it was easy for her to give up her idea.

Participants learned that the five generations had different perspectives on some issues but were willing to consider the needs of other generations. Abe from the Civic generation thought the Intergenerational Dialogue made him aware of why people from different generations sometimes had a hard time understanding each other. He realized that different generations came from different timeframes and their views were shaped by different events. Abe voiced his thoughts:

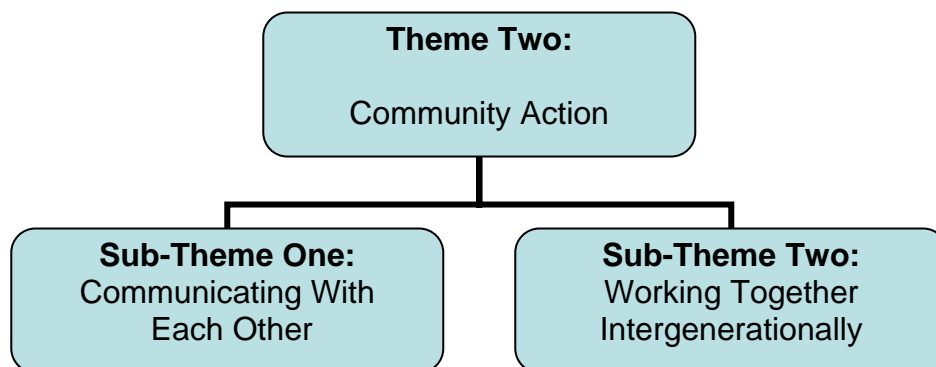
After learning their histories, It would be kind of silly to think they could come into a room and just agree on something without exchanging thoughts and ideas. It was interesting, surprising or whatever you want to call it that, coming from different timeframes defines how we might approach something and so forth.

Every participant felt the importance of understanding the different generational perspectives was the main role the Intergenerational Dialogue served in their community. Community members thought if they understood each others' perspectives, the path was clear for them to work together.

Theme Two: Community Action

The second theme that emerged in this study was community action. This theme had two sub-themes. The first sub-theme was communicating with each other. The second sub-theme was working together intergenerationally. Figure 4 exhibits theme two and its sub-themes.

Figure 4: Visual Display of Theme Two and Sub-Themes



Sub-Theme One: Communicating With Each Other.

All of the participants recalled how the Intergenerational Dialogue emphasized the importance of listening and communicating with each other.

Participants from North East and Central City realized their town's inability to communicate with each other as a problem that required immediate action.

Sarah from the millennial generation viewed communication with each other as a necessary step toward understanding the needs of the community. Sarah explained:

We need to listen to each other because we might change our mind on what we feel is important. We then would finally understand each other and maybe work together. If we want to get something done we need to talk to them and show them what we think and how it affects each of us.

Norma from the diversity generation did not normally communicate with some of the other age groups. After realizing the importance of listening to each other, Norma changed her attitude toward communicating with other generations. Norma described how she changed her strategy:

I've learned to talk to them and hear their ideas. I got to know them and what is important to them. I think we learned about listening and hearing what the other groups are saying. I guess it was giving value to other people's opinion which really helped me understand other generations. I learned to encourage others to give their point of view and how if our community is going to grow we need to listen to each other.

Jacob from the boomer generation agreed that communication with each other had improved in their community, "I think we have learned to talk and listen to each other." He added, "It is important to show your willingness to listen to others and not be a dictator with your own idea, no matter how good you think it is." Jacob emphasized communication as a two part process, listening and speaking. He thought many people tended to leave out the listening part.

Frank from the mediating generation felt the community has made substantial progress on improving their communication with each other and the effort had helped considerably.

Abe from the civic generation thought the Intergenerational Dialogue reinforced good listening skills. Abe learned in order for people to talk and contribute; they must feel it is safe to do so. To feel safe people wanted to know they would be listened to and their input was welcome.

The Intergenerational Dialogue demonstrated to the participants that communication with each other needed to improve before they could work together on community issues; subsequently both communities improved their ability to communicate with other generations.

Sub-Theme Two: Work Together Intergenerationally.

Every participant realized and commented on the importance of working intergenerationally. Participants often interchanged the terms, working together, working across generations, working intergenerationally, and working together intergenerationally, which would indicate these terms were synonymous. The participants agreed that working together intergenerationally was something their communities should do to benefit as many people possible. When generational cohorts worked together to seek a solution to an issue, the result would most

likely be embraced by the community. Sarah from the millennial generation understood the futility in trying to work alone:

We found out that if you try to do something in a community without involving other people, it probably will not come together because you are just satisfying one group. You need everybody's opinion and try and make it mutual, neutral, so you can get a lot of input on the issue. A community is like a sports team, you have to work together.

Norma felt working together in the Dialogue taught people how to communicate and work with each other. Norma explained, "It helped me see the younger people wanted to be involved but were rarely invited to take part in anything, the older people felt the same way. We learned to invite them to be involved." She described how working together has had positive results in her community:

What was needed was not just a group of 40 and 50 year olds trying to do it. Now we have 20 to 80 year old people working together and we are getting things done. I mean they came together there for the first time and wouldn't have if they did not meet at the Dialogue meeting.

Norma learned when communities work intergenerationally there was more agreement on the solution because every generational perspective on the issue had been considered.

Abigail from the mediating generation thought working together promoted positive attitudes and improved relationships between community members.

Abigail explained why she thought working together was important:

When people work together, it gives everyone a sense of hope and pride to know that many of us want the same things. You get improvement of our town and positive attitudes. You have to have a positive attitude toward what you are working on. Ideas may begin with one person, but it takes many hands to put them together.

Many of the participants agreed with Abigail by making similar comments. They thought working together in the Dialogue improved their attitudes and made people realize what they could accomplish.

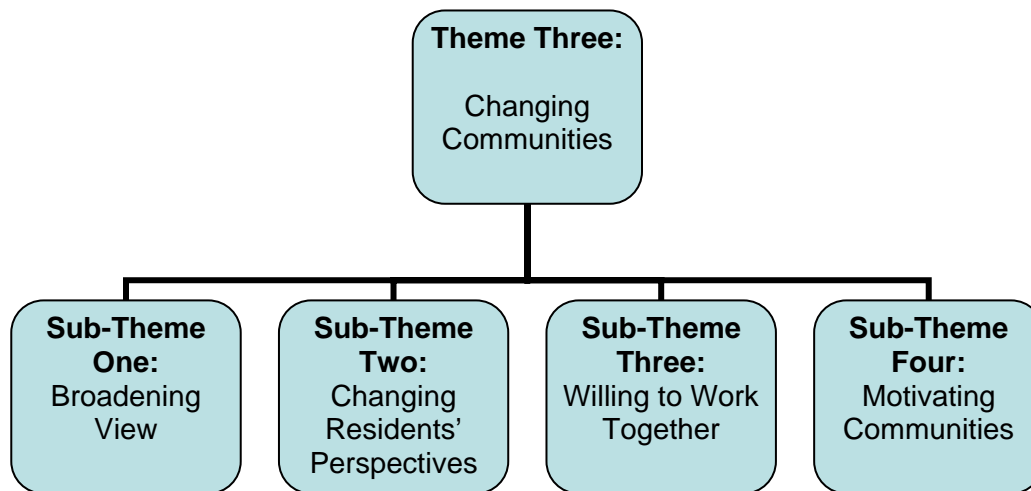
Frank from the mediating generation felt people had to work together for the community to succeed. Frank said, "We saw that none of us can get it done by ourselves; we absolutely have to work together. If we do work together we have a chance to realize our goals." Russell and Frank agreed that working together intergenerationally was absolutely necessary. Russell saw no reason to approach a community issue in any other way.

Every participant agreed that working together across the generations was the preferred action for a community to take in order to generate a lot of ideas and find appropriate solutions to community issues. At the time of the participant interviews in this study, both communities were still working together intergenerationally.

Theme Three: Changes in Communities

The third theme that emerged in this study was changing communities. This theme had four sub-themes. The first sub-theme was broadening view. The second sub-theme was changing residents' perspectives. The third sub-theme was willing to work together. The fourth sub-theme was motivating communities. Displayed in Figure 5 below is theme three and its sub-themes.

Figure 5: Visual Display of Theme Three and Sub-Themes



Sub-Theme One: Broadening View.

When sorting through the data I discovered many text segments that made reference to expanding the participant's views, becoming more open-minded, or deepened their understanding. There was enough support for a theme to emerge that I called it broadening view. Every participant said the Intergenerational Dialogue expanded their understanding of other generations and taught them to be more open-minded to the ideas of other generational perspectives.

Many participants learned to consider why another generation's idea may be more important than their own idea. Alex from the millennial generation learned to consider things he never thought about before. Alex commented:

It makes you open your eyes to see, you know, we all tend to see things through our own eyes; we see what we want to see. When you hear other people's beliefs and thoughts it makes you stop and think, maybe there are things out there that are more important than what I want.

Alex understood that looking through the lens of another generation could give him a different perspective of an issue.

Norma from the diversity generation learned how having dialogue with each other could remove what was formally an obstacle to progress. Norma described how a tense situation was defused:

I learned to be more open-minded. To me, the generations that hit me the most were the young and the old. They really got me, we were able to put ourselves in their shoes and see what they needed. This type of talking to

each other helped them iron out what was between them. Just by being open to other viewpoints we learned so much.

Marne from the diversity generation learned the value in considering more than one group's perspective. She thought the Dialogue introduced many ideas for consideration. Marne described what she learned:

Hearing the older generation's concerns really opened my eyes to what this community needed. It opened me up to ideas other than my own, you know, made me see that this is something we need and I would not have seen that if I did not attend that group meeting.

After he participated in the Intergenerational Dialogue, Matt from the boomer generation became more open to considering the perspectives of other generations. Matt explained his thought:

I think I am more open to ideas of other people, where before I may have considered only my own ideas. I have learned to give value to other ideas. I did not realize how strong they felt about theirs, like I do about mine. I want to say, I am more open-minded.

The participants learned that being more open-minded about other generations' perspectives gave the community a larger understanding of the issue they were considering. People realized their idea might not benefit the community as much as another person's idea. When they were more open-minded and cooperated with each other, they learned about perspectives they never considered before.

Sub-Theme Two: Changing Residents' Perspectives.

All of the research participants indicated they had changed the way they would approach a community issue. Most of the participants, 90%, said they learned to value the input of all generations or changed the value they attached to the opinions of other generations.

Sarah and Alex from the millennial generation discovered the older generation had a lot more experience with community issues than they did. Both Sarah and Alex gained a new respect for members of the civic generation. Sarah remembered her experience at the Dialogue:

It became clear to me that their experience played an important part in their choice of what was best for our town. I understand now that people from different generations may have different needs. We should look at everyone's needs and set priorities in what we should provide.

Alex changed the way he viewed the civic generation after he heard their presentation at the Dialogue. Alex commented:

I saw the input of the older generation as helpful because their ideas are based on experience. I used to think the older people just became useless. The Dialogue helped me realize how narrow my viewpoint was.

Sarah felt that after the civic and millennial generations communicated with each other they learned to understand and value each other. Sarah recalled both generations giving up their preconceived ideas about each other:

thought they hated us and did not care about our opinions. When we answered the questions at the Dialogue they really listened to us; they

never did that before. They saw we care about the town and they respected us and we started to listen to them. My approach to solving a community issue has changed; we must get input from all the age groups.

Matt from the boomer generation discovered the importance of working intergenerationally when he realized the community neglected to recognize the needs of the civic generation. Matt Explained:

I guess it is interesting to me that we were not even thinking about the needs of our seniors. We are always worried about getting new houses for young people to keep our school population up and things to keep our town growing. Unfortunately we neglected to consider the people who are finishing up their life here. Now we are including them and making them feel like part of the process, like they have a say in their town.

Matt's community understood how important it was to include all the generations in the process because they had not realized the civic generation was experiencing such difficulty in finding housing.

Frank from the mediating generation changed his perspective on listening to the other generations' ideas. Frank explained how he changed:

I think I learned to listen more to what people are saying. I think a person really needs to listen more and not be so narrow-minded about what we need to do. I tended to be one of those people who thought they had a good idea and would not give it up. I look at others ideas now and am more willing to give up my ideas.

Abe from the civic generation learned to value input from other generations and changed his perspective on dealing with community issues. Abe described his change in attitude:

The forum changed the way I would approach a community issue. In solving a community issue you must understand what all needs are. You must try to get as many ideas as possible in order to fully understand the issue. My generation's ideas may not be the best ones out there. I would consider the needs of all the generations to get as many ideas as I could.

The participants agreed their attitudes toward other generations had improved and they now valued the perspectives of other generations.

Sub-Theme Three: Willing to Work Together.

Participants believed their participation in the Intergenerational Dialogue helped clear the obstacles that prevented them from working together in their community. At the Dialogue they learned they could work together and experienced some positive interaction. Norma from the diversity generation described her experience at the Dialogue, "We all worked pretty well together in our groups and came up with some good ideas. It worked because we were willing to work together." Marne from the diversity generation agreed with Norma and thought the Dialogue provided an environment that was conducive to working well together and it included everyone in the process. Marne explained:

Everybody is more willing to work together because there are not as many hurt feelings. It was a very positive group to work with and we were open

to other people's ideas. When you listen to each other and understand each other, it makes it much easier to work together.

Jacob from the boomer generation thought people learned to value each others' opinions at the Dialogue. He felt the people's attitudes toward one another had improved and are more willing to work together because they learned they need each other. Jacob spoke about the change in attitudes:

People in this town are talking to each other that have never talked to each other before. I think we realized how much more we can get done if we work together instead of competing for the limited resources that we have. Attitudes have really changed.

Frank from the mediating generation felt when people learned their participation was valued, they were more willing to get involved in a community project. Frank said, "I think we have a lot more people that are ready to get involved because of the Intergenerational Dialogue. People respect each others' ideas more and are more willing to help out where they can." Many participants agreed with Frank and made similar comments. They felt the Dialogue provided a place for people to learn from each other and learn about each other.

When participants recalled their involvement in the Intergenerational Dialogue, they remembered the positive experience of working together in their intergenerational groups. Every participant said their Dialogue group worked well together and generated many ideas. The positive experience of working together in intergenerational groups at the Dialogue demonstrated to the community residents, they had the ability to work together intergenerationally. The participants agreed their communities must work together intergenerationally and were more willing to do so after the Dialogue.

Sub-Theme Four: Motivating Communities.

Participants felt the Intergenerational Dialogue motivated their communities to continue their work together. In the past community groups had started projects and soon failed when participants lost interest or became frustrated. The participants credited the communication skills and the understanding of generational perspectives they learned at the Dialogue for the success they were experiencing. Both communities continued to work intergenerationally.

Sarah from the millennial generation indicated the Intergenerational Dialogue influenced people from the millennial generation to share their experiences with others, "After the Dialogue we set up a meeting to inform other young people in our community how they could become involved." Alex from the millennial generation thought the Dialogue helped generations understand each other by showing them how to communicate with each other. Alex explained:

The Dialogue helped us understand what our community needed to do in order to work together. We are continuing to build on what we learned. We are still working with people from all the generations.

Residents in Alex and Sarah's communities continued to work intergenerationally and taught others what they learned in the Intergenerational Dialogue.

Norma from the diversity generation described how their community had worked together and remained motivated:

The Intergenerational Dialogue fired people up and motivated them. People from the Intergenerational Dialogue were able to work with other groups and get some things done. We feel motivated and have been applying for some grants. The willingness to work together is still there and we are still working together and making progress.

Matt from the boomer generation was encouraged that his community had moved forward with a recommendation plan that had been presented at the Dialogue. Matt explained:

I like the direction our community is taking because the Intergenerational Dialogue motivated us and then we found our own way. We have formed a community task force to help keep things moving. We have added many people to that group. The majority of our original group is still going strong.

Abigail from the mediating generation agreed with Matt. She said the ideas generated at the Dialogue were just a beginning for the generational groups in her community. Abigail described what their community had accomplished:

They had designed surveys to hand out. We folded the papers, stuffed envelopes and stamped them for mailing. We got a lot of answers to find out how the community feels. We are moving toward our goals.

Abe from the civic generation thought the younger people in his community involved themselves in community projects because they were motivated by the Intergenerational Dialogue. Many more people from Abe's community became interested in helping the community. Abe commented, "I see a lot more people at community meetings and many young people are getting involved." The participants from both communities felt the Intergenerational Dialogue played a major role in motivating community residents of all ages to become involved in community projects. At the time of this research both communities continued to work together intergenerationally.

Summary, Implications, and Recommendations

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this case study was to describe participants' experience of the Intergenerational Dialogue Process. The study explored community residents' perspectives of the role the Intergenerational Dialogue Process served in building a community's capacity for change. The grand tour 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? The findings were based on qualitative data from personal interviews, observations of two Intergenerational Dialogues, and examining relevant documents. The reported findings were from themes that emerged from interviews incorporating extensive

use of participants' own words. To summarize, the following findings were revealed, as the participants:

- Realized all generational cohorts had concerns about the future.
- Learned each generation had a specific concern that affected their future.
- Understood why differences exist between generations.
- Started to value each others' ideas as they learned to listen to each other.
- Felt the Dialogue experience made them feel closer to each other.
- Thought the community resident's attitude toward each other improved.
- Cooperated with other generations and valued other opinions.
- Participation in the process of listening, caring and sharing taught residents to understand and respect other generational perspectives.
- Thought understanding each others' perspectives removed some of the barriers between the generations and cleared the path for them to work together.
- Believed the Dialogue expanded their understanding of generations and taught them to be more open-minded and respect other generations.
- Felt being more open-minded about other generations' gave the community a larger understanding of the issues they were considering.
- Changed their strategies for dealing with community issues.
- Learned the importance of including people of all ages in any community process.
- Agreed that working intergenerationally was the preferred action to take when approaching a community issue.
- Felt more people were willing to become involved in community projects.
- Believed the Intergenerational Dialogue motivated and encouraged the community by providing a positive experience of working together.
- Commented that both communities remained motivated and continued to work intergenerationally.

Implications

Implications for the three themes described in the findings section – understanding the generations, community action, and changes in communities were examined.

Understanding the Generations

In both Intergenerational Dialogues participants spoke of being concerned for the future of their community. Representatives from every generation revealed their concern during the questioning of the Generational Panels portion of the Dialogue. In their personal interviews for this research, participants remembered each of the generations expressing those concerns. What impressed the participants was the fact that generational representatives spoke of concerns that were specific to their generational needs. Some examples would be: the millennial generation was worried about finding employment, the diversity generation was concerned about maintaining schools, and the civic generation

expressed concern over housing. Most of what people heard was not new to them; what was different was the context in which they were hearing these concerns. Hearing the different generations testify to what they needed and why they needed it helped the Dialogue participants understand why their ideas for the community were so different and aided the community residents in understanding different generational perspectives.

Some of the participants were surprised when they realized many of their perspectives were shared by other generations. If you accept that we form our core values sometime between the ages of 8-15 (Daniele, 1998), you can see how an 80-year-old would have different core values from a 20-year-old. However, the 20-year-old and the 80-year-old shared at least 20 years together. Given the inundation of media and basic human nature, it is not surprising that people across generations share different things in common.

Community residents knew with the resources in these small communities being very limited at best; it would be impossible to implement the ideas or accommodate the needs of every generation. The Dialogue served as a medium for the community residents to establish a priority as to who's need to service first. Because every generation had a chance to share their concern for the future, people were able to understand how the needs in many cases were interconnected and why one idea might benefit the community more than another.

The foundation of the Intergenerational Dialogue uses respect, caring, and cooperation to create an environment that is conducive to listening while someone shares their generation's unique perspective. This type of environment was successfully created at the Dialogues in North Central City and North East. Readers might ask themselves, when was the last time you attended a public forum of any kind where five generations listened to each other with respect and caring? When do young people in particular have the opportunity to speak directly to four other generations from their community? The inclusiveness of the Dialogue made everyone feel welcome, particularly the oldest and youngest generation who are often not invited to these types of forums. Dialogue participants opened up to each other because they felt it was a safe place to speak and they would be listened to. Frank from the mediating generation said, "People talked about things they would not dare talk about anywhere else." They would not express themselves before coming to the Dialogue because they felt no one would listen. After the Dialogue participants listened to each other, they began to understand each other's perspectives. When the Dialogue participants shared and understood each others perspectives, they felt closer to each other.

The participants in both communities felt the Dialogue bonded the community together. This bonding was apparent in the Central City Dialogue where there was a noticeable amount of tension between the younger people of the millennial generation and the older citizens of the civic generation. The two groups made unkind comments about each other until they had the opportunity to listen to each others' perspectives. Once they took the effort to listen to one another they were able to understand why their perspectives differed, and they began to value each other. These two generations discovered they were more similar than they were different. After the generational questions at the Dialogue,

they praised each other and truly connected. This type of interaction was common in both Dialogues.

The research participants believed the Dialogue improved the attitudes of the community residents and made them feel closer to each other. Actively listening to each other at the Dialogue allowed participants to treat each other as they would like to be treated, creating a safe positive atmosphere. The “good feeling” experienced between generational participants had lasted long past the Intergenerational Dialogue and was still present over one year later. Understanding the generations served as a means to unite these communities.

Before their involvement in the Intergenerational Dialogue, participants had never met to specifically listen to other generational perspectives. After listening to each other, the participants changed the way they interacted with people from other generations. They learned why other generations might have different ideas and why an idea that seemed beneficial to some generations might affect people from other generations adversely. Strauss and Howe (1991) and Daniele (1998) believed as generations moved through time, each generation was impacted by social moments in history or world events. These social moments were when people believed that historic events were greatly changing their environment. Every participant used the information they learned about generational groups to understand each other.

If the participants had not made the effort to gain the information about generational groups, they would not have been able to make any progress toward solving their community issues. After they understood other generational perspectives, they began to value the input from other generations and cooperated with each other instead of competing with each other for scarce resources. Understanding and cooperating with each other breaks down some of the barriers between generations so they can work together; gaining the ability to work together is the main purpose of the Intergenerational Dialogue (Gambone, 2001). The participants thought that being able to understand the generational perspectives cleared the path for them to work together.

Community Action

This theme included the sub-themes of communicating with each other and working together intergenerationally. The participants recognized communication and working together as actions the community needed to take in order to accomplish their goals. The themes are closely related in that to work together effectively you must first communicate with each other. To communicate effectively you must first understand each other.

There is wide-spread misconception about communication in rural areas. Often people hold the belief that because rural areas are typically small the residents know each other and interact with each other on a regular basis. Residents of rural areas often travel over a large territory to meet their daily needs. Where this occurs, residents tend to have fewer intimate relationships or strong social ties. Many residents of rural towns have strong social ties to distant urban centers, but few social ties in their rural communities (Bender, 1978). Rural

location can influence community interaction by influencing the probability of interpersonal contacts within the local population.

The lack of social ties in rural towns has come to be recognized as a serious barrier to the development of community in rural areas (Wilkinson, 1999). A typical example of having a lack of social interactions in their local community was Matt from the boomer generation. He was embarrassed that he did not normally interact with citizens from the older generation. Matt's job involved the youth and their parents so he never communicated with the civic generation and was not aware of the seriousness of their concerns. Dialogue participants realized they were not as close as they believed they were. They learned a lot about each other and truly understood their differences after the Dialogue. The participants found the lack of communication was a major barrier that prevented them from working together.

Participants realized that they needed to work together intergenerationally to accomplish their goals. Many times in the past a community project would fail when people would lose interest or become frustrated with the process. It seemed that the community could not agree on their priorities or a method of getting a project finished. People were often suspicious of another's ideas. Individual efforts in community building often become self-seeking and fragmented (Ryan, 1971). Working together through dialogue a group can explore complex difficult issues from many points of view. Individuals suspend their assumptions and bring to the surface the full depth of people's experience and thought that moves beyond their individual views (Senge, 1990).

The self-help model of community development designed by James Christenson (1989) uses a bottom-up approach that involves community members in building capacity to take collective action. This approach has been successful because of the high degree of buy-in from community members. People will more likely embrace an idea that is generated inside the community rather than someone from outside the community. There is a downside to using the self-help model in small towns. People know each other in many roles and there may be a risk in taking a public stance which may result in disagreement with a boss, customer, or colleague.

The Intergenerational Dialogue is a form of the self-help model that uses a bottom-up approach to build capacity for change and generate solutions to community problems. This method allowed community members to decide the priority of the community projects and the methods they used to accomplish their task. One of the reasons for the success of the Dialogue Process is the high degree of buy-in by community residents. There is a high degree of buy-in because the Dialogue participants designed a recommendation or solution using input from all the generations in their community. With the high amount of input there is a wide-spread understanding of the different perspectives of the issue at hand. Unlike Christenson's model, the Intergenerational Dialogue is ideal for use in small communities because participation in the process poses no threat to community residents. Participation in the Dialogue requires participants to step out of their everyday roles and become representatives of their generation. Because social stratification is eliminated and everyone is there to represent their

generation, the playing field is level. The Intergenerational Dialogue demonstrated through the use of its Generational Workgroups that these communities did have the ability to work together successfully.

Changes in Communities

Participants felt their experience in the Intergenerational Dialogue expanded their understanding of other generations and taught them to be more open-minded to the perspectives of others. The participants believed the Dialogue played a major role in removing the obstacles that prevented them from working together by changing the way they interacted with other generations and increased the value they attached to the perspectives of others. Because they now possessed the ability to work together successfully, participants changed their strategies for dealing with community issues and were willing to work together intergenerationally. The experience of working together successfully motivated the communities to continue their work together intergenerationally.

Participants contended that their involvement in the Intergenerational Dialogue Process changed their perspectives of other generations, improved relationships between community members, and motivated their communities to work together. The experience of the Dialogue Process was so powerful the participants were able to recall their experience in great detail over a year after the Dialogue took place. It truly made a lasting impression on the participants. Communities are networks of relationships and relationships are a series of conversations. Therefore the most powerful vehicle communities have for transforming their norms, values, policies, purposes, and ideologies is the act of dialogue (Dowling, 1999). Warner Heisenberg (as cited in Senge, 1990) remembered having conversations that illustrated the staggering potential of collaborative learning. Collectively, we can be more insightful, more intelligent than we can possibly be individually. The participants felt successful when they could work through their differences and find solutions to community issues that were embraced by the community.

Final Thoughts

In the two rural communities of this study, the Intergenerational Dialogue Process worked where other models of community development had failed. Participation in the Intergenerational Dialogue allowed some of the barriers to be removed that prohibited people in these towns from working together. The communities were able to make needed changes and continued toward attaining their goals. The data in the findings of this study substantiated the use of the Intergenerational Dialogue Process as a viable community development tool and suggest it should be initiated in community development or community organization interventions.

Recommendations for Future Research

- I would like to see more research identifying the reasons the Intergenerational Dialogue is so powerful. The Intergenerational Dialogue contains five essential elements: the circle of generations, the scenario, the Generational Panels, the Intergenerational Work Groups, and the recommendations. Are any of these elements more useful than the others? Does any one of these elements give the power to the Dialogue? Must you use all five of these elements for the Dialogue to remain so powerful?
- It would be interesting to conduct this study using participants who experienced the Intergenerational Dialogue in urban areas. Would a study in urban areas produce similar findings as the one in rural areas?
- Design a research project using indicators that can measure the amount of change in communities as a result of the Intergenerational Dialogue.
- Design a follow-up study on the people from the millennial generation who attended the Dialogue to see if their lives changed as a result of being listened to respectfully.
- There is a need for longitudinal studies, both qualitative and quantitative on the Intergenerational Dialogue Process.
- This research suggests that more Intergenerational Dialogues should be funded as part of rural community economic development programs with money set aside for evaluation and follow-up research.

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