A Field Study of Appreciative Inquiry Method:
Understanding and Supporting our Diverse Community

Conducted on behalf of
Glendale Residents Organization

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Purpose

Glendale Resident Organization (GRO) is a small resident based nonprofit, serving the Glendale community in Minneapolis, Minnesota. GRO assists the community in accessing resources and gaining self-sufficiency, and serves as a liaison between residents and the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority.

The purpose of this study is to find out how Glendale Resident Organization (GRO) can better understand the Glendale community, how GRO can work with other community providers and networks to better promote and utilize the strengths of the Glendale residents, supports their goals, and respond to the needs and issues that most concern them.

The final research report will, therefore, include Glendale demographics, background information on major ethnic communities, residents’ relationships with the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, research summary and findings as well as recommendations for future studies.

The report is believed to be used in shaping GRO’s current services and increasing assess to these services, understanding how to recruit volunteers to assist with youth and other resident council efforts and to provide the appropriate leadership development and skill building opportunities for community members.

Executive Report

This study was conducted between June and August 2001. The research process included statistical break down of resident demographics, literature review on cultural backgrounds of the major minority groups, interviews with minority leaders and focus group interviews with the residents, and recommendations for future research.
**The Glendale Resident Organization**

The Glendale Resident Organization (GRO) was formed in 1956 by the Hennepin County Community Health and Welfare Council at the request of the residents of Glendale. The funds were provided by the United Fund, the Margaret Barry Fund and the East-side Neighborhood Fund (Minneapolis Public Housing Authority Records). Glendale is located in Southeast Minneapolis between the University of Minnesota and Tower Hill. There are 183 family homes in Glendale providing housing for approximately 780 residents. This includes 400 youth ages 17 and under. Glendale is a community made up of smaller communities. The majority of the residents are Somalian and African American. There are also families who are Southeast Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and Caucasian.

All Glendale residents 18 years and older are considered natural members of Glendale Resident Organization and are eligible to vote at monthly resident council meetings. The Glendale Resident Organization is administered by a board whose members are consisted of Glendale residents. The board members are elected annually for a specific terms that varies upon the nature of the appointment. All board officers of GRO are residents and are elected by the membership.

Services in Glendale Resident Organization include a food-shelf, clothing room, and a self-service Laundromat. GRO has initiated the Youth Council, which provides opportunities for youth between 8 and 14 years old to become more involved in community activities and events. One of GRO’s priorities is to work with local service providers in order to provide leadership, job, and recreational opportunities for the diverse Glendale population.
Research Process

Research Method

This research project is conducted through appreciative inquiry method, which is composed of four “D” cycles of Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny. The purposefully positive nature of appreciative inquiry method was important in deciding the research technique. While ensuring a high level of participation, appreciative inquiry also transforms inner dialogue between the participants. Another reason for choosing appreciative inquiry method for the project is that it stimulates vision and creativity; thus allowing people to learn by doing.

According to Cooperrider and Srivasta, appreciative inquiry is a theory of organizing and method for changing social systems (1987). Appreciative inquiry, to an extent, is a product of the failure of action research method in generating useful theory. Gergen, on the other hand, argues that appreciative inquiry is a product of the sociorationalist paradigm reconstruction. However, appreciative inquiry is a natural result of the failure of action research to meet expectations at theory level and the need to reconstruct a sociorationalist paradigm. Appreciative inquiry, therefore refers to both a search for knowledge and a theory of intentional collective action which are designed to help evolve the normative vision and will of a group, organization, or a society as a whole (Cooperrider and Srivasta, 1987, p. 159). Appreciative inquiry distinguishes itself from critical modes of research by its deliberately affirmative assumptions about people, organizations, and relationships (Reason and Bradbury, 2001).
The 4-D Model

Appreciative inquiry has four phases, Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny. The following is Cooperrider and Whitney’s “4-D Cycle” of appreciative inquiry technique (1998). It should be noted here that appreciative inquiry model is not an individualistic model; on the contrary, a team is necessary to conduct a research using the model. For this study as an external researcher my team members were consisted of people from Glendale Resident Organization, Shirley Davis, the Assistant Director, and Patti Tototzintle, consultant.

In the first phase, the discovery phase, the question is what are the life-giving forces at Glendale Resident Organization. This is especially important in valuing the best of those forces. This phase is the interview stage to gather information on Glendale’s strengths and assets. As an external researcher, the first step is to interview the group members, who have substantial knowledge on the organization and the community.
The interviews indicated that one of the life-giving forces at Glendale is its diverse population and harmonious environment in that residents from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds live in peace together. The Glendale Resident Organization is another force that provides a number opportunities and services to the community while instituting democratic functions and humane values within the community.

The second phase is the “dream” in that the question to be answered is what might be. It is the envisioning stage. The team members engage in brainstorming on what are the world calling Glendale to be? The important aspect of this stage is that while sharing common images of an ideal future, provocative propositions are welcome to stretch the imagination. As a result of the brainstorming, the team concludes that Glendale is a diverse neighborhood, and such a powerful aspect of cannot be left without sufficiently addressing it. In order to adequately utilize the human capital and resources of Glendale the Glendale Resident Organization need to understand the current demographics of the residents and further inquire about the cultural backgrounds of the large minority groups. The organization is further interested in inquiring among the residents of their expectations and suggestions. The interviews with the team members allow me to determine the focus points of the research that are understanding the cultural backgrounds of the residents and developing better ways to serve the resident that would lead to a more culturally diverse and conscious community.

The third phase was “design” stage. This is where co-constructing takes place. The team decides on what to choose while aligning values, structures, and mission with the ideal that the team agreed upon. However, in this stage it is important to focus on developing achievable plans and steps to make the vision a reality.
To achieve this the following plan is implemented. First, the demographic data of the community is to be obtained from the Minneapolis Housing Authority. This data should be statistically processed and the results will determine the ethnic groups to focus on. In the second stage of the plan, a literature review is to be conducted as to obtain authentic information in regard to the cultures of these groups. This information will especially helpful to the Board of Glendale Resident Organization. In the third stage of the plan, interviews with those ethnic community leaders and focus groups with those ethnic groups are conducted. The community leaders provide an in-depth understanding of the ethnic groups, as they have long been involved with them. The focus groups will enable the researcher to engage in a dialogue with the residents so as to allow fist-hand information access and exchange. The fourth stage of the plan includes composing a report to present to the related groups and institutions. The report will help these groups and institutions to better understand the strengths and needs of the population that are involving with and the constitute a reliable resource for future studies.

The fourth and the last stage is the “destiny” in which we discuss what will be and how to liberate, learn, actualize, and improvise what we have planned. This is the sustaining stage, so co-creating a sustainable preferred future is the focal point of this stage. Since Glendale Resident Organization is an entity our goal ultimately is innovating lasting cultural change within the Glendale’s administrative body. This is also important as the community is becoming increasingly diverse and complicated. During this stage all research efforts are ensured to be aligned with the goal of leading a lasting cultural change in Glendale.
Among the dialogues engaged in this appreciative inquiry process, the focus was on the Glendale’s founding sources, innovations, shared values, peak experiences, turning points as a non-profit organization, its proud achievements, best practices and services, how Glendale leverages the strengths, empowers traditions as an organization, how it utilizes intergenerational wisdom, tests its organizational integrity, learns from difficult times, its organizational capacity, Glendale’s leadership at all levels, and organizational legacy. As a problem solving approach appreciative inquiry may be very proactive and effective. But as an organization that seeks profound cultural change, appreciative inquiry enables Glendale create an environment that fosters personal and organizational transformation with long lasting systemic results.

**Demographics**

Based on the data provided by the Minneapolis Public Housing, the residents of Glendale Neighborhood as of August 2001 present the following statistical demographics:

a) **Ethnicity**

![Ethnicity Chart]

- Somali: 37%
- African American: 21%
- South Asian: 10%
- Native American: 4%
- Caucasian: 28%
As the date indicates Glendale community is a very diverse neighborhood. The highest percentage of the residents is Somalis. This is also significant for the Glendale Resident Organization because of the fact that changing demographics indicate a new flock of immigrants from Somalia. These immigrants and their cultural and backgrounds are unknown to Minnesotans. Therefore, Glendale Resident Organization is very interested in getting to know more about their new residents to further help them with their adaptation and culturalization processes. As part of the appreciative inquiry process, the team members decide to focus on this minority group. This decision is not only made based on the demographics but also the other minority groups such as African Americans, South Asians, Native Americans have long been studied and their cultures are known and they have support and network systems at grassroots level.

b) Age

![Age Distribution Chart]

Based on the age demographics it can be concluded that Glendale has a young and dynamic population. The fact that 17 percent of the population is under the age of 18 indicates a large children and youth population in Glendale. This statistical information is
important for Glendale Resident Organization at administrative level, because this data needs to be taken into account in the planning and implementation of some of the services provided by the Glendale Resident Organization. The chart also indicates that Glendale has a large number of adult population, who probably are members of the working class. The data also indicates that Glendale does not have an aging population.

c) **Gender**

![Gender Chart]

The gender statistics present a surprising result. The large discrepancy between the male and female population should also be taken into account for planning and programming. This also refers to a strong need to address the needs and problems of women both in the family and the workplace. There are also cultural issues that need to be taken into account when there is a large women population. In some cultural, such as the Somalian cultures, the women have considerably less access to opportunities and relatively less freedom than their Western counterparts.
d) Disability Status

The disabilities are another issue that Glendale needs to look into. It is important to ensure that the services and programs are also targeted to accommodate the needs of the people with disabilities. 24 percent of the population is both non-elder and disabled. The data is statistically significant and should not be ignored. This will also ensure compliance with the Federal and state laws for disability issues.

Cultural Background

To provide extensive information about the cultural backgrounds of every single minority in Glendale is beyond the scope of this study. As a result of the appreciative inquiry method, the research study will provide information on the Somali culture. This decision is also a result of the Board of Glendale Resident Organization’s interest in attempting to better understand these new tenants from Somalia. The demographic information is obtained from Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA’s) “The World Factbook 2001 as it includes the most current data is available on Somalia.
The Somalian Culture

Somalia, also called the Somali Democratic Republic, is located on the Horn of Africa, the easternmost part of the African continent. The total area is 637,657 sq km, and the capital is Mogadishu. The estimated population is 7,488,773. A Siad Barre regime was ousted in January 1991; turmoil, factional fighting, and anarchy followed for nine years. In May of 1991, northern clans declared an independent Republic of Somaliland, which now includes the administrative regions of Awdal, Woqooyi Galbeed, Togdheer, Sanaag, and Sool. Although not recognized by any government, this entity has maintained a stable existence, aided by the overwhelming dominance of the ruling clan and economic infrastructure left behind by British, Russian, and American military assistance programs. The regions of Bari and Nugaal comprise a neighboring self-declared Republic of Puntland, which has also made strides towards reconstructing legitimate, representative government. Beginning in 1993, a two-year UN humanitarian effort (primarily in the south) was able to alleviate famine conditions, but when the UN withdrew in 1995, having suffered significant casualties, order still had not been restored. A Transitional National Government (TNG) was created in October 2000 in Arta, Djibouti, which was attended by a broad representation of Somali clans. The TNG has a three-year mandate to create a permanent national Somali government. The TNG does not recognize Somaliland or Puntland as independent republics but so far has been unable to reunite them with the unstable regions in the south; numerous warlords and factions are still fighting for control of Mogadishu and the other southern regions.

One of the world’s poorest and least developed countries, Somalia has few resources. Moreover, much of the economy has been devastated by the civil war.
Agriculture is the most important sector, with livestock accounting for about 40% of GDP and about 65% of export earnings. Nomads and semi-nomads, who are dependent upon livestock for their livelihood, make up a large portion of the population. Livestock and bananas are the principal exports; sugar, sorghum, corn, fish, and qat are products for the domestic market. The small industrial sector, based on the processing of agricultural products, accounts for 10% of GDP; most facilities have been shut down because of the civil strife. Moreover, ongoing civil disturbances in Mogadishu and outlying areas have interfered with any substantial economic advance and with international aid arrangements. Due to the civil strife, economic data is susceptible to an exceptionally wide margin of error.
The Somalis, a Cushitic people, share the same language, religion and culture but are divided into groups by a deeply ingrained clan structure, such as the Dir, Iqsaq and Digil. The indigenous population is nomadic or traditional pastoralists. The rest are either crop farmers, fishermen, or urban dwellers. About 70% of all Somalis are nomads who travel with their herds through Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia. Of the 7.4 million Somalis living in Somalia, 80% belongs to the Somali or Samaale group in the north; the remaining 20% belongs to the Sab, or southern Somali. All believe they are descended from the same male ancestor and his two sons, Somali and Sab. Such a closeness has brought a long history of both strong alliances and bloody feuds. Communities are united into a larger social and political unit called a rer, each with its own elected leader. Marriages to more than one wife and a dowry system are mainly secular contracts but Somalis tend to follow Islamic cultural patterns. The Somali people speak an Afroasiatic language as well as Arabic. The official language of Somalia is Somali, which, despite attempts to introduce Arabic script, uses the Roman alphabet. Arabic and English are also used widely. The official religion is Islam. About 99% of Somalis are Sunni Muslims. Islam has the greatest influence on the Somali culture and the daily lives of the Somalis. Therefore, a brief introduction to Islam is included in this study so as to provide the Glendale Board members with an understanding of Islam, its history, culture, and contribution to civilization. Such an understanding is necessary as it may affect the perception of and participation to planning and programming efforts as well as the utilization of the programs and services by the Somali population in Glendale.
Islam

The researcher of this study notes that the following information on Islam as taken from the essay of Doctor Mohammad I. Hussain “An Introduction to Islam”.

Islam is the proper name of a religion; it is not pronounced, Izlam, with a "z" sound. The first syllable is pronounced like the end of the word, "bliss." The Arabic word "Islam" means submission in peace, and in practice it is understood to mean submission in peace to the will of God Almighty. It is also understood to mean total peace that comes from surrender to the will of God Almighty (Allah).

The people who profess the faith of Islam are called "Muslims," not "Islamics." The word "Muslim" is not synonymous with the word "Arab." Islam originated in Arabia and many of the Arabic-speaking people (Arabs) are Muslims, however most of the Muslims in the world are not Arabs. Islam is not a racial or ethnic term. There are Asian, European, African, American and Middle Eastern Muslims, just like there are American, Italian, Polish or African Catholics or just like there are Russian, German, Polish or American Jews. Similarly, there are Muslims of all colors and races.

Islam is truly a universal religion. There may be 6 to 8 million Muslims in North America, over 30 million Muslims in Western Europe and 50 to 60 million live in different parts of the Republics that were once a part of Soviet Union (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Albania and others). Significant Muslim minorities live in the Far East (such as China, The Philippines, Thai Land, Viet Nam, Burma, Sri Lanka) and in Eastern Europe (Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina). Islam prevails in countries like Egypt, Syria, Jordan
Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Turkey, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sudan, Lebanon, etc.

Mohammad (Peace be upon him) was the man through whom Allah (God Almighty) transmitted the teachings of Islam to the mankind. He was born in Mecca, a city on the Arabian Peninsula, in 571 AD. He was orphaned before his birth and his mother died when he was six. He was raised by his grandfather till he was nine when his grandfather passed away and his uncle raised him. He did not have the benefit of education and was an unlettered man. As he grew up he worked as a shepherd and as a trader in the caravans. He spent the rest of his life in an unending effort to deliver the message of God. He remained a messenger the rest of his life, and he had no misunderstandings about his role and mission. He said, "God has not sent me to work wonders, He has sent me to deliver His Message," and, "I never said that Allah’s treasures are in my hand, that I knew the hidden things, that I was an angel, I am only a messenger of God’s words." Like all other prophets who were sent by God before him, he suffered for delivering the God’s message. He was ridiculed and persecuted, and the opposition was so intense that Mohammad and his followers left the city of Mecca and migrated to the city of Medina, which is 270 miles North. This migration is an epochal event in the history of Islam. It took place in 622 AD, and it marks the first year of the Islamic calendar.

All Muslims profess acceptance of God Almighty (Allah) as the One and Only God and Mohammad as the last and final messenger of God. Muslims believe that angels are spiritual beings who carry out the will of God, that Qur’an is Allah’s eternal word, that prophets are messenger of God and that there will be a day of judgment and
accountability with resurrection, at which time, those subservient to the will of God will be rewarded and those who failed to observe their obligations will be punished. Muslims also have an understanding of destiny as an essential belief. The basic principle of worship in Islam states that every action of an individual that is carried out to fulfill God’s will and is to seek God’s pleasure is an act of worship and will be rewarded. According to this principle, for a Muslim to go to work to earn a living, for a father or mother to provide for their children, for a spouse to love and care for the spouse, for parents to raise their children and even to play with their children, and so on, is an act of worship that will be rewarded by God.

In addition, there are five obligatory acts of worship, which are also called the five pillars of Islam. The purpose of worship is to remember God, to strengthen the individual’s faith and submission to God and to solidify the individual’s character. This process is to make the individual a better and more useful member of the society. These acts of worship are obligatory to all Muslims at all times and places, except when someone is unable to perform them because of age, sickness, lack of financial resources or the fear of persecution.

1) Declaration of Faith: Declaration of faith is the first act of worship when it is done with full sense of sincerity and commitment. The declaration that "There is no other God but One God (Allah) and Mohammad is His Messenger and servant" is the simple statement that makes a person become a Muslim and is required to be said once in lifetime with full conviction and understanding. In practice the Muslims may be saying it several times a day.
2) The Prayer—Salat: The prescribed prayer is called salat in Arabic. It is the most visible act of worship and it constitutes the second pillar of the practice of Islam. Prayer is to be offered five times a day (at the break of dawn, at noon, mid-afternoon, at sunset and at dusk after dark.) All able bodied Muslims are to pray five times every day, however there are exceptions. A person who cannot physically perform the act of prayer because of sickness is exempted without any feeling of guilt. There are magnificent mosques all over the world, yet a Muslim is not required to pray in the mosque. It can be done anywhere, and in practice the whole world is a mosque for a Muslim. However, it is more meritorious to pray in the mosque with fellow Muslims. Before the prayer, the person has to wash their hands, face, forearms and feet, and a person should be as clean and as pure as possible. The prayer is offered directly to God Almighty without any intermediary, and Muslims all over the world face towards The Kaba, which is in the city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The grand mosque, Kaba was originally built by Prophet Abraham. This practice symbolizes the unity of Muslims and is a respectful remembrance of Abraham. In addition to the five daily prayers, Friday noon prayer is an obligatory congregational prayer. Muslims are required to pray in the mosque with the congregation on Fridays, but they are permitted to get back to their normal business after the prayer. In practice, across the Muslim world Friday is observed as a weekly holiday. In the mosque, people stand next to each other in straight rows to offer congregational prayers. There is no seating arrangement and people sit as they please, generally the first comers get in the front rows and the latecomers get to sit in the back. There is no preferential
seating in the mosque, all being equal in the sight of God, and there is no membership to belong to a certain mosque. All Muslims are welcome to all mosques.

3) Fasting: Fasting is the third act of worship in Islam. Muslims fast in the month of Ramadan every year from the break of dawn till sunset. In addition to physical fasting, Ramadan is the month of spiritual activity at a heightened level. The month of Ramadan is the ninth month in the Islamic calendar. Muslims fast in Ramadan every year, and it is also called the month of fasting. Only those adults are required to fast that are physically able to fast. Those who are too weak or ill are not required to fast. Fasting is also not ordered for young children. People who are traveling are not to fast. They can fast at a later date to make up for the missed days of fasting. The fast starts at the break of dawn, which is usually about 90 minutes before sunrise. The fast ends at the time of sunset. At the time of fasting the person does not eat or drink or smoke or have sex with the spouse. A fasting Muslim is expected not to speak ill of others, not to cheat or lie or commit other sins. Fasting teaches self-control as a person learns to control desires. This can help the person fight and stay away from bad habits like drugs, alcohol or smoking. The person’s character also improves as the person learns in the month of Ramadan not to lie or cheat or steal. During Ramadan the family is together at the time of activities. They eat together before the break of dawn, fast together until the sun set and break their fast together at sunset. Praying is also done together as a family. The fasting in Ramadan makes the person experience hunger and the person then feels more compassion for the poor and the hungry. Eid ul
Fitr (the feast of Ramadan) is celebrated at the end of the month of Ramadan. This is a day of enjoyment and it marks the beginning of normal activities after a month of fasting.

4) Charity—Zakat: The fourth pillar of Islam is charity or the poor dues. In simple terms, the rich and the well-to-do are obligated to pay in charity to help the needy. This obligatory tax is called zakat, and it is paid out of all assets that the individual possesses, at the end of every year, above and beyond the individual’s personal and family needs. It is calculated at a fixed rate of two and one half percent per year.

5) Haj—Pilgrimage to Mecca: The Haj or the pilgrimage to Mecca is an essential duty of all Muslims. This duty has to be performed once in a lifetime. Only those people are required to go for Haj who are in good health (healthy), who have the money (wealthy) and the means to travel to Saudi Arabia (capable). Haj is performed by visiting Mecca in Arabia at the annual time of Haj. Every year more than one and one half million Muslims from all parts of the world perform Haj at Kaba. This large gathering of Muslims of all races and cultures promotes the international brotherhood and reflects that all Muslims are alike and equal in the sight of God. The Haj is performed in the month of Zulhijjah, and it comes two months and ten days after Eid ul Fitr. When Haj is being performed at Mecca, the Muslims in the rest of the world celebrate the festival of Eid ul Adha. The day starts with a congregational prayer (Salat e Eid) at a central gathering place in every town or city. Everyone dresses in new and clean clothes and attends the Eid prayer. This is followed by visiting friends and family, exchanging gifts, and
eating and dining together. This holiday is celebrated much like the day of Eid ul Fitr, however Muslims, who can afford to buy a sheep or a goat, offer the sacrifice. The meat of the sacrificed animal is given to the needy and poor people, some of it is eaten by the family and some is given to the friends. This tradition of the sacrifice is to commemorate the memory of Prophet Abraham, who was asked by God to be ready to sacrifice his son, but God replaced the son by a ram. This act of supreme obedience and the sacrifice reminds Muslims of their responsibility of submission to the will of God.

Islam is a complete way of life. This is denoted by the Arabic word Din (Deen). It embraces the spiritual, social, moral, economic and cultural life of its followers, as well as their belief in God. It is concerned with the total person, and all acts receive their justification and direction from the teaching that is embodied in Qur’an. The laws that govern the daily practical affairs are given in The Qur’an, because Islam is vitally concerned with how people interact with each other as a community and in the spiritual and material welfare of the individual. The equality of the individuals, race relations, the treatment of men and women, marriage and divorce, family life, justice, conduct of war and health are some of the subjects that have been dealt explicitly in Islam.

Contrary to what has been portrayed by some Western writers in the past, Islam is neither anti-Jewish, nor anti-Christian. In fact Islam teaches religious tolerance, and it explicitly directs its followers to respect all other religions and faiths. Islam recognizes the truth that is contained in the doctrines of Judaism and Christianity, and confirms Abraham, Moses, Jesus and others as true prophets who preceded Mohammad.
Islam’s achievements are monumental. It gave equal rights to all human beings, regardless of race, color, sex, nationality, status or lineage. Throughout its 1400-year history, Islam changed barbaric people to civilized people. (The most well known example of this transformation is the conversion of the hordes of Mongols to civilized Muslims).

Islam taught respect for other individuals and their rights. It gave rights to women, who had almost no rights in the history of mankind before that time. Islam set family laws and made rules for inheritance. It discouraged and eliminated slavery. It made the state responsible for the basic needs of all of its citizens, regardless of their race or religion, and the state is responsible to protect the legitimate rights of the citizens.

**Interviews with the Community Leaders**

In order better explore the problems Glendale resident face as ethnic communities interviews with two community leaders were conducted. Ms. MayKao Y. Hang from South Asian Community and Ahmad Syed Ahmed, from Minneapolis High-rise Council were interviewed. The answer given to each question differed because of the differences in two communities.

The first question they are asked was the current issues and problems that their communities were facing. For the Hmong community, they are redefining power relationships between men and women, old and young, and balancing what sexuality, dating, and romance means. There is limited support for “being young” or being in a teenage stage that leads to some problems in the community. Marriage is another big issue. Examples include: Hmong men who marry teenagers, imported wives from Laos, polygamy or the practice of having more
than one wife. Education is key and although there are many Hmong now attending college or post high school institutions, there needs to be more. For the Somalian community the problems centered on the refugee issues and their financial, psychological, physical, and social implications. The cultural, economic, and social challenges that the community has to endure. The problem of literacy is another issue. No needs to be done to education both adults and children to avoid future conflicts within the community.

The second question that was asked to them was whether these problems or issues the same for the community members living in public housing, or were there any other concerns. For the Hmong community, issues are pretty similar in public housing with the added notation that poverty is wider spread. Families that live in public housing may be more vulnerable to all these dynamics because of dependency on relatives to define their family relationships and social circles. For the Somalian community the issues are the same. In addition, people face problems with the public housing system. They need orientation to the Western life style. Some type of training may be provided on housing education as well.

The third question was how these community leaders would describe the working relationship between their organization and public housing and resident organizations. Ms. MayKao Y. Hang is the Resident Services Director for St. Paul Public Housing. She indicates that the St. Paul Public Housing has a different structure than Minneapolis Public Housing. They have about 30 partnerships with social service providers who deliver services to our residents. They have wonderful working relationships with both the leadership of the hi-rises and family sites. Each hi-rise and family site has its own
resident council. Officers from these then make up the City-Wide Council (family sites) and the Presidents Council (hi-rises). In addition, they have an advisory committee called the Resident’s Advisory Board that works with them on their Agency Plan and other resident driven programs including an orientation program and a recycling program. Most recently, they have residents at McDonough Homes participating with them on their modernization project there. Mr. Ahmad Syed Ahmed describes his organization’s, Minneapolis High-rise Council, relationship with public housing as a great collaboration to better serve the community. There are regulations and rules that his organization has to abide with in order to function.

The fourth question was how could resident or neighborhood organizations reach out and serve your community members. For the Hmong community, there is always a larger need to know more about the Hmong community, its culture and practices. On a realistic level, getting involved in tutoring or mentorship program has been most successful as well as creating a space for children and youth to explore different elements of “being American” as well as learning what it means to “be Hmong.” For the Somalian community resident involvement is of great importance. The background, skills, and abilities of the officers are also important.

The fifth question was whether they thought resident organizations would be of any assistance to their community in solving these problems. For the Hmong community a strong resident organization provides opportunities for Hmong residents to be challenged as leaders and could be very helpful in redefining power relationships. For example, one of the Commissioners here is a Hmong woman. She really demonstrates that women can be leaders in the Hmong community while serving the agency. For the
Somalian community, resident organizations may be of great assistance to the community at large. They can contribute to deal with issues such as housing, education and financial problems that the community members are facing.

The sixth question was how they would you characterized the strengths and assets of their communities. Ms. MayKao Y. Hang states that assets include strong family relationships, good solid internal structure of volunteerism and helping, and a culture the values the basic human rights and principles. Mr. Ahmad Syed Ahmed, on the other hand, suggests that the potential human capital and social capital of his community may be better utilized if they are provided with necessary training. Such an endeavor would lead to a greater community involvement. In addition, the cultural identity of the Somalian community is another strength.

The last question they were asked was how they would visualize the future of your community. Ms. MayKao Y. Hang would like to live in a community that has fewer unequal power relationships, for example between young and old and men and women. She further prefers to see her community acknowledge their own limitations on a larger leadership level and start addressing institutional barriers that keep the community low functioning only at the grass roots level. She is one of the few people she knows who is in public service and has made headway in addressing the concerns of the Hmong people at a mainstream organization. For Mr. Ahmad Syed Ahmed, the way Somalians challenge life and handle with the problems will also determine the future of the community. He believes that his community will keep close ties within their own community and also with the greater community here in the Twin Cities.
Interviews with the Glendale Residents

To better understand the needs of the community in Glendale a focus group that is made up of all sub-communities was attempted to be conducted. However, due to the difficulties of reaching every member of the community, a focus group that consists of eight women from Glendale was invited to participate in this process. In order to overcome language barriers a translator from the community was also at present. Throughout the interview, it is observed at the background of the researcher made a great impact in engaging the participants in the process. Therefore, for future studies, it is strongly suggested for the researchers to become familiar with the cultures of the population that they are studying.

The first question was how long have they been living in the Glendale Neighborhood. The average was 6 months, which confirms the high turnover rate in the public housing in that neighborhood. The second question was what they liked about living in this family housing. They liked the playground for kids, security, and the classes on sewing, computer and home making. They consider the organization as a place where they can get together as a community. They also think that it is a quite and peaceful neighborhood. It is a diverse community where they can meet with their neighbors from different cultures and backgrounds. The third question was what were the problems they have come across in Glendale Neighborhood. The greatest problem was the lack of a convenience store. Secondly the machines in the laundry do not function properly and sometimes it is hard to find coins. So, a change machine is desired needed. Regular maintenance of the laundry is also necessary. Recycling containers are also needed. The fourth question was whether they believed they had a good relationship with your
neighbors in the community. They all believe that they do have good relationships with their neighbors. Among the services or programs of Glendale Resident Organization (GRO) they are using or participating are food shelf, laundry, tutoring, community events. However, they add, the Glendale Resident Organization should do more publicity to advertise the events and programs. When they were asked how they thought they could become a community that welcome diversity and lived well together, they suggested to achieve such an environment, they need to become more diverse and foster a multicultural environment. More community involvement is needed to achieve interaction among residents. The officers in Glendale Resident Organization and the residents at large need to be oriented about different religions so as to provide religious tolerance and awareness. More programs may be offered to help residents in their efforts to adopt the society in which they live.

**Recommendations for Future Studies**

This study was intended to provide a cultural and social background to the Glendale Resident Organization to help them better understand the Glendale community and how they could work with other community providers and net workers to better promote and utilize the strengths of their residents, support their life struggles, and respond to the needs and issues that most concern them.

When conducting such studies researchers must be aware of the difficulties and barriers and plan their study so as to overcome these problems. Appreciative Inquiry method, therefore, has been very helpful to this study. In addition, some other issues addressed by the researcher throughout the study may be taken into consideration for future studies of this type.
References


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