Old-timers : life in the gulch
by Robin Lee Boland

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Nursing
Montana State University
© Copyright by Robin Lee Boland (2000)

Abstract:
Traditionally, it has been assumed the older, longtime residents of rural communities held an influential role in a communities social order. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore the concept of old-timer and its relationship to the social function of a rural community. This concept may have implications for individuals, families, communities, and the healthcare providers in rural communities.

Informal interviews using open-ended questions were conducted with nine participants of a small rural community. Criteria for participation consisted of 70 years of age or older and having lived in the community for greater than 30 years. The sample included three females, two males, and two couples. Data from the interviews were analyzed utilizing grounded theory methodology. Emerging themes from the analyzed data were identified as name descriptors of older residents, characteristics of old-timers, community functions of old-timers, and old-timers' perception of their influence in the community.

All participants were identified as old-timers by one another or by others in the community. However, old-timers' influential relationship with a rural community may no longer exist. The old-timers' self perceived loss of community influence was related to the changes within the community, loss of respect for the elderly, and advances in technology.

OLD-TIMERS: LIFE IN THE GULCH

By

ROBIN LEE BOLAND

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Nursing

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
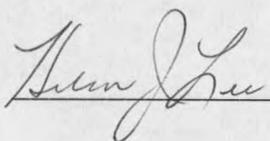Bozeman, Montana

July 2000

APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Robin Lee Boland

This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.
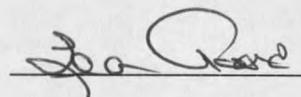
Helen J. Lee, Ph.D., R.N. _____ 7/24/00
                                                              Date

Approval for the College of Nursing

Lea Acord, Ph.D., R.N. _____ 8/14/00
                                                           Date
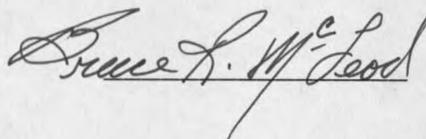
Approval for the College of Graduate Studies

Bruce McLeod, Ph.D. _____ 8-15-00
                                                         Date

STATEMENT OF PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's degree at Montana State University, I agree that the Library shall make it available to borrowers under the rules of the Library.

If I have indicated my intention to copyright this thesis by including a copyright notice page, copying is allowable only for scholarly purposes, consistent with "fair use" as prescribed in the U.S. Copyright Law. Requests for permission for extended quotation from or reproduction of this thesis in whole or in parts may be granted only by the copyright holder.

Signature _____

Date _____July 11, 2000_____

This thesis is dedicated to my daughters, Molly and
Maggie, in hopes that seeds have been
planted for their own personal
and educational growth.

VITA

Robin Lee Gerhart was born on May 17, 1954, to Leonard
(Bud) and Helen Gerhart in Great Falls, Montana. Robin
grew up rurally on a cattle ranch nestled in the foothills
of the Little Belt Mountains of Central Montana. After
graduating from Belt Valley High School, Robin attended
Montana State University School of Nursing, Great Falls
campus and graduated in 1976 with her Bachelor of Science
degree in Nursing. She currently resides in Great Falls,
Montana with her husband Gerald and their two daughters,
Molly and Maggie.

Robin has twenty-four years of nursing experience in
critical care nursing, recovery room nursing, and nursing
education. She is currently employed at Montana State
University-Great Falls campus as a Graduate Teaching
Assistant.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I wish to express my gratitude and my thankfulness to my husband, Jerry, for his constant loving support and encouragement, to my daughters, Molly and Maggie, my helpers and most precious gifts, my parents, Bud and Helen, for their love and encouragement, and my brother Shane, for his friendship and support.

Second, I wish to express my gratitude to my Thesis committee members, Dr. Helen Lee, Dr. Jan Buehler, and Cathy Caniparoli, for their professional support, mentorship, and guidance through this learning and growing experience.

Lastly, I wish to express my gratitude to the nine men and women of the Gulch community for their willingness to share their stories, perceptions, and old fashioned hospitality with me. Without them, this thesis work would not exist.

vii

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS ~ <u>Continued</u>

ABSTRACT

Traditionally, it has been assumed the older, longtime residents of rural communities held an influential role in a communities social order. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to explore the concept of old-timer and its relationship to the social function of a rural community. This concept may have implications for individuals, families, communities, and the healthcare providers in rural communities.

Informal interviews using open-ended questions were conducted with nine participants of a small rural community. Criteria for participation consisted of 70 years of age or older and having lived in the community for greater than 30 years. The sample included three females, two males, and two couples. Data from the interviews were analyzed utilizing grounded theory methodology. Emerging themes from the analyzed data were identified as name descriptors of older residents, characteristics of old-timers, community functions of old-timers, and old-timers' perception of their influence in the community.

All participants were identified as old-timers by one another or by others in the community. However, old-timers' influential relationship with a rural community may no longer exist. The old-timers' self perceived loss of community influence was related to the changes within the community, loss of respect for the elderly, and advances in technology.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Acceptance into a rural community as a health provider can be influenced by many variables. One such variable is the social order of a community. Rural dwellers are strongly independent, yet in time of need depend heavily on family, friends, and neighbors. They look to the older, more experienced individuals for guidance and leadership in establishing a community's social order. Weinert and Long (1987) wrote

> Rural dwellers used the concepts of 'old-timer' and 'newcomer' as a framework to organize their social interactions, their relationships within the community and were important to their 'view of the social environment' (p. 453).

Acceptance by an old-timer may facilitate the acceptance of a newcomer by the community.

This study explored the concept of old-timer and its relationship to the social function of a rural community. This concept may have implications for health care decisions made by individuals, families, and communities. The community acceptance of a newcomer provider may depend upon their approval by long time, respected residents of rural communities.

Purpose

The purposes of this qualitative study were to clarify the use of the term "old-timer" in several rural Montana communities, and to explore the influence these individuals have on a community's social function and or social order. These relationships may influence access and utilization of health care in rural communities.

Background and Significance of Study

In 1989, Long and Weinert identified several key concepts important in understanding rural health needs and rural nursing practice. These include "work beliefs, isolation and distance, self-reliance, lack of anonymity, outsider/insider, and old-timer/newcomer" (p. 119). They further stated that the concepts of old-timer/newcomer, and the related concepts of insider/outsider, were "relevant in terms of acceptance of nurses and of all health care providers in rural communities" (p.119). Caniparoli (1998) looked at the concept old-timer utilizing the Walker and Avant concept analysis approach. From the dictionary definitions and search of the literature, Caniparoli

identified defining attributes of old-timer. These were

"age, length of time in a community, and establishment of a

relationship within the community" (p. 108). In her

summary, she concluded, the use of the term old-timer

needed further evaluation and clarification. Specifically,

Caniparoli suggested further clarification to include

> (a) To what degree do communities of today use the concept old-timer as it was used in Western folklore? (b) How are old-timers identified in a community and how do they view themselves? (c) What roles do old-timers serve in a community organization and social order? (d) Are the attributes of old-timers the same today as they were in the past? (p. 111).

This study builds upon Long and Weinert's (1989) work,

and Caniparoli's (1998) concept analysis to further the

knowledge base of the term old-timer, and provide insight

into the relationship between a community's social function

and the influence of a long time resident. If the term old-

timer is appropriate in naming these individuals, and if an

influential relationship exists between these individuals

and the residents of a community, then the provision of

health care to a community may benefit from the knowledge

base the study provides.

Conceptual Framework

In the late 1970's limited theory existed relating to the health needs of a rural population. Existing nursing models were applicable toward urban and suburban areas; however, due to the unique health problems and health needs of the rural population, they were inadequate in addressing rural health care concerns. Long and Weinert (1989) wrote "No organized theoretical base for guiding rural health care practice in general, or rural nursing in particular, existed" (p. 114). As a result, faculty from Montana State University College of Nursing directed graduate students to collect qualitative data using an ethnographic approach in order to explore the health beliefs, values, and practices of rural dwellers. Key concepts that appeared repeatedly in the data included "health status and health beliefs, isolation and distance, self-reliance, and informal health care systems" (Long & Weinert, 1989, p. 117).

To validate the findings that had emerged from the ethnographic interviews, nursing faculty from Montana State University continued the theory development by collecting quantitative data through a survey developed by Weinert in

1983. The quantitative data supported the identification of key concepts related to understanding rural health needs and rural nursing. They were identified as work beliefs and health beliefs, isolation and distance, self reliance, lack of anonymity, outsider/insider, and old-timer/newcomer (Long & Weinert, 1989, p. 119).

Caniparoli (1998) attempted to further clarify the meaning of the term old-timer through a concept analysis. Her findings were inconclusive; she wrote, "The use of the term old-timer needs further evaluation" (p. 110).

Definitions

Rural dwellers are defined as those individuals living in sparsely populated areas.

The word old-timer, according to the Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary (Steinmetz, 1998), has its origin between 1855-1860, and is defined as a noun,

> 1."A person whose residence, membership, or experience began long ago and has been continuing for a considerable length of time; veteran. 2. An old person. 3. An old fashioned person or thing. 4. Sometimes offensive (used as a form of familiar direct address to an elderly man). Old-time + er. (p. 1349).

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary (1992) defines old-time as "an adjective, 1. Belonging to or characteristic of old or former times, methods, ideas. 2. Being long established." (p. 1003).

The word "old" appears in many languages, such as Old English, Saxon, German, Norse, Dutch, Old Icelandic, and Latin, all with similar meanings of nourish, bring up, and elder (Barnhart, 1995; Onions, 1966). Old English, Old Icelandic, Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish are languages in which the word time appears. Common meanings of the word time are an occasion, that of leisure, sense of measure, rate, and duration (Barnhart, 1995; Onions, 1966).

A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English (Partridge, 1970) places the definition of old-timer as one long established in place or position around the year 1810. In 1860 old-timer was used in the colloquial sense as one given to praising old times, and finally about the year 1905, old-timer was used as a term of address. In Western Words: A Dictionary of the American West, Adams (1968) describes an old-timer as

> A man who lived in the country a long time. Most old-timers had to fight many battles before the country became settled, and it could be said of

such a one that "his scars was a regular war map."
It was said of all good old-timer Texans that they
were raised to vote Democratic ticket, love good
whiskey, and hate Mexicans (p. 210).

Associated meanings of the word old-timer are fossil,

geezer, golden-ager, Gramps, moss back, old-dog, old-hand,

old soldier, senior, veteran, warhorse, antique, buster,

crumbly, dusty, geri, grunters, oldie, old coat, timer and

wrinkly (Chapman, 1999; Green, 1986).

Assumptions

Long time residents of rural communities influence

decisions made in the communities. This assumption is based

on social interaction observed in rural communities. The

influence used is often consistent with the informal

networks in rural communities. Not all long-term residents

who influence community's decisions are in identifiable

positions of authority or influence.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Burns & Grove (1997) stated that the literature in grounded theory research is used to define selected concepts and to verify the relationships in the theory developed from the empirical data. In this chapter the term old-timer was reviewed using literature from the perspectives of Western/historical, popular media, health care, and finally a concept analysis of old-timer.

Western and Historical Literature

Most of what is written about the term old-timer is found in the context of Western and historical literature. Historical literature accounts of the late 1800's and early 1900's rarely uses the term old-timer. Instead these historical narratives give rich descriptions of old-timers. The introduction to "Reminiscences of an old timer: a recital of the actual events, incidents, trials, hardships . . . of a pioneer, hunter, miner, and scout of the Pacific Northwest: together with his later expereinces in official

and business capacities, and a brief description of the

resources . . . several Indian wars, anecdotes, etc.

(Hunter, 1989) provided insight to the description of

Hunter as "a blunt uneducated man, who has roughed it in

the great Northwest from boyhood." Hunter was

fifty-four years old at the time of publication in 1889,

yet referred to himself as an old-timer. During this same

time period Burlingame (1942) provided the reader with

insight into the type of man who migrated to the West.

> "As the Americas had attracted the courageous,
> adventure-loving young men of Europe, so the West
> served to drain off the exuberant and irresponsible
> from the East in the middle of the 1800's" (p. 73).

As railways and settlements brought civilization to the

West, El Comancho (1929) added "the day of the old-timer

was about already done . . . . Most of the real first

pioneers drifted farther westward" (p. 6).

Hufsmith in the forward to Rogers (1964) wrote

> Old-timers are so designated by their date of arrival
> in the valley on a seniority basis. Anyone arriving
> here since 1920, regardless of his length of residency
> is considered an "outsider."

The majority of old-timers in Western historical

literature were men. Malone (1983) explained most

western historians did not consider women a part of

the frontier experience. When acknowledged, women tended to be falsely portrayed and inaccurately represented. Historical literature prior to 1960 rarely discussed women. When women were discussed it was usually in the context of relationships with men. Shirley (1995) wrote that only since the feminists movement of the 1960's and 1970's have women taken a historical look at how women influenced history. She described the axiom "women are history, but men make history" (p. 7) as an impetus to present the women in her book, several of whom would be considered old-timers, with historical accuracy. Women such as Fanny Sperry Steel, a champion bronco rider, and Mattie Castner, a black business woman and founder of a community, were but a few of the women regarded as old-timers. Seagraves (1994) described the first women to arrive in the West as those of easy virtue. In her book on early day prostitution, she defined an old-timer as "A prostitute who has been in the same brothel for a long period of time, or who is an older, more experienced woman" (p. 168).

Most old-timers were seen as having an adventuresome

spirit, mysterious ways, unusual habits, older age or

residency, colorful, knowledgeable in their work, good

workers, strikingly independent, free-spenders, hard

drinking, and friendly. They usually had characteristics

that set them apart from other persons in early communities

and settlements. These characteristics included size,

dress, language, posture, and living arrangements.

(Burlingame, 1942; El Comancho, 1929; Green, 1969;

Guernsey, 1936; Lee, 1968; Shirley, 1995; Stewart, 1913).

The Boilermaker, a woman during the Colorado

mining boom who came to the aid of the sick, met the

description of an old-timer. Lee (1968) wrote

> One look at the Boilermaker was enough to kill anybody
> already on the verge of the grave! She was a six-
> footer, strong and husky, and about fifty years
> old . . . . (she) was a rare person. She was a diamond
> in the rough, with the tongue of a mucker and
> the heart of an angel" (p. 151, 155).

Burlingame (1942) told of a male old-timer in the

following way:

> Larpenteur was a small, wiry man who never got
> overvivacious, well-informed and in the main a kindly
> person. Handsome, careful of his clothes and vain
> concerning his appearance and ability, he was to
> suffer greatly over these points of personality.
> Although Larpentuer was one of the most capable and

trusted men on the upper river, he went from one
company to another, with frequent intervals of free-
lancing on his own account, and he left the fur
business without having enough to keep him comfortable
in his old age. (p. 62)

Many times authors described old-timers according
to their occupations, such as cowboys, miners, loggers,
prostitutes, ranchers, and trappers. Their work was implied
to be on the dangerous side of life, and usually involved
working alone. El Comancho (1929) said this about an old-
timer cowboy:

A picturesque, lovable cuss, who was also an ornament
object fit to decorate any landscape. He didn't know
what fear meant, would fight for his cattle, and fight
the cattle themselves in a stampede. He would fight
Indians, rustlers or what have you, and give his whole
ability and serious attention to the business of the
moment, whatever it might be, from playing a hand in a
poker game, to filling a trouble hunter full of used
lead from a fanned six-shooter, if the occasion seemed
to demand it. He was not quarrelsome and never ran
from trouble. He took his liquor straight and full of
fire, asked no questions, grinned, told nothing about
himself that he didn't want to. He lived in the wide
open spaces. He was the most rollicking, happy-go-
lucky adventurer who ever lived. (p. 70)

More recently in Western Literature, McCumber
(1999) used the term old-timer as a marker for respect
and experience when he wrote "Yesterday's greenhorn is
tomorrow's old-timer" (p. 93).

Old-timer In The Popular Media

Chafetz, Childress, Glazer, Holmes, and Lande (1998)

studied the preferences for nouns and adjectives that might

be used in news stories to refer to older adults. The

purpose of their study was to reevaluate the relationship

between the news media and older adults. The study,

surveying eight hundred sixty-eight community-dwelling

older adults in Dallas County, Texas, was a partial

replication of the Louis Harris and Associates poll

published by the National Council on the Aging in 1975 and

the Texas Poll Study reported in 1994. In their literature

review Chavetz et al. (1998) reviewed the findings of the

original Louis Harris and Associates poll survey. The

survey contained a section concerning politics of old age

that included questions on how to refer to people sixty-

five and over. Respondents to the survey most liked the

terms "mature American," " retired person," and "senior

citizen." The most disliked terms were "old man" or "old

woman" (67%), "aged person" (50%) and "old-timer" (45%).

In Chafetz et al.'s survey participants rated fifteen

nouns and ten adjectives as "like, don't like, doesn't

matter, or don't recognize." They reported the five most disliked nouns; "old-timer" received a fifty-six percent disapproval rating. Other nouns and their disapproval percentages were "geezer" (86%), "old man/woman" (76%), "old person" (73%), and "oldster" (68%). Men prefered the term old-timer more than women. The authors reported the findings of this replicated survey, assimilated the findings of the Louis Harris and Associates Poll done almost twenty years before. In both surveys nouns least preferred were "old man/woman" and "old-timer."

In 1996 the popular media, specifically newspaper headlines across the state of Montana, reported the relationships between newcomers and long-time residents of Montana. Johnson's (1996) article, printed simultaneously in the Great Falls Tribune, Missoulian, and Helena's Independent Record, revealed the survey results describing the attitudes of long-time residents toward quality of life, jobs, and importation of new ideas and innovations caused by newcomers to the state. Data from a poll of Montanans across the state, conducted by the Rochester Research Group of Rochester, New York, were used as the basis for this news story. Johnson used the label, long-

time Montanans, as those living in the same state longer
than ten years. These individuals were more likely to
criticize the impact of newcomers and agreed that the
number of newcomers moving into the state would negatively
affect the environment of the state. The long-time
residents agreed a sixty-four to twenty-nine percent
margin, that people moving into the state were negatively
affecting the state's environment. This is an example of
the old-timer and newcomer concept used as a framework to
organize a community's social interaction to which Long and
Weinert (1987) refer.

Old-timer In Health Care

Scharff (1998) documented the use of old or old-timer
to describe a nurse in reference to tenure, level of
proficiency, and sociability related to group fit. An
ethnographic study, including twenty-six rural hospital
nurses in four communities, was utilized to describe the
nature and scope of rural nursing. Old-timer in reference
to tenure was a variable related to the characteristics of
level of proficiency and sociability. A nurse employed less
than two years was considered a newcomer, and employment of

three to five years with competent skills usually garnered

acceptance. A seasoned nurse, tenure beyond ten years,

could in special cases be considered an old-timer if

accompanied by high level of proficiency; however, the term

old-timer was usually used describe someone who had been

around for twenty or more years.

Old-timer was used in health care to describe an older

physician who has developed, over many years, a

relationship with his patients and community (Losee, 1994).

Sedden's (1992) article, "My Dream Practice Had Everything

Except Patients," tells the tale and the risks of buying a

practice from an old-timer whose practice was well

established. Unfortunately, the charting and billing

systems were antiquated, reflecting

> a practice style of an old physician whose patients
> were conditioned to accept outdated medicine. My
> efforts at change were not always appreciated, and at
> times were actively resisted. (p.121)

The young physician discovered, as a newcomer to the

community, there was little room for acceptance in lieu of

older established physicians.

The term old-timer also appeared in relationship to

the roles within an alcohol addiction program. The old-

timer was described as a person who has used alcohol from

very early on, attended the meetings regularly but participates minimally, and had no intention of changing in any way (Berliner, 1987).

Concept Analysis of Old-timer

Caniparoli's (1998) concept analysis to clarify the meaning of the term old-timer revealed "little is written in the literature about the term 'old-timer' and its relationship to a community's social order or function." Old-timer status was described as conditional on the number of years lived in an area. This may require twenty years at the very least, to perhaps a generation before consideration as an old-timer.

Caniparoli (1998) identified three attributes of old-timers. They were age, length of time spent in the community, and establishment of a relationship with the community. She also identified the consequences of attaining old-timer status as: (1) When persons are identified as old-timers, other community residents must recognize the persons as old-timers. (2) This designation sets these individuals apart from the rest of the

community. (3) Consequently the individuals or old-timers then establish relationships within the community. These "relationships may be viewed as positive or negative depending on the role of the viewer" (p. 110). In concluding Caniparoli (1998) stated "mis-understandings and miscommunication by rural dwellers, health care providers who are newcomers, and individuals who look at the social order in rural areas will occur" unless the questions surrounding the concept of old-timer are answered (p. 111).

Summary

In summary, the term old-timer or descriptions of old-timers have been used extensively in Western/historical literature to describe older, adventurous, colorful, yet knowledgeable individuals. Folklore and Western movies have portrayed old-timers in this capacity. The popular media and health care are similar in their views of old-timer as an older, tenured, respected, and experienced. Caniparoli (1998) identified attributes and consequences in her concept analysis that are consistent with the views from the popular media and health care. These attributes were age, tenure, and relationship to the community. Old-timer

warrants further clarification to determine its

relationship to a community's social order.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter focused on the methods used to study the concept old-timer and its relationship to the social function of a rural community. The population, sample, design of the study, data collection, interview questions, protection of human subjects, and plan for data analysis are discussed in this chapter.

Population and Sample

The communities of Sand Coulee, Stockett, Tracy, and Centerville lay in close proximity to each other, and are ten to fifteen miles south of the larger city of Great Falls. These communities have a rich agricultural and mining history. Many families emigrated into these communities in the early 1900's, and have maintained homesteads, family farms or ranches, as well as small businesses. Together these communities form what is commonly known as the "gulch."

Potential participants from the communities of Sand Coulee, Stockett, Tracy, and Centerville, met specific criteria to be included in the research study. The criteria consisted of (a) being 70 years of age or older, (b) having lived in the communities for greater than 30 years, and (c) voluntarily agreeing to participate in the study.

Design

A qualitative descriptive design, based on the grounded theory approach, was chosen to clarify the concept of old-timer and explore the influence these individuals have on a community. A convenience sample approach was utilized to include participants in the study.

LaBiondo-Wood & Haber (1994) stated that descriptive research is used to identify or describe concepts of the experience of individuals. Burns & Grove (1997) stated the term grounded means that the theory developed from the research is "grounded" or has its roots in the data from which it was derived. They went on to state that grounded theory is an inductive research method, developed for health-related topics by

Glaser and Strauss. Inductive research was designed to
discover and describe relationships without imposing
preconceived notions of what phenomena mean (Chinn &
Kramer, 1995). Convenience sampling is useful for
exploratory studies, as participants can be entered
into the study to obtain the desired sample size (Burns
& Grove, 1997).

Procedure for Data Collection

Two informants known to the interviewer were
contacted initially for an interview. These interviews
were strictly voluntary. From the initial interviews,
additional names of potential participants were
solicited, creating a snowball effect of gathering
participants. An informational letter and invitation to
participate was sent to each potential participant
(Appendix A). One week following the mailing of the
informational letter, the potential participants were
contacted by telephone to establish their willingness
to participate in the research study. A total of nine
participants were interviewed. Informal face-to-face
interviews were arranged at a mutually agreed upon time

and location. At the interview, the participants were given the consent form to read and sign (Appendix B). Interviews lasted forty-five to ninety minutes. Permission to audiotape interviews was obtained from all participants.

Interview Questions

Informal face-to-face interviews were conducted utilizing open-ended questions to gather information about individuals who have lived in a community for a long time (Appendix C). Interview questions were developed for the theoretical sampling of the initial two interviews. The original questions and slight variations of the original questions, dependent upon the responses, were then used to illicit information from the remaining sample population. Demographic data was also gathered from the participants in the research study (Appendix D).

Protection of Human Subjects

The rights of the human subjects were protected throughout this research study. Participation was voluntary, with assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. Names did not appear on the transcribed interviews; participants were identified by numbers. The researcher retained the key to the numbered interviews in a locked file. The nature of the study was fully explained to the participants in an informational letter and again in person before written consent was obtained. The consent forms were stored in a locked file at Montana State University College of Nursing; they will be kept for two years, then destroyed. Participants were informed that they could choose not to answer any question or withdraw from the interview at any time. The tape recordings were destroyed following transcription.

No physical, emotional, or psychological risks were identified for the participants. There were also no benefits to the participant other than the satisfaction of participating in a research study that could further the knowledge and practice of nursing.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed utilizing a grounded theory method of comparative analysis. Chinn & Kramer (1995) stated that in a grounded theory approach, analysis of the data involves coding, examining the units of analysis for patterns, and categorizing the data. Therefore, the data analysis of this research study consisted of coding the transcriptions from the taped interviews and field notes, followed by examination for patterns and themes in which to categorize the data. The patterns were then analyzed for new categories and concepts, and their relationships.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter focused on the findings of the study. Demographic data obtained from interviewees are discussed first, followed by the analysis of the interview data.

Demographic Data

All the informants (N=9) for this qualitative study lived in the small rural communities of Sand Coulee, Stockett, Tracy, and Centerville, or in the immediate surrounding vicinity of these communities. Collectively these communities are known as the "Gulch," as they are located in a narrow valley and a distance of no further than ten miles exists between the two furthermost communities of Sand Coulee and Stockett. The surrounding vicinity consists of farms and ranches of various sizes, located in the foothills of the Little Belt and Big Belt Mountains of north central Montana. Three participants lived in one of the small communities of the "Gulch" while the remaining six participants lived in the surrounding area. The participant furthest in distance from the "Gulch"

lived on a ranch accessed by traveling no further than 20 miles on gravel roads and then following a primitive trail down a steep hillside to the ranch house.

All participants were Caucasian. Their ages were between 72-92 years, with the mean of 82 years. Participants were three females, two males, and two married couples. All participants were native Montanans. Six participants had lived in the community since birth, two arrived in the community in early adulthood to teach school and married residents of the community, and one participant moved into the community at the age of 5 years. Eight participants had children or extended family living in the community, while the ninth participant had never married and was the last of her family to live in the community. The participants' occupations consisted of teaching and ranching. All informants were retired with the exception of five who were semi-retired ranchers.

The most frequently cited community activities in which the participants were or had been involved included 4-H leadership, activities within the community's Catholic or Methodist Church, and the Senior Citizen organization. Other activities included high-school Booster Club, local

craft and art shows, affiliation with committees that have

written community history books, Gulch Trail Association,

PTA, tutoring and provision of scholarships at the local

school, and the Home Demonstration Club and Water

Conversation District Board through the County Extension

office.

Emerging Themes

As explained earlier in the data analysis section of

Chapter 3, the interviews were coded and categorized

according to patterns that emerged from the data. The

patterns were then reviewed looking for new categories, and

finally central themes were identified. Four central themes

emerged from this process: a) name descriptors of older

residents, b) characteristics of old-timers c) community

functions of old-timers, and d) old-timers' perception of

their influence in the community.

The four central themes were broken down further into

subcategories, overlapping at times. However, the

subcategories were placed in the central theme to which

they had the most meaningful significance. Each theme was

interlaced with old-timer stories that provided insight and rich descriptions of the old-timers from the Gulch.

Name Descriptors of Older Residents

A name descriptor may not be considered an individual characteristic. However, as a reference to a subgroup of a population, a name can have significance. To properly identify and address the older, long-time residents of a community, the participants were asked to identify terms or titles that described a person who had lived in the community for a long time. The most common name given was that of old-timer. Other terms identified included "old duffers," "native," "pioneer," "early settler," "senior citizen," and "golden ager." All participants agreed old-timer was a respectful term worthy of describing these residents. Therefore old-timer was used to identify older residents in the discussion of these findings.

Characteristics of Old-timers

Four subcategories were identified within the theme of characteristics of old-timers: age, long-time residency,

land ownership, and stories which depict specific
characteristics of old-timers.

Age

All participants identified age as a defining
characteristic of an old-timer. However, they were less
clear on a numerical value that qualified one as an old-
timer. The youngest participant, age 72, referred to
herself as "a pretty young old-timer." All participants
shared stories of individuals they considered old-timers.
These old-timers had "age on their side," usually being
eighty years or older, with a few as old as 98 to 100 years
old. It was a common belief that many of the old-timers
were "gone," "passing away," or "there aren't that many
left."

Long-time residency

Long-time residency in the community was also
identified as a defining characteristic of an old-timer.
"Being born and raised here" was a saying recited more than
once during the interviews. "Living here all your life,"
was often quoted as a pre-requisite to inclusion as an old-
timer. In reference to one old-timer, "he grew up at No. 7
(a mine)," and continues to live in the community to this

day. One participant offered this insight when asked to clarify between age and long time residency in determining old-timer status: "I would say how long they have lived here. We haven't had anybody move in here that is an old-timer."

Land Ownership

An exception to the long-time residency was the association with land ownership. One participant acknowledged an old-timer who had lived elsewhere for a majority of his life, returning to the area sometime within the last 25 years. He had inherited land belonging to his family, returning to the area to retire. He acquired old-timer status due to his age and land holdings. Many old-timers interviewed had grandparents or parents who homesteaded in the area, and they were the second or third generation to live on the family ranch. One participant stated the relationship between land ownership and old-timer status this way:

> The ranch has been in our name 100 years. The neighbors down here, they came about the same time our Dad did, but the old people are both dead now. Their kids sold part of the ranch to me. So them old-timers are gone. Now we are the old-timers or old-duffers.

Another old-timer, also a rancher, offered this explanation regarding the discrepancy between old-time

miners and old-time ranchers from his boyhood. "The miners would drink," with the implication the miners were less respectable than the ranchers. In his mind the ranchers were the old-timers.

Old-timer Stories

The last subcategory of characteristics to emerge from the interviews was the stories the participants used to describe the old-timers they had known in the past and the stories of the old-timers of the present. The stories recited here reflect a colorful and sometimes peculiar quality of an old-timer that serves to describe their physical appearance or habits.

One old-timer participant recalled the story of a hired hand working for his father. The hired hand had been hauling manure and was injured when he fell off a wagon being driven by another hired hand. Angry, the injured ranch hand left for Stockett on foot. The participant continued:

> He went to Dr. Ball and got sauced up and he came back that night and the other kid was eating his supper and there was a gunshot, he shot him through the window. Didn't hit the guy. They had him arrested and he had ten dollars coming. The ten dollars he had coming, he spent for snoose. They called him Snoose Mike. He didn't chew it, he stuffed it up his nose.

The same old-timer participant also recalled this story about an old-timer:

> We had an uncle that lived up the coulee there. He was a big tall guy with a mustache. He had legs about twice as long as the rest of his body. But he was a prince of a guy and one heck of a fine carpenter, and he would tell things about when he was a kid in Germany . . . . he was a true old-timer. He was a mighty fine guy.

Community Functions of Old-timers

Four subcategories were identified within the theme of community function of old-timers: work as an activity, sociability, keepers of the traditions, and historians.

Work as an Activity

A common adjective the participants used to describe old-timers was "hardworking." Four of the five rancher participants continued to live and work in a semi-retired capacity at ranching while their children assumed the majority of the workload. One old-timer participant shared "All of the old-duffers we know are still working on the ranch . . . lot of the old miners are dead." A female participant, who had been a schoolteacher all her life, described her elderly neighbor as "a pretty interesting character. She did outside work on the farm all the time."

The hard work was associated with a simpler life from an earlier time period, as demonstrated by one informant saying "They grew up and walked everywhere. Very little need. Their diet was simple. A very strong heart." Another participant remembered this about an old-timer; "He really never did anything besides go around and help people. We called him "Old Irish." He liked his liquor and he liked his fun."

The old-timers also worked together out of necessity for survival, their personal survival and that of their livelihood or ranching business.

> As far as getting together, the old-timers had to rely on one another, more so than today. We still work together. You have to. We ship (cattle) together. Otherwise, you just can't get help. When I grew up, there were about six of us that had a branding crew and working crew together, but I am the last one left.

The participant continued to explain that quite often working together was also a social event.

> The real old-timers, if you look way over there you see the roof of that big barn? That was Pete's place. That was a real old-timer. This is how they got together and worked. He called the neighbors and said I have a bunch of three-year-old steers to de-horn. You come next Sunday and we will do them. I will get a keg of beer. They made one mistake. They opened the keg of beer first. By the time they got to work the big steers, because they had to rope them and throw them, 1500 pounds apiece, those guys were so looped they couldn't handle them. Pete said we can't do it, you come back next Sunday and we will do it again.

They did the same darn thing. They opened the keg of
beer again. Two Sundays in a row and they never got
one animal done. The third Sunday, they did them
(steers) before they opened the keg of beer.

Sociability

All the participants agreed that old-timers of
yesterday were more sociable than the old-timers of today.
Activities of yesterday included dances, card parties,
meetings, baseball, and of course just plain visiting.
Community dances were especially important. Barns were
built to hold dances and people would come from all over.
One participant, a fiddle and saxophone player, explained
"every ranch house had one or two fiddlers," and "I took my
sax, tied it down (on the saddle), and away I would go."
Another participant shared "The difference between nowadays
and when I was a kid was when I was a kid there were dances
all over." However, at least one participant stayed active
socially by his involvement in the Fiddlers Association and
by playing his fiddle for various groups and organization.
He proudly boasted "No matter where I go, everybody knows
me," and "I set the pace because I am a fiddler."

Card parties were also plentiful, as a participant
shared:

When I was young, there was a card party club. I
wouldn't be sure if it was every week or every two
weeks, but you went from place to place and played
500 . . . We had an old Swede working for my Dad, John
Lynn, and he just loved to play cards. Saturday night,

my Dad didn't go much, but John and I would take off
and walk three miles to wherever that party was and
hope to catch a ride to pretty close to home. That
went on all the time.

Visiting has also changed. A ranch wife shared:

No telephones. That made a difference too. You wanted
to go and visit people and there was nothing to just
dropping in on them. Nowadays, you just don't do that,
they might not be home. The telephone is nice, but it
kind of ruined the community as a community."

Her husband continued:

If you needed to see a neighbor for something, you
went to see them and if you went to his place Saturday
or Sunday, you didn't call them up, you just went.
When I was a kid somebody either came or went. If you
didn't get away before someone came.

The wife then added, "On Sunday it was expected."

The same couple shared how their community hall came

to exist.

When they built the hall down there, they sold shares
and everybody got together and worked and built it. It
is still in operation. We can't afford to put a dance
on anymore because you absolutely can't make any
money.

Meetings consisted of Home Demonstration, Eastern

Star, Masons, Senior Citizens, church or parish meetings,

and 4-H meetings. One old-timer reflected on the change in

the social structure of the community:

It was a close community because that is all there
was. It was a long way from Great Falls and other
entertainment and you didn't go to Great Falls until
it was necessary, so they depended on one another for
anything that was going on. You would leave notes on

the board down at the store if there was anything going on or a shower or whatever, home demonstration meeting.

Baseball was also identified as a favorite past-time and social event for those that lived in the communities of Stockett, Tracy, Centerville, and Sand Coulee. One female participant particularly liked to play the sport. She shared a story about the superintendent of the mine who also supported the sport. "He got players in from other places. We had one from Cuba. That was in the '20's, '24, '25. And I know when I graduated they had a team of actors, a band."

Only one participant, a retired female teacher, thought old-timers could contribute more to their community. She stated her thoughts this way:

> I think I could contribute more. I could be down there reading stories to the kids in the library and working at the school and teach them to crochet or activities like that. I am too lazy or the thing that bothers me is that I don't want to have to be at a certain place a certain day and all. There are a lot of things they (old-timers) could contribute if they would.

Old-timers as Keepers of Traditions

Old-timers in the community today continue to serve in the socialization of the communities by keeping the traditions that have served them so well throughout the

years. One female participant who was very active in the

Senior Citizen organization and in the Holy Trinity Parish

shared her philosophy regarding the passing on of

traditions; "If it wasn't for the them (old-timers), a lot

of things wouldn't be done. See, the kids will see what

they do and then they (kids) keep right on doing the same

thing." Another old-timer agreed, stating "I know our fall

dinner wouldn't happen without the older group. The younger

people don't seem to be involved in that." Both women

contributed many hours preparing hams, pigs-in-the-

blankets, mashed potatoes, and deserts for the parish fall

and spring dinners, and breakfasts at the Senior Citizens.

The Senior Citizen's organization compiled a cookbook

of recipes from cooks in and around the Gulch. The editors

dedicated the cookbook, Cooking with Friends of the Gulch

(1993):

> This cookbook is meant as a tribute to the many
> homemakers and cooks of our area and others far and
> wide who are friends of the Gulch. The area referred
> to as "The Gulch" is southeast of the city of Great
> Falls. This area is composed of the small towns of
> Tracy, Sand Coulee, No. 7, Centerville, and Stockett.
> The early pioneers of these towns came together in the
> 1800's from different part of the globe to work in the
> coal mines of the community. Now the mines are closed,
> but many of the descendents still reside in "The
> Gulch." Thus, the different nationalities and their
> recipes handed down from generation to generation have

become a part of our every day living, enhancing our lives with friendly neighbors and friends.

Another tradition in the community involved maintaining the community hall. A participant shared, "They have a work day every year. There is a hall board (of directors) and they get the guys to come one day and clean up the yard and trim and paint and do what is necessary."

Old-timers as the Community Historians

All participants shared stories of old-timers they had encountered at some time during their lives. They eagerly shared their families' personal history related to settling and working in the community, as well as bits and pieces of the rich history surrounding the settling and development of the community. The participants also expressed remorse at not asking their parents important questions regarding the history of the community.

A female participant, referring to a potential participant who had been not only her fourth grade teacher but also her husbands' and countless others who had lived and attended school in the Gulch, stated "she's the one who knows a lot." Identification by others in the community as an old-timer was "being part of the history" according to one participant. The oldest participant in the study had written two books on the history of the communities, and

another participant had contributed to a lengthy history

book of old-time families who had lived in the community.

An old-timer shared in reference to the younger

generations "Oh, they like to listen and hear stories about

the old times, but they don't want your advice."

Old-timers' Perceptions of Their Influence on a Community

All the participants agreed their community has

changed dramatically and this has effected the influence

the old-timers once had in the community. A participant

stated this best by saying, "Our community has changed. The

people living here haven't been here very long and so our

group doesn't really know the younger group. I don't think

we can say that we influence them very much." She

continued, "You could count them on the hand the families

that have lived here for even a decade." As the

conversation progressed, the participant speculated:

> I think they (old-timers) would have an influence, but
> I don't think that their decision would be the one
> accepted. They could voice their opinion, but they
> (others in the community) would listen, but I don't
> think it would change they way they feel.

The participant then added,

> The people next door moved in two or three years ago.
> They came over and introduced themselves and that was
> the end of it, and I haven't seen them since. I don't
> think that I am going to influence them in any way.

She did consider "If these new families will go their half of the way and participate."

Technology, in the form of automobiles and telephones, was seen as either positively or negatively affecting the influence these old-timers had. One participant reasoned that automobiles made it possible for her to be a lot more involved. "Before, they never had no vehicles. They never got to go like they do today, you know, where you could go and do more things." Yet, other participants were of the opinion that both the telephone and automobile have diminished their need for community "get togethers" and reliance on each other. This has resulted in a loss of influence.

When considering why some old-timers were more influential than others were, one participant said, "They just liked doing it. Some people are just natural leaders and put themselves out I think." He shared this story of an old-timer the participant claims helped to save the community during and after WWII:

> We had a man that did a lot for the community by the name of *Jacobs from Stockett. He would loan money. I suppose, in his lifetime he had to foreclose on one or two people. I had a cousin that burrowed money from him, to tell what kind of character he was. When *John (the cousin) sold some cattle he went down to pay him off. And, *Jacobs says, "I don't want this money. Why don't you keep it? I just have to find someone else to loan it to." Can you find a banker like that today?

Influence also has its ties to land ownership, as another

participant explained: "Most of them still own the

land. The kids are running it, but they still have interest

in their land, and they work together with their kids and

give advice when the kid will take it." The participant

continued sharing his own story of how an old-timer had

influenced him to manage his own land differently:

> During the Depression, those Johnson's always had a
> good crop of wheat. Everybody (else) in the community
> had 8 to 10 bushels. They (*Johnson's) always had at
> least 25 to 30. I asked him just a few years before he
> died what his secret was. He said that every cloud
> that dropped a few drops of rain would break the crust
> (ground). And for the spring crop, if you get the crop
> in by the 20th of April, you are pretty sure you will
> get the crop. I kind of watched what he said and it
> worked out.

He finished his story by adding, "I try to pass it on

whether it goes on or not."

In contrast, another semi-retired rancher participant,

shared these sad thoughts:

> Older people look at how the younger people do things,
> there are a lot of things that I don't agree with,
> with my son. He doesn't pay any attention to what I
> have to say. Well, I feel that he thinks he doesn't
> need my advice anymore. Lots of times he won't even
> answer my question. I just figure I guess I don't know
> anything.

Echoing the above sentiments, another participant felt

the loss of influence was directly related to the loss of

respect for older people. She stated old-timers when she

was growing up were "much more respected. There were two or even three generations living in the same house. You took care of them. I can't even remember arguing with anything my older brothers or sisters told me to do or my parents." Her last thoughts regarding respect were "I am a pretty young old-timer though. To me, there is that aura of respect that I have for old-timers."

*Pseudonyms

Summary of Findings

In summary, four themes emerged from the interview data. These themes were (1) name descriptors of older residents, (2) characteristics of old-timers, (3) community functions of old-timers, and (4) old-timers' perception of their influence in the community.

Old-timer was the most common name identified by the participants, and all agreed the term was considered respectful in reference to older residents who had lived in the community a long time. Some participants delighted in reaching the status of old-timer.

Age, long-time residency, and land ownership were identified as common characteristics of old-timers. The

participants were less clear on a numerical value to identify old-timers. Participants agreed there were very few old-timers left, and of those left many were "passing away." The characteristic "being born and raised here" were used multiple times to describe old-timers. One exception to long time residency was land ownership. Many of the participants, as well as others identified as old-timers, had land holdings going back two and three generations.

Work as an activity, sociability, keepers of the traditions, and historians were identified as functions old-timers contributed to the community. Old-timers were described as hardworking. The times, the conditions, the elements necessitated they be so. Hard times helped to forge a common bond between the old-timers. They depended on one another for work and social companionship. Today the old-timers continue to serve the community by sharing traditions from previous generations. Their community is steeped full of traditions from their ethnic forefathers. Old-timers also act as historians, passing down stories from generation to generation. These stories richly described the lives and characteristics of old-timers. Some

participants served as informants for local history books or had written their own books.

The participants expressed that changing times has altered the influence old-timers have on a community. The community is not as tightly knit as it once was. Many new families have moved into the community who are not actively involved in community functions. Participants thought the younger residents are less respectful and listen less to the advice the old-timers have to give.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Presented in this chapter are a discussion of the
findings, limitations, and implications of the study.
Recommendations are offered for further study.

Discussion of the Findings

This qualitative study explored the concept of old-
timer and its relationship to the social function of a
rural community. It provided insight into the role and
self-perception of the older long-time residents of a rural
community. The purpose of the study was to clarify the use
of the term old-timer and to explore the influence these
individuals have on a community's social function or social
order. Utilizing the grounded theory research method,
information was elicited from nine older, long-time
residents of a rural community, and then analyzed for
emerged themes. These themes were old-timer
characteristics, community function of old-timer, and old-
timers' perception of their influence on a community. The

participants lived in the rural community all their lives or from a very young age, and were identified as old-timers by one another or by others in the community.

The majority of old-timers in Western historical literature were men, and when women were discussed it was usually in context of relationships to men (Shirley, 1995). However the women participants of this study were identified as old-timers independently of their marital status based on their age, length of residency, and contributions to the community. The equality of gender mix of participants in this study demonstrates a change in societal values towards women.

The use of the term old-timer was not only found to be acceptable, but most often was the first synonym identified by the participants of the study to describe an older long time resident. This finding is in contrast to that of Chafetz et al.(1999). They cited old-timer as one of the most disliked terms in referring to people over sixty-five. One explanation for the discrepancy between the studies findings could be the difference in locations of the studies. Specifically, the Chafetz et al. study was

conducted in the more populated Dallas County, Texas, in comparison to this study done in rural central Montana.

Many participants in this study delighted in being referred to as an old-timer, as the title commanded respect to people of their generation. The participants had aged 72 to 92 years; consequently the stories they shared reflected old-timers living as early as the 1920's and to the current period. Their stories painted a picture of earlier individuals who were knowledgeable, hard working, fun loving, and committed to their neighbors and the rural way of life they shared. As indicated by one old-timer rancher, as old-timers from the previous generation passed away, his generation then became the old-timers. The participants viewed the status of old-timer as a rite of passage, "being part of the history."

Age, long-time residency, and land ownership were identified by the participants as characteristics of an old-timer. This supports Caniparoli's (1998) concept analysis, which identified three attributes of old-timer as age, length of time spent in the community and establishment of a relationship with the community. In this study a numerical value was not assigned to age, but rather

generally assumed to be 80 or 90 years. One participant, age 72 years, conceded she was a "rather young old-timer."

Age and long-time residency were also woven together to form the basis for "being born and raised here," which was identified as an important concept in the identification of an old-timer. Hufsmith in Rogers (1964) also characterized old-timers as to time of arrival into a community, regardless of the length of time lived in the community. Time of arrival into a community may be similar in context to land ownership dating back two or three generations. In the present study, land ownership as well as age also qualified persons as old-timers. Older persons could potentially move back into the community and would still be considered old-timers if their families had a long history of land ownership. The land ownership was the tie to the community; land established a relationship with the community. The implications were long-time residency may be a variable superceded by the combination of age and land ownership.

The old-timer participants from this study did not readily resemble the descriptions of old-timers from Western historical literature or folklore. The participants

did share stories from their youth describing colorful,

adventuresome, experienced, and independent characters they

deemed as old-timers. However, upon reassessing the

participants' demographic factors, all were risk takers at

some point in their lives. The young women who took

teaching positions in unfamiliar rural one-room

schoolhouses and the hard working young men who risked all

during the depression years to keep the family ranch in

operation pay tribute to these qualities. These old-timer

participants emerged from these experiences to form the

backbone of the community, the glue holding the tight knit

community together. These findings have some similarities

to the characteristics Scharff (1998) used to describe

seasoned, tenured, highly proficient nurses who were

regarded as old-timers. Sociability related to group fit

was a characteristic Scharff used to describe an old-timer

nurse.

Community activities as work, sociability, keepers of

the traditions, and historians were common threads among

the old-timers. As previously discussed, hard work was

common to old-timers, often out of necessity to survive

personally or to assure the viability of the family ranch

or business. Old-timers relied on each other for their needs to be met. Often a work situation was also a social event, mixing work and pleasure.

Today there are fewer farms and ranches on the landscape, and distances are further between neighboring farms or ranches. Even within the small communities, long time residents do not know the "newcomer" neighbor living next door. The community's close approximation to the larger city of Great Falls has rendered the Gulch as a bedroom community. Newcomers to the community reportedly show little interest or actual involvement in community activities. Just as the characteristics of the community's population base have changed, so have the emphasis placed on community activities. The participants also attributed the changes in sociability to today's fast life style, and technological advances as the telephone and automobile.

Even in the face of societal changes, the participants continue to participate in the community by the keeping and passing down of traditions. The Holy Trinity Catholic Parish continues its tradition of a Fall dinner, serving as many as six hundred people from the general vicinity pigs-in-the-blanket, ham, mashed potatoes, and homemade pies.

The Senior Citizens Center hosts a breakfast the second Sunday of each month and public card parties the first Saturday of each month. The Eden Community Hall is maintained yearly at a workday that draws residents from the community who volunteer their time and talents. These activities are only but a few of the testaments to the dedication, hard work, and determination the participants possess in keeping alive the community's traditions.

The pages of history written about the Gulch owe their life to the tales and trivia recorded or retold by old-timers. Old-timers hold the past knowledge of the community's rich mining history, the secrets of the abandoned homesteads scattered on the hillsides, and the stories of many a person who has come and gone from the community. The participants were eager to share their own stories, which spoke well of their knowledge of the history of the community. Yet, many participants said even though their stories were often sought after, their influence has waned.

The old-timers' self-perceived loss of community influence was also considered related to changes within the community. The participants noted less need to rely on one

another, resulting in a loss of influence. In some

instances the identification of old-timers by family

members did not mean they were necessarily influential.

Unfortunately for some old-timers, the loss of influence

has affected their self-esteem, and sadly enough, altered

relationships with family or community members. The loss of

influence by old-timers was also linked to the loss of

respect for the elderly in today's society. In the <u>Great</u>

<u>Falls Tribune</u> Johnson (1996) reported attitudes compatible

with the study findings. The long-time Montanans surveyed

and reported in Johnson's article were critical of the

impact of newcomers and agreed the number of newcomers

moving into the state would negatively affect the

environment of the state.

Weinert and Long (1987) wrote

"Rural dwellers used the concepts of 'old-timer" and
"newcomer' as a framework to organize their social
interactions, their relationships within the community
and were important to their 'view of the social
environment'" (p.453).

The findings in this study do not dispute this statement.

However, to quote an old saying, "things are never as easy

as they used to be," nor are they "black and white." Old-

timers continue to command respect, value, and some degree
of influence within certain social circles. The amount of
for or degree of influence from old-timers may seem to be
dependent upon the construct of the social circle existing
in a community. In the narrow context of organizations,
Holy Trinity Parish or the Senior Citizens, old-timers have
a strong connection to the social order of the community.
However, in a broader sense such as the Gulch community,
changes in the population base, life style, technology, and
commitment to community service, have diminished the old-
timers' relationship with the social order of the
community.

This study addressed Caniparoli's (1998) need for
clarification of the old-timer and the relationship to a
community's social order. Clearly, old-timers in this study
questioned the influence they may or may not have on the
community, casting shadows of suspicion as to whether an
influential relationship exists between an old-timer and a
community.

Based on the preceding discussion, the assumption that
long-time residents of rural communities influence
decisions made in the communities, was not upheld. The

assumption was based on observed social interaction in rural communities, over twenty years ago.

Limitations

Limitations to this work exist. The participants' self-perception of their influence on this community's social order may not be generalizable to other old-timers and their respective communities. The small rural community known as the Gulch is in transition, changing from a close knit community to a bedroom community for the larger city of Great Falls to the north. Participants of other small rural communities may present a different perspective to old-timer status and its relationship to their communitys' social order, dependent of the stability of the population and economic base of the community.

Implications for Practice

The implications and applications to the practice of nursing are numerous. Old-timer status and its relationship to a community's social order may still influence access and utilization of health care, but on a smaller scale than

previously thought. Old-timers may influence individuals in a smaller social circle, such as organizations in which they are a member. Their sociability provides an avenue to share information directed towards accessing and utilization of health care. For example, an elderly female patient who has learned the value of breast self exam during a physical exam, may in turn share this information with her Home Demonstration Group. If she is a respected member and her opinions valued, she may influence others in the group to either schedule a physical exam or to begin breast self-exam.

A different aspect to consider in regards to practice issues was the lack of influence older long-time residents have on a community. Based on this study's findings, practitioners new to a rural area may be ill advised to target their advertising dollars toward the elderly of the community. To assume that utilization and acceptance by the older age group would ascertain utilization by the community as a whole could put the practitioners at financial risk.

Recommendations for Further Study

This research indicates the need for further qualitative research to determine the context of old-timers' status and influence within organizations. The study could also be replicated in other rural communities to determine the generalizability of the concept of old-timer and its relationship to the social function of a rural community.

References

Adams, R. F. (Ed.) (1968). Western words: a Dictionary of the American west. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Barnhart, R. K. (Ed.) (1995). The Barnhart concise dictionary of etymology. New York: Harper Collings.

Berliner, A. K. (1987). Group counseling with alcohol offenders: An analysis and typology of DWI probationers. Journal of Offender Counseling Services & Rehabilitation, 11(2), 33-51.

Burlingame, M. G. (1942). The Montana frontier. Bozeman, MT: Big Sky Books.

Burns, N., & Grove, S. K. (1997). The practice of nursing research, (3rd ed.). Philadelphia: Saunders.

Caniparoli, C., (1998). Old-timer. In H. J. Lee (Ed.). Conceptual Basis for Rural Nursing (pp. 102-112). New York: Springer.

Chafetz, P. K., Childress, E., Glazer, H. R., Holmes, H., & Lande, K. (1998). Older adults and the news media: Utilization, opinions, and preferred reference terms. The Gerontologist, 38(4), 481-489.

Chapman, R. L. (Ed.). (1986). New dictionary of American slang. New York: Harper & Rowe.

Chin, P. K., & Kramer, M. K., (1995). Theory and nursing: A systematic approach, (4th ed.). St. Louis: Mosby.

Cooking with friends of the Gulch. (1993). Kearney, NE: Cookbooks by Morris Press.

El Comancho (1929). The old timer's tale. Chicago: Cantebury Press.

Green, C. (1969). Montana memories, volume 1. Kalispell, MT: Charles Green.

Green, J. (1986). The slang thesaurus. London, England: Penguin Books.

Guernsey, C. A. (1936). Wyoming cowboy days. New York: Putnam.

Hunter, G. (1889). Reminiscences of an old timer: a recital of the actual events, incidents, trials, hardships . . . of a pioneer, hunter, miner and scout of the Pacific Northwest: together with his later experiences in official and business capacities, and a breif description of the resources . . . several Indian wars, anecdores, etc. (4th ed.). Battle Creek, MI: Review & Herald.

Johnson, P. (1996, February 5). Most Montanans see newcomers as threat to jobs. The Great Falls Tribune, pp. 1B-2B.

Labiondo-Wood, G., & Haber, J. (1994). Nursing research: Methods, critical appraisal and utilization, (3rd ed.). St, Louis: Mosby.

Lee, M. B. (1968). Back in Cripple Creek. New York: Doubleday.

Long, K. A., & Weinert, C., (1989). Rural nursing: developing the theory base. Scholarly Inquiry for Nursing Practice, 3(2), 113-127.

Losee, R. E. (1994). Doc: Then and now with a Montana physician. New York: Lyons & Burford.

Malone, M. P. (1983). Historians and the American West. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

McCumber, D. (1999). The cowboy way: Seasons of a Montana ranch. New York: Avon.

Onions, C. T. (Ed.) (1966). The Oxford dictionary of English etymology. London: Oxford University Press.

Partridge, E. (Ed.) (1970). A dictionary of slang and unconventional English, (7th ed.). New York: Macmillan.

Rogers, W. P. (1964). Oldtimers of Jackson Hole County of Wyoming; A story of mountain men for mountain men only. Dallas: Warlick Press, Inc.

Scharff, J. E. (1998). The distinctive nature and scope of rural nursing practice: Philosophical bases. In H. J. Lee (Ed.) Conceptual Basis for Rural Nursing (pp.19-38). New York: Springer.

Seagraves, A. (1994). Soiled doves: Prostitution in the early West. Hayden, ID: Wesanne.

Sedden, A. M. (1992). My dream practice had everything except patients. Medical Economics 69(19) 115-121.

Shirley, G. C. (1995). More than petticoats: remarkable Montana women. Helena, MT: Falcon Press.

Steinmetz, S., (Ed.) (1998). Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, (2nd ed.). New York: Random House.

Stewart, E. P. (1913). Letters of a woman homesteader. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary. (1989). New York: Barnes & Noble.

Weinert, C., & Long, K. A., (1987). Understanding the health care needs of rural families. Family Relations, 36(10), 450-455.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION