INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY:

HOW IT WORKS AND THE POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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FOREWORD

This book comes out at a time when Thailand needs a new paradigm to confront the unprecedented problems of a greying population and the onset of family disintegration. These two problems began when Thailand's Total Fertility Rates (defined as the average number of number of children that would be born per woman if all women lived to the end of their child bearing years) started to fall from the historically high level of more than 6.5 during the end of the 1960s to a level of just 1.6 today. The pace and magnitude of the decline was hailed by many world-renowned demographers as the world's fastest demographic transition, with the majority happening in slightly over a decade. For the population policy makers who were in favor of low fertility and lower population growth rates, this was an achievement to reckon with and to celebrate. However, this will attest the adage that a solution to one problem often leads to another problem. This is where this book picks up.

The authors begin by pointing out the impact of rapid socio-economic transformation, which followed the demographic transition, of the age structure of the population and of the Thai family system. The book also calls our attention to the fact that the population aged 60 and over is larger than ever before. What is really disturbing is that they are quickly losing their status of being the venerable citizens and are now being viewed as the dependents of social welfare schemes. As shown in this book, this is because the policies for the aged have led the elderly to dwell in a social hole and bequeathed to them a new label of a socially dependent group. Getting out of this social chasm through engaging people from different generations, particularly those within the families, in everyday activities is the message that is delivered in this book.

Promoting intergenerational solidarity is proposed as an antidote for the problems of the unavoidably aging population and the emerging trend of family disintegration. By advocating intergenerational solidarity, this book offers a new paradigm with which to tackle these two problems at the local level. The research findings reported in the book are especially welcome today. This is because we all know that the political tug-of-war at the national level will most likely put the abstract and hard to visualize problems of this nature on the back burner. Research at our university has shown that the central government is somewhat reluctant to devote their power and authority to these two problems. It is with relief that we find community key leaders and local governments that are trying to devise ways to cope with these problems. With clear policy statements formulated by local governments, we can all hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The complex, intentional connection of people of three or more generations, which is the cornerstone of inter-generational solidarity, has recently gained more attention from academicians, but still receives little or no attention from national development policy makers. This is in part because there have been very few, if any, research works to reveal the long-established linkage between inter-generational solidarity and human happiness. People have always taken the interaction among people of different generations, particularly within the context of family, for granted. But as the nuclear family has become the predominant form of family structure, replacing the once strongly knitted extended structure, the multi-generational interactions have become less visible, making it more difficult to prove or disprove the hypothetical impact of strong inter-generational solidarity on the happiness of the elderly.

This research report is one of a few which recognizes the importance of inter-generational solidarity and the need to study the factors interacting with this phenomenon. This study had the objective to assess the extent to which inter-generational solidarity is associated with elderly sense of well-being (i.e., happiness) and collected data from a sample of elderly residing in the villages of Tambon Samprao, Muang District, Udorn Thani Province in Thailand's lower-income northeast region. The setting of Samprao is provincial urban as it transitions from the predominately agricultural society to a more municipal environment. There are approximately, 2,000 elderly residing in the 15 villages of Samprao. The data collection in this research study focused on households with elderly persons in residence either living with children, grandchildren, or alone. For each of the 15 villages, the researchers sampled one household for each of the four categories and one elderly resident, thus yielding a total sample of 60 households and 60 elderly persons.

This study documented the disintegration of the provincial urban extended family as measured by the amount of positive inter-generational interaction and relationships. Approximately 28% of the elderly reported that there is friction and conflict with their children and grandchildren, resulting in a lack of mutual caring and respect across generations. This is contrary to traditional Thai households which held to the custom of unreserved respect and caring for the elderly members of the family. Further, nearly all of the households with inter-generational conflict reported that there was little or no positive communication between the youngest members of the household with their parents or grandparents. By contrast, the households with good inter-generational relationships reported conducting daily joint activities such as preparing and eating meals together, which was highlighted as a major source of elderly sense of well-being. It is generally accepted and an admirable feature of Thai society that a good child or grandchild must look after their parents and/or grandparents when they are older and frail. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that there will be some wealth transfer from younger to the oldest members of a family. However, this research found that 70% of the elderly were the ones to provide financial or material support to the children and grandchildren and not the other way around.

The results from the bivariate, regression analysis are that living in the same household with children and grandchildren, sharing meals, and living with a spouse are all independently associated with elderly happiness (at a statistically significant level). It should be noted that some of these factors are proxy indicators for a deeper level of interaction. For example,

dining together often entails joint preparation of food and the dining area. Also, eating together usually involves conversing with all members at the meal. The number, frequency and constructive nature of these intergenerational interactions should, in theory, constitute greater inter-generational solidarity and greater happiness for all members of the family, not just the elderly. When applying principle component analysis to the data, this research also found that three factors had different levels of influence in explaining the variance of inter-generational solidarity: Dining with the extended family members was most powerful (explaining 55.6% of inter-generational solidarity variation), followed by living in the same household (30.1%) and living with one's spouse (14.3%).

The researchers recognize that these findings potentially extend well beyond the extended family to the community and society at large. Thus, the second phase of the research explored the readiness of the national government and local infrastructure to accommodate a greying of the population. One indication that the country is moving in the right direction is the establishment of the Family Love Bonding Project Coordination Division in the MSDHS to promote the network of "Three Generation Weaving Family Love" Centers throughout the nation. This initiative most closely matches the centrality of inter-generational solidarity as the best opportunity to accommodate Thailand's elderly in constructive and cost-effective ways. Establishing the royally inspired Three Generation Weaving Family Love Centers around the country also helps the policy makers and planners to move away from a welfare approach to the elderly and, also, to more actively engage the elderly in community activities. These Centers represent a visionary approach to restoring the extended family support structure with a view of the elderly as valuable members of every community and the cornerstone to quality inter-generational relationships.

This research looked at the financial, community and administrative feasibility of the Samprao TAO to spearhead a replication of the Three Generation Weaving Family Love Center approach in that Tambon. The results are the Samprao Tambon Administrative Organization seems ready, able and committed to pursue inter-generational solidarity, at least initially through a virtual center, followed by a stand-alone facility to promote the activities of the Center Project model in ways that are consistent with the goal of inter-generational solidarity. If the experience with Tambon Samprao is any indication, then there is genuine potential for replication the Center Project model with a goal of inter-generational solidarity throughout the country.

This research has confirmed that inter-generational solidarity is founded on a process of regular activities of extended family members, conducted together naturally in the course of daily life. This interaction should be a cause and consequence of positive inter-generational relationships and mutual love and understanding. Thus, national leaders should give greater priority to inter-generational solidarity by formulating new supportive policies, and by moving away from the welfare (handout) model toward greater engagement of the elderly in family and community life. Policy makers need to understand that elderly happiness is not driven by money or income as much as it is by feeling useful and respected members of society. Based on the findings of this research, national policy and programs which promote elderly well-being through inter-generational solidarity are a more appropriate and sustainable strategy.

To facilitate the implementation of such a strategy, it will be important to strengthen the local administrative organizations to take the lead in promoting inter-generational solidarity. This study found that the Tambon administrative organization, such a Samprao, has the

commitment, resources and readiness to take on this role as catalyst. Only through a collaborative, grassroots effort, with involvement of members of all generations can there be a profound cultural shift to re-establish the extended family and broaden its reach to include those elderly who have no children and grandchildren to provide mutual care. These inter-generational solidarity communities will be the ultimate safety net for all members of society as Thailand continues through its irrevocable transition from a younger to an aging population.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents information on the social context of the rapidly evolving age structure of the Thai population and corresponding changes in the traditional family structure. These changes are having an impact well beyond the aging of the population and are eroding the level of intimacy between the generations which traditionally has been quite close in the Thai, extended-family setting. This transition is also having an indirect impact by increasing the burdens on the elderly in terms of unstable economic security and declining social relevance and veneration by the younger generations. This chapter also makes the case that the Thai government policy and programs to assist the elderly are based on a social welfare approach which is inappropriate for the needs and challenges of the elderly. The authors suggest that there needs to be a reconceptualization of how to address population aging by viewing the elderly as the nexus of inter-generational relationships in the extended family. The strength and closeness of these relationships are likely to be a more genuine and meaningful source of happiness of the elderly than welfare assistance. Finally, this chapter summarizes the questions, objectives and scope of the research, and the potential application of the findings for policy and guidelines in improving inter-generational relationships with the goal to raise the level of elderly well-being.

Context and Importance of the Problem

The rapid evolution of Thailand's socio-economic landscape is having an impact on the Thai family structure. Traditionally, Thai households had members of at least three generations living together, a typical extended family. Currently however, more and more households are comprised of the parents and children only, i.e., a nuclear family. This transition is changing the social fabric and the role of the elderly in society. The role of the elderly in the community is declining in importance as their social status declines in a modernizing society. Traditionally, the family was a unit which collaborated in agricultural production for subsistence and income generation. Now, however, more and more households are becoming units of consumption instead of production.

The elderly generally have less formal education than their children which has reduced their social status as repositories of traditional wisdom (or tacit knowledge). Increasingly, elderly are not able to keep pace with the rapid spread and modernization of information technology (IT), which youth view as a more important source of knowledge and entertainment. This phenomenon has widened the gap between the older and younger generations especially in the sphere of IT (Cowgill and Holmes, 1972) and this has further contributed to the decline of esteem for the elderly.

From the employment perspective, it can be seen that most of the adult children and grandchildren of the elderly – whether co-habiting or not – work outside the household as an economic necessity. Thus, often, elderly are left by themselves to tend an empty house and care for themselves. Many elderly still want to work and earn an income to support themselves, but the number of jobs for the elderly are becoming scarcer over time. A national study of the

elderly in Thailand found that only 38% were employed during any part of the week prior to the survey, and most of these were in the agricultural sector (Knodel, Prachuabmoh and Chayovan, 2013). Increasingly, many elderly are low-income. In one study of income and aging Chayovan (1999) found that the mean income of the elderly was under 30,000 baht per year; and one-third had less than 5,000 baht annual income. A study by Knodel, Prachuabmoh and Chayovan (2013) found that 80% of elderly received the government welfare stipend for persons over age 60, and 11% of them cited this as their main source of income. Approximately 1.5% of the respondents have no other source of cash income than the old age allowance. Overall, it is estimated that one-fourth of Thai elderly have less income to meet essential needs.

In the social realm, it can be seen that the elderly do not participate as much as before in community activities, despite their desire and need to do so. Furthermore, many of the elderly do not have opportunities for on-going education in order to keep up with the better-educated younger generations. This further marginalizes them and widens the generation gap among family members (Kiprawat, 2006).

What is more, nearly all Thai elderly are experiencing declining health status, especially those over age 65. Many have symptoms of forgetfulness, senile dementia, and depression. Studies have found that more elderly than before are suffering from chronic illness, disability, and dependence on others to perform daily functions. Approximately 3.8% of elderly have restricted mobility and, thus, many are house-bound. Of this group, nearly 29% receive assistance from the community, but nearly one in five (18.5%) lack a regular care provider (Jitapunkul and Suriyawongpaisarn, 1999).

The over-emphasis in Thailand of economic development at the expense of psycho-social development of the population is eroding quality of life of the population, and the elderly are especially vulnerable to these impacts. The primary strategy of the government to ameliorate this problem is to pay the elderly a monthly stipend. But the amount is so small to be nearly insignificant. Further, the government seems unable or uninterested in implementing programs to improve the quality of life of the elderly, and instead focuses more on populist programs to win elections.

As a rule, in high-fertility societies, most of the population is in the working ages (15-59 years) and the elderly are a minority. Before Thailand's demographic transition to a low-fertility society, the number of elderly without children or grandchildren was relatively small, and government assistance to those who were not self-sufficient consisted of subsidized housing at assisted-living facilities provided by the Department of Social Welfare. Later on, conceptual thinking and policy began to shift as it became clear that Thai society was aging fast and soon, the elderly, as a proportion of the population, would become a significant demographic force. Over the past few decades there has been increased interest in this transition and how it is affecting households and elderly in particular. The content of programs for the elderly started to focus more on individual development rather than addressing the elderly as a social problem. The government has formulated two development plans for the elderly, with the second covering the period from 2002-2021. This plan has five strategies: (1) Preparation of the population for an increase in quality elderly citizens; (2) Capacity building for the elderly; (3) Social protections for the elderly; (4) National management for development of the elderly and related personnel; and (5) Compilation of information and knowledge about the elderly and evaluation of implementation in accordance with the plan of the National Committee on Aging (2009).

Each of these five strategies contain various measures to serve as guidelines to achieving programmatic goals of improving the quality of life of the elderly. The national aging policy, as reflected in this plan document, includes 57 indicators of achievement. Studies are showing that the average age of the elderly group of the population is increasing, but also increases the number of years of elderly dependence on others. Interim evaluation of the plan has found a success rate of 58.3% of indicator targets, with no overall indication that the sense of well-being of the elderly has improved.

The national aging policy has produced some laws, but these laws are hard to implement since there is no penalty for non-compliance. In addition, the frequent change of government administration reduces the continuity of the policy process and the profile of the national agenda. Further, the issues of the elderly are not high priority to politicians since they are too remote from the day-to-day issues which the elderly face. In addition social programs for the elderly are not as lucrative or high-profile as the large infrastructure projects that are preferred by parliamentarians. The potential for meaningful action to increase the well-being of the elderly thus lies with the decentralized local administrative organizations (LAO). However, even these agencies are beholden to the national political and programmatic priorities. Also, the LAOs do not always receive financial support to implement the mandated national programs. Thus, a more effective approach is to work with the extended family members to care for the elderly members of the household.

A newer conceptual approach would not view the elderly as society's dependents, but would bolster the role of the elderly in the community and society at-large. To increase the quality of life of the elderly there must be a corresponding improvement in the inter-generational relationships in the family and the relationships of the elderly with their children and grandchildren in particular. This strategy is moving against the current social currents toward more independent living and self-reliance. This individualism is having adverse effects on the elderly through reduced care and support from younger relatives, and increased isolation and solitude.

In this newer approach, there would be promotion of the elderly as venerable citizens without discrimination by age, race, ethnicity, language, social class or religion. Being a grandparent is a mark of reproductive success for humans, which many cannot achieve due to premature death or first- or second-generation infertility. Currently, there are many studies being conducted of the elderly, including studies of improving the status and role of the elderly as grandparents (Mehta and Thang, 2012). In Thailand, the leading investigators of the role of the elderly as grandparents are Kamnuansilpa and Wongthanavasu (2005) who have studied the burdens and value-added of senior citizens. These researchers have compared the challenges of the elderly across four classifications: (1) Grandparents who raise their grandchildren out of necessity (e.g., child death, child marital dissolution, out-migration for employment, etc.). This pattern is most common in the Northeast and least in the Southern regions of Thailand. The burden of caring for one's grandchildren single-handedly adversely impacts on the health and economic status of the elderly. (2) Grandparents who provide daycare for grandchildren on behalf of their child(ren) who work outside the home during the daytime but return in the evening. In this type of family, there is more mutual support than the first type. (3) Grandparents who have greater freedom of choice in what role to play for a grandchild (e.g., care provider, teacher, nanny, playmate, etc.). (4) Grandparents who are not close to or are estranged from the children and grandchildren and/or do not know what their role is as a grandparent.

Research into the role of grandparents cited above looks at inter-generational relationships in the typical, three-generation extended family. The researchers found that, in three-generation households, there is greater inter-generational solidarity than nuclear families, as expressed by mutual love and caring. Indeed, the researchers observed that grandchildren actually showed more love and caring for their grandparents than for their parents. In addition, research has found that grandchildren help create a web of psycho-emotional connections between the three generations. Similarly, grandparents often say they love their grandchildren more than or at least equal to their own children (Hornboonherm, 2007). The inter-generational nexus provides a framework for analysis of the well-being of the elderly across the psycho-social and emotional dimensions (Kamnuansilpa and Thang, 2012) as well as the psycho-economic, physical and labor dimensions (Hornboonherm et al, 2009).

Some of the research has compared the psychological well-being of the elderly who receive support from a working-age person (regardless of whether blood related or not), those living with a child and those not living with a child. Those co-habiting with a child had greater psychological well-being than those that did not. Elderly who received financial or material support from a child actually had less happiness than those that did not. Also, more understandably, those elderly who still had to provide financial assistance to a child had less sense of well-being than elderly who did not have to support their child this way (Pothisiri and Sukontamarn, 2012). Although the researchers did not attempt to explain this latter finding, the authors of this volume postulate that the elderly parents were disappointed in their child's lack of self-reliance and lack of success in life.

Support of elderly relatives or household member is an important indicator of the quality of the inter-generational relationships and the potential for inter-generational solidarity which is at the heart of the research reported on in the chapters to follow.

Research Questions

Based on the findings of past research, the first key question for this study is whether elderly persons living in three-generation households have better relationships, more mutual support and greater inter-generational solidarity than families in which the members of different generations are not close. This first question leads to a follow-up query to determine which factors are responsible for inter-generational solidarity, and the nature of the association between inter-generational solidarity and elderly happiness. The answers to these questions will help inform policy for LAOs in their role as the most proximal agency to the peripheral population and can help them direct resources to the developing and strengthening of constructive inter-generational relationships.

Research Objectives

This research has two objectives as follows:
1. To test the hypothesis that inter-generational solidarity is a source of elderly happiness and well-being;
2. To determine the extent to which LAO can apply the findings of this research to policies to increase elderly well-being (if it is found that inter-generational solidarity is a source of elderly happiness) and what the nature of those policies are.

Scope of the Research

Happiness of the elderly, in general, is measured and looked at from multiple dimensions of well-being. Academically, Promphakping and Klungsaeng (2006) have defined four components of happiness: (1) Living environment; (2) Economic status; (3) Health; and (4) Socio-cultural aspects. For this study, the researchers did not construct new composite indicators of well-being but focused on the association between elderly happiness derived from mutual love and caring among extended family members. Further, this study does not distinguish between the different effect of love and support from a child or grandchild, since the effect, if any, is probably the result of complex interaction of the web of relationships in the household. Further, to try to distinguish between different levels of relationships might make the elderly respondent uncomfortable during the in-depth interview. Finally, the standard conceptual framework for the study of elderly well-being does not view one inter-generational relationship as distinct from another, but instead looks at the combined effect of three generations living together.

In addition to focusing narrowly on elderly happiness, the researchers further limited the scope of the study to residents of 15 villages of Tambon Samprao in Muang District of Udornthani Province. Thus, the findings in this study regarding elderly well-being pertain only to this location and do not necessarily apply to other parts of Thailand.

Definitions of Terms

There are three key terms used in this study: (1) Inter-generational relationships; (2) Happiness derived from inter-generational relationships; and (3) Policy. The following defines these terms as applied in this research.

"Inter-generational relationships" refers to relationships among the three generations of grandparents, parents and grandchildren.

"Happiness" as derived from inter-generational relationships refers to the elderly sense of well-being which includes, but is not limited to, feelings about one's physical and mental health in the context of favorable living environment and socio-economic status.

"Policy" denotes the intention or plan of the Samprao Tambon Administrative Organization (TAO) to promote inter-generational solidarity based on the concepts of Bengtson (1991) and Bengtson (2001) which hold that there are six dimensions to family stability and mutual support: (1) Structural solidarity; (2) Affectual solidarity; (3) Associational solidarity; (4) Functional solidarity; (5) Normative solidarity; and (6) Consensual solidarity.

Expected Benefit of the Research

The researcher anticipates that there will be extensive benefits of the findings, both academically and policy-related. Academically, this study should provide empirical data to affirm whether inter-generational solidarity is a source of elderly happiness, whether elderly will derive a sense of well-being from close and constructive relationships with their children and grandchildren

or, in other words, whether elderly happiness depends on how well they are treated by their children and grandchildren.

If the findings can be applied to inform policy, they will form the basis of guidelines for development of inter-generational solidarity by strengthening positive inter-generational relationships and closeness among the generations. This would be a tangible benefit for the extended families and communities under the administration of the Samprao TAO.

CHAPTER 2
RELATED LITERATURE, CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

This chapter reviews the conceptual thinking about inter-generational relationships in the context of family structure. This thinking is a basis for the conceptual framework of inter-generational solidarity. In addition, the authors review trends in support and development of inter-generational solidarity. Because this research is concerned with applied policy for improving happiness in the elderly by LAO, this chapter also reviews the status of related policies on inter-generational relationships. This includes a brief discussion of Policy Coalition Theory proposed by Charles L. Sampson (2012) which is the theoretical framework used in this research as a guideline for local policy formulation in support of inter-generational solidarity.

Conceptual Thinking about Inter-generational Relationships

The concept of inter-generational solidarity as applied in this research was adapted from the conceptual framework of the sociology of the family, first proposed by Bengtson (1970) to explain family relationships. This framework was used to analyze the generation gap in American families; later it was expanded to assess extended family relationships in single households (Bengtson and Mangen, 1988; Bengtson, 1991; Bengtson, 2001; Bengtson et al., 2005a; Bengtson et al., 2005b; Bengtson et al., 2005c). In the analysis of inter-generational relationships, Bengtson discussed factors which brought family members together and referred to these as "solidarity" attributes. Bengtson proposed that there are six dimensions to family stability and mutual support: (1) Structural solidarity; (2) Affectual solidarity; (3) Associational solidarity; (4) Functional solidarity; (5) Normative solidarity; and (6) Consensual solidarity. These dimensions are described in greater detail below:

1. Structural Solidarity

Family structure determines the opportunity for and nature of relationships among family members. Interaction of family members shapes the household relationships. Bengtson analyzed family structure in consideration of number of family members and demographic characteristics of the different generations represented within and outside the household. Harmonious and mutually supportive co-existence among family members in a household is the basis of inter-generational solidarity. Thus, when discussing family structure, the key attribute is the nature of the compassionate interaction among members of different generations (grandparents, parents and grandchildren) mindful of age, sex, marital status and whether living in or outside the household.

Under this framework, members of an extended family (three or more generations represented) can more easily and often interact with the elderly relatives than can members of the nuclear family with only working-age parent(s) and child(ren) present. Thus, in the extended family there is the expectation of mutual care and support of related household members. This family structure based on interaction provides the scaffolding for members to develop inter-generational solidarity. In this way, the family structure protects and promotes happiness for the elderly in the household. Thus, it is reasonable to hypothesize that elderly

who live with children and grandchildren will have greater happiness than those who do not. This is a core proposition of this research.

2. Affectual Solidarity

Affectual solidarity is related to structural solidarity of the family in that it concerns the results of interaction among family members in terms of emotional feeling. In general, emotional reactions to family member interaction are positive and a basis for increasing household harmony and togetherness (Gronvold, 1988). This paradigm encompasses the range of constructive feelings among family members including mutual love, closeness, and respect. Quantitative tools have been developed to measure this level of solidarity (Silverstein et al., 1998) as well as qualitative approaches through self-assessment by family members (Aquilino, 1990).

3. Associational Solidarity

Interaction among family members in a household can be documented by the extent of face-to-face communication and joint implementation of activities (Mangen and Miller, 1988). Each family may have different patterns of interaction depending on opportunity. Joint activities encompass the full range of everyday activities such as dining together and participating together to celebrate special occasions and holidays. Associational solidarity can be measured by both quantitative and qualitative indicators of interaction (Aquilino, 1990).

4. Functional Solidarity

This dimension of inter-generational solidarity centers on the degree of mutual assistance among family members of different generations in the household, and is a general indicator of inter-dependence. Functional solidarity as it relates to elderly well-being can be observed from intangible and tangible properties of interaction such as the provision of money, services, food, domicile, medicine, and health care for the elderly member of the family. This kind of interaction can be measured by frequency and duration of encounters (Hancock, Mangen and McChesney, 1988). Past research has relied on quantitative indicators which segregate interaction by frequency and duration of mutual exchange or support activities to compute mean values (Lee, Netzer and Coward, 1994; Silverstein, Parrott and Bengtson, 1995; Ikkink, Tilburg and Knipscheer, 1999). In most of these studies, data collection focused on amount of financial exchange and material assistance based on personal interviews with the target individuals (Sloan, Zhang and Wang, 2002).

5. Normative Solidarity

Family norms are a dimension, which helps to explain behavior of members of a household, their interactions and behavioral expectations (Mangen and Westbrook, 1988). Each society has its unique set of family norms that derive from the traditional culture. Family members interact with each other generally based on a cultural script. Past research has used a scale of values to assess this dimension in largely quantitative terms (Lee, Netzer and Coward, 1994). But qualitative data collection methods such as in-depth interview and focus group discussion can also be used to measure this dimension of inter-generational solidarity.

6. Consensual Solidarity

Consensual solidarity reflects the level of harmony of attitudes and opinions among members of the family on various topics such as religion, politics, marital norms or customs, selection

of a marital partner, or daily life activities (Landry and Martin, 1988). In this study, the researchers were interested in consensus across generations and especially with the elderly members of the family.

According to Bengtson, for a family to have inter-generational solidarity, there needs to be a supportive structure, with household members playing defined roles according to normative expectations and who are in general harmony with each other. Bengtson also contends that lacking solidarity in any of the relevant dimensions will result in an unstable household and an imbalance in family relationships.

External factors can also affect different dimensions of inter-generational relationships in the family. These factors might be economic, social, cultural, political or government policy. The following section describes the conceptual foundation on which this study is based. The goal is to produce policy recommendations for TAO to support strengthening inter-generational relationships for greater well-being among the elderly. The TAO is the focus of policy leverage since it is the most proximal LAO to the peripheral population.

Conceptual Thinking about Inter-generational Solidarity

Research on inter-generational solidarity by Maria Amparo Cruz-Saco and Sergei Zelenev (2010) expanded the concepts of Bengtson beyond household inter-generational relationships to a broader view of society at-large and outside the context of the family. Cruz-Saco (2010) developed a conceptual approach for analyzing inter-generational relationships as a manifestation of inter-generational solidarity. Cruz-Saco contends that the connections based on inter-generational bonding are a natural drive of family members which may arise out of self-interest, compassion, altruism, need for closeness, and mutual assistance. Cruz-Saco also expresses the view that inter-generational solidarity is both a cause and consequence of constructive interaction of members of different age groups in society.

Butt (2010) has observed that members of society, despite being of different generations, remain linked with each other and inter-dependent when they share the same values and needs. These links are manifest in formal and informal associations and organizations, which help build consensus through civil interaction and exchange. The result is inter-generational solidarity, which is a basis for transfer of knowledge, wisdom and culture from one generation to another. In other words, society exists and progresses because of inter-generational solidarity.

In most families with children and grandchildren, the younger assist the older generation in various ways. Reciprocally, grandparents often provide childcare for their grandchildren in the event that the middle generation works outside the home, is divorced, separated, deceased or incarcerated. This shifting and exchange of roles is found both in extended and nuclear families (Silverstein, Giarrusso and Bengtson, 2003). By the same logic, it can be deduced that inter-generational solidarity that results from mutually supportive relationships of family members is a normative feature of many countries, especially those in the East, where children are taught to venerate the elderly. Thus, it can be viewed as an advantageous cultural norm of Asian societies that older persons are held in esteem by society (Moneer Alam, 2010). Indeed, it is a cultural tenet of Thai society that children are expected

to return the beneficence to their parents for giving them birth and raising them. This reverence for elders extends to grandparents as well. This norm is prevalent at all levels of Thai society, regardless of socio-economic status, and helps to preserve inter-generational solidarity in Thailand and confer well-being for Thai elderly.

In the context of Eastern society, the concepts of Cruz-Saco (2010) hold that the obligation or role of local leaders (assuming they have close connections to the community) is to bolster relationships and bonding among members of different generations. Accordingly, the LAO would be expected to formulate and implement policy that promotes inter-generational solidarity through strengthening inter-generational relationships. This could be applied in many ways such as implementing projects to modify attitudes, feelings and behavior of younger generations so that they are more positive and respectful toward the elderly. The outcome should be enhanced motivation to stay close together and care for the elderly when they become infirm. Another approach would be to tap the traditional wisdom of the elderly and formalize this for transfer to the younger generations. In this way, the elderly become the nexus for interaction among members of a community. From this perspective, the elderly are viewed as a source of strength and solidarity and not as a burden on society. Schindlmayr (2006) argues that inter-generational solidarity improves a community so that it is a desirable place to be. But to achieve this requires a certain level of activism by members of society. This is exemplified by a pervasive sense of fraternity by members of society, and the common use of the terms "brother" and "sister" when Thais refer to (unrelated) friends. This sense of fraternity is more visible in rural areas than in the larger cities. The expectation is that everyone has a moral duty and social ethic to maintain and promote this harmony. A society based on mutual compassion will be the most desirable and the most likely to be able to meet the essential needs of all its members in appropriate ways (Aboderin, 2006). It could be said that those who believe in the principles of inter-generational solidarity are most likely to collaborate well and unselfishly with others. A prevailing norm which encourages cooperation and discourages exploitation of others will strengthen society and the economy at-large.

Because of the apparent universal benefit of inter-generational solidarity, specialists in welfare for an aging society are revisiting existing cultural assets to identify the value added of the elderly which today's youth do not provide. It is undeniable that most elderly play the role of grandparent and that this role is very important (Mehta and Thang, 2012). However the increasing proportion of elderly (i.e., supply) may be exceeding the ability to absorb them (i.e., demand). Historically, life expectancy was considerably lower than today because of the absence of proper sanitation, nutrition and effective medical intervention. It was rare that life expectancy at birth exceeded 60 years in most prehistoric societies (or today's conventional threshold for classifying someone as elderly). Thus, any family with living grandparents in the household should be considered lucky, and grandchildren could benefit enormously from the interaction with their grandparent. In today's modern society, not only are more men and women becoming grandparents but they are also living as grandparents for much longer than previous generations. However, delayed marriage and declining fertility in these same societies means that the population structure is undergoing radical change. This is already being experienced in low-fertility countries of Europe and North America, and in East Asian nations such as Japan and China, and Southeast Asian countries of Singapore and, increasingly, Thailand. The lower fertility and delay or avoidance of marriage means that, while the proportion of elderly increases, there is not necessarily an increasing amount of interaction between grandparents and grandchildren. Indeed, being elderly may be less associated with grandparenthood over time.

While increased life expectancy is a universal goal of most societies, promoting grandparenthood is not necessarily a goal and may be viewed more as a matter of fate or divine intervention, or at least out of the control of the elderly person. However, it may not be a strategic error to focus on promoting the role of the grandparent as the fulcrum of inter-generational solidarity.

Thai society, especially in rural areas, refers to elderly persons nominally and respectfully as 'grandfather' or 'grandmother.' Thus, it might still be possible to promote inter-generational solidarity through a focus on the elderly as the cornerstone of relationships, at least in the more rural areas of the country. But as fertility continues to decline, and working-age rural residents continue to migrate to industrialized centers, there will be fewer adult relatives to care for the elderly in the home community. Thus, the government and private sector are bound to play a larger role in eldercare in the decades ahead. If the present public sector approach is any indication, then government assistance will continue to be in the form of welfare, which does nothing to reduce the dependence of elderly on outside institutions.

Based on societal evolution to-date, as a country becomes wealthier and industrialized, the government plays an increasing role in eldercare. Conversely, the role of the family and community in care of the elderly declines as part of this transition. In the richest countries, the private sector takes on more responsibility for providing profit-driven assisted living and hospice, paid for by insurance or the children of the elderly. Institutionalized forms of support for the elderly such as social security and subsidized medical care have their roots in the concepts of inter-generational solidarity in that the working age population pays for this support through special taxes. The difference is that these funds are pooled and available to anyone who is eligible as opposed to a direct wealth transfer from child to dependent parent. The challenge for aging societies is how to maintain these sources of funds when the pay-outs begin to exceed the contributions.

Given these trends and inevitable transitions, it is time to give greater attention to the importance of inter-generational relationships, especially the psycho-social aspects. We also need to examine to what extent younger generations are pivotal in the elderly's sense of well-being rather than merely focusing on care and support for elderly parents or grandparents. Whatever view or questions one poses, the answer will be related to inter-generational relationships and inter-generational solidarity. In the words of Butt (2010, p. 82) "(Inter-generational solidarity) recognizes that people of all generations – past, present, and future – are bound together in order to survive and thrive." Larkin (2010, p. 96) agrees that mutual support among the generations is a prerequisite for advancement and successful livelihoods:

> *"Regardless of where we live or what our economic circumstances are, every generation needs the next, and caring for one another is essential if we are going to thrive as a people."*

Concepts of Support for Inter-generational Solidarity

It is believed that strong policy and plans in support of inter-generational solidarity are the key strategy to create social cohesion, unity and shared responsibility in the nation (Hatton-Yeo, 2002). The foundation of inter-generational relationships as a basis for inter-generational solidarity involves giving and receiving throughout the life cycle. All humans desire safety and

security, and want to be appreciated for their usefulness, value and meaning. The reciprocal provision of these attributes is the fuel for inter-generational solidarity.

We have observed since the beginning how inter-generational solidarity is traditionally viewed through the lens of the family. However, this research has expanded the context to the community or society at-large. In this broader view, the elderly are still the fulcrum of inter-generational solidarity through their role as grandparents and as experienced repositories of traditional wisdom. Sanchez, Saez and Pinazo, (2010) have observed that successful promotion of inter-generational relationships needs to be based on a culture of human relationships. However, the current social trends are leading to more independent living and self-reliance. The challenge then for programs is how to reverse this trend toward an individualistic culture, and return to one that places high value on inter-generational relationships.

Traditional Thai values already support the principles of empathy and compassion for others as a reciprocal social duty (i.e., the Golden Rule, Buddhist tenets, and Confucian doctrine). This requires that individuals in society adopt a relationship perspective in their daily life. Projects to promote inter-generational solidarity need to identify activities which bring people together in constructive ways, other than and in addition to the collaborations that already occur naturally in the family setting. The appropriate goal of a project and activities to bolster inter-generational solidarity is to create bonding, affection and desire to support others in society to enhance companionship (see Bressler, Henkin and Adler, 2005). Thus, policy development in support of inter-generational solidarity needs to be mindful of these attributes as intended outcomes.

Policies to Promote Inter-generational Solidarity

Effective programs require relevant policies to back them up. In addition, there need to be mass communication efforts in a rapidly aging society so that the younger generation does not view the elderly as a burden or eyesore. Youth need to recognize that a shrinking labor force in relation to an increasing population of elderly dependents presents a great challenge for a society, and that they will be the future beneficiaries of solutions that are found today. At first, there needs to be an agreement that the government alone is not the solution to eldercare. Thus, any program to promote inter-generational solidarity should avoid focusing on social security fund strategies and elderly stipends, which is the current public sector approach.

An international conference in 2002 produced the Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging (MIPAA) which included the recommendation that participating countries should promote inter-generational solidarity through the following activities:
1) Raise awareness about the elderly and aging for the general public to promote widespread understanding of how an aging society affects everyone;
2) Have the government review and analyze existing policies to see how they support togetherness and solidarity and constructive inter-generational relationships in society;
3) Initiate forums for exchange of knowledge with the elderly as resource persons;
4) Create opportunities for communities to conduct local activities to improve inter-generational relationships. This would include planning and implementation that involves members of multiple generations and avoids age-segregated events;

5) Assess local opinion (all generations) that it is the obligation of families to provide care for the children, parents and grandparents in the household;

6) Support and strengthen inter-generational assistance as a foundation for social development; and

7) Initiate and implement research on pros and cons of assisted living for the elderly of different types, including home-based models as well as group living arrangements, across a spectrum of socio-cultural contexts (see United Nations, 2002, pp. 17-18).

It can be seen that these recommendations do not distinguish between activities by family members and those in society at-large. The hypothesis is that strong familial relationships are the basis for inter-generational solidarity which smooth the way for successful policy interventions in this area (United Nations, 1995). What is needed is a comprehensive framework for addressing the following four dimensions: (1) Status and condition of the elderly; (2) Human development throughout the life cycle; (3) Multi-generational relationships; and (4) Positive relationships between the level of development and the elderly (Sanchez, Saez and Pinazo, 2010). In pursuing these four dimensions, the community should be the implementer with an emphasis on exchange of information and knowledge between the elderly and younger generations, especially in technological areas and maintaining traditional practices (United Nations, 1995, p. 7). In other words, the key actors in this process are the elderly and youth who must join forces to re-build a multi-generational society. It is also observed that the 1995 recommendations for inter-generational solidarity by the UN are the foundation of the MIPAA recommendations in 2002. Five years later, the UN conducted a review and evaluation of progress toward the MIPAA goals (UN, 2007). It was found that many countries were applying the recommendations and developing policies to promote greater inter-generational solidarity. This process also represents a gradual paradigm shift from viewing the elderly as a burden or social problem toward the view that the elderly are our social companions who should be befriended. A more concrete development is the concept of an inter-generational contract which mandates that each generation must provide reciprocal attention and support for the other. In sum, many countries have started to move away from the welfare model of eldercare.

Despite this paradigm shift, it is still clear that many policy-makers and national administrators are still not making the distinction between inter-generational solidarity of members of the family and inter-generational solidarity of members of the community or society at-large. Another noteworthy finding of the UN progress assessment was that a select few of the projects to promote inter-generational solidarity were conceived at the grass roots level and were not an extension of central government directives. In Singapore and Japan for example, NGOs or Civil Society groups were the originators of programs to arrange multi-generational home-stay events to improve inter-generational relationships and knowledge transfer through joint activities.

Thailand is beginning to take genuine interest in building inter-generational solidarity as evidenced by the establishment of the "Three Generation Weaving Family Love Center" in all provinces of the country. These centers were not the outgrowth of central policy but were inspired by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Thailand, who felt that Thailand should have more centers for quality of life development, with an emphasis on sustainability and inter-linkages among the generations. It was Her Royal Highness Princess Srirasm, the Royal Consort to the Crown Prince of Thailand, who coined the name for these centers and

directed the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) to be responsible for establishing and overseeing the network of centers. This initiative emphasizes a process of delivery of services to meet holistic needs and serve as an operational model for expansion to other locations throughout the country (Department of Social Development and Welfare, 2006). This community-based center approach emerged through royal inspiration, independently of the government, even though oversight and implementation is channeled through the MSDHS. However, the centers that have already been established are not yet fully integrated with the operations of the LAO in the locality, and implementation has many features of government development programs. This raises interesting research questions: How do the LAO – and the Samprao TAO in particular – view inter-generational solidarity-strengthening initiatives, and is there interest in replicating models of inter-generational solidarity promotion? If the response is positive, then the question is whether the TAO is prepared and able to fund and implement such a program, and what is the supporting policy for this? It is the view of the researchers that any inter-generational solidarity policy at the LAO level should be consistent which the challenges which the elderly face and genuinely meet the needs of community members. Furthermore, implementation of the policy must cause no harm.

In this study, the researchers adapted the conceptual framework of Charles L. Sampson (2012) and his Policy Coalition Theory as the basis for inter-generational solidarity policy development in this research. The key stipulation is that policy is not the privilege or role of political authorities and administrators. The conceptual framework also stipulates that policy formulation should be the result of full participation of all the relevant stakeholders who address a common goal. The goal, in the context of this research, is a set of guidelines or measures for conferring happiness for all elderly, without having to rely on the government welfare system or social security. A basic principle of this goal is that elderly as a group must not be viewed as the problem. Instead, they should be seen as a valuable community resource who can contribute to the revitalization of society going forward, and not as a burnished relic of the past.

Inter-generational Solidarity and Elderly Sense of Well-being

As noted earlier, Thailand's national development strategy has emphasized economic output and increasing the gross domestic product. This one-sided approach drives the acceleration of consumption (to create a feedback loop) and revs the economic engine. The problem with this narrow strategy is that psycho-social dimensions of development are neglected, and the population begins to view happiness in terms of money and material possessions for consumption, with an emphasis on luxury items.

Many research studies have shown that economic expansion is not necessarily accompanied by a corresponding elevation of happiness in the society. Indeed, studies have found an inverse correlation between these factors (Brockmann et al., 2099; Delhey, 2010; Diener et al., 2010; Helliwell, Layard and Sachs, 2012; Knight and Gunatilaka, 2010; Pedersen and Schmidt, 2011). Selin and Davey (2012) reviewed cross-national data and concluded that human happiness or quality of life is comprised of many dimensions in addition to material wealth. In looking just at the ten member countries of ASEAN, the data clearly show that, while Singapore is the wealthiest country, its happiness as measured by the Happiness Planet Index is lowest (Yuen and Chu, 2014).

In Thailand, research on happiness of the population has been conducted by Gray, Kramanon and Thapsuwan (2008a) who found that happiness of the residents of two medium-income provinces (Chainat and Kanchanaburi) did not depend solely on per capita income. Instead, educational attainment and lack of debts were also important determinants of happiness. Further, those persons who felt they had good neighbors had greater sense of well-being than those who did not. Another interesting finding from this study is that the perception that one is poorer than one's neighbors is a source of unhappiness. An interpretation of these findings is that people are having difficulty accepting their standard of living. In other words, being satisfied with one's lot in life is a source of happiness, compared with striving for more.

In their study of elderly sense of well-being in Chainat Province, Gray et al. (2008b) had similar findings in that those who did not feel economically inferior to one's neighbors reported being happier than those that did. Research by Nanthamongkolchai et al. (2009) in the higher-income Rayong Province found that elderly with high self-esteem were happier than those with less self-esteem. In that study, elderly sense of well-being also depended on the level of social support they received and quality of the relationship with household members. These factors are all part of the foundation of inter-generational solidarity.

A Hong Kong study looked at life satisfaction among a sample of 1,557 persons age 70 years or more. Key factors for life satisfaction were found to include social support, living with relatives, siblings or other family members who provided mutual support, and playing a role and participating in various community activities (Ho et al., 1995).

The findings from all these studies suggest that, in the context of economic development, national leaders must look beyond material production/consumption alone as an indicator of progress. These leaders need to be mindful of unequal distribution of income as well. As the Thai economy expands, income inequality -- as measured by the Gini Index -- has been growing. In 2006, Thailand had a Gini index of 43 (CIA World Factbook, 2011), and this increased to 54 by 2010 (World Bank, 2011) indicative of a worsening of economic inequality. In pursuing policy and programs to increase elderly well-being, national leaders need to focus more on social support systems through inter-generational solidarity as opposed to merely providing hand-outs. To help with that re-conceptualization, the next section of this volume looks at the association and connections between inter-generational relationships and inter-generational solidarity.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents information on the location of data collection and methods and steps in conducting the research as these relate to confidence in the accuracy of the data and analysis.

Location of Data Collection

The researchers selected Tambon Samprao, Muang District of Udornthani as the site for data collection. The rationale for this is that Samprao is in the midst of a transition from a primarily rural environment to a provincial urban setting. Since 2007, the amount of external investment in Udornthani has increased dramatically in a range of sectors including trade, industry, hotels and real estate (The Federation of Thai Industries, Udornthani, 2007-2008; The Udornthani Chamber of Commerce, 2009 – 2013). This influx of investment has had a spillover effect to the periphery, such as Tambon Samprao which is experiencing socio-economic and cultural evolution that is altering the way of life of the local population. Expenditure on luxury items is increasing, as the communities become more consumerist. The local economy is becoming more cash-based, and farming families are selling land to cash in on the rising valuation of their property. With the shrinking availability of farm land, those with less means encroach on protected areas to clear forest to plant crops. The resulting deforestation degrades the land and is altering the climate so that it is more prone to drought. Crop yields per farm are declining and this is forcing many of the working-age population to migrate elsewhere for work. This out-migration of the middle generation is resulting in a distorted demographic structure of predominately elderly and young children. Increasingly, the burden for care of infants and young children is falling on the grandparents as their children leave the community for either economic or social reasons. The fracturing of the extended family is threatening inter-generational solidarity in Tambon Samprao. Thus, it is important to study this phenomenon while it is actually happening.

Research Design

This research was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, the objective was to test the research hypothesis. In the second stage, the objective was to formulate guidelines and policy recommendations for promoting inter-generational solidarity in ways that are consistent with the challenges and needs of the local population and the capacity of the Samprao Tambon Administrative Organization (TAO). In the first stage, the researchers developed the survey design for testing the proposition that elderly persons who live in the same household with children and grandchildren have better inter-generational relationships and have a greater sense of well-being or happiness than elderly who live by themselves and/or lack positive interaction with children and grandchildren. It is necessary to first test this hypothesis because a premise of the positive effect of inter-generational solidarity is based on the assumption that improving quality of life of the elderly requires mutual love understanding between them and their children and grandchildren. Thus, before proposing that promoting inter-generational solidarity will

be the most cost-effective strategy to improve elderly well-being, it is first necessary to establish the validity of the association between positive inter-generational relationships and elderly happiness.

The Samprao TAO comprises 15 villages. The data collection focused on households with elderly persons in residence and can be further classified as follows: (1) Three-generation households in which the elderly are living with a married child (possibly with other children who have not yet married) and grandchildren; (2) Two-generation households in which the elderly are living with a childless married or unmarried child; (3) Households in which the elderly are living with their grandchild(ren) because their child(ren) has left the household for work outside the community; and (4) Households in which the elderly are living alone because they have been abandoned by the children and/or grandchildren. For each of the 15 villages, the researchers sampled one household for each of the four categories and one elderly resident, thus yielding a total sample of 60 households and 60 elderly persons for the Tambon. Ness (1985) observed that such a sample size is neither too small nor too large, but has limited robustness for multi-variate analysis. That said, this modest sample size is appropriate for conducting qualitative data collection by in-depth interviews (IDI) and yet large enough to allow descriptive statistical analysis, bivariate logistic regression and factor analysis.

After establishing the validity of the hypothesis in stage one, the second phase of the research attempts to identify various options and approaches to establishing inter-generational solidarity based on a foundation of constructive and compassionate inter-generational relationships. This research views the elderly as the cornerstone of inter-generational interaction and focuses on the following: (1) The availability and adequacy of budgets of Samprao Tambon Adminisrative Organization for investing in a strategy of promoting inter-generational solidarity; (2) The feasibility of acceptance of the strategy by the community and society; and (3) Management feasibility of the strategy including the need for sustained support by the local politicians.

The second stage of the research is conducted in a participatory fashion with the key stakeholders to inform the options and strategies for promoting inter-generational solidarity. These stakeholders include the following: (1) Administrators of the Samprao TAO; (2) Staff of the TAO; and (3) Male and female residents of different generations (age 15-19, 20-59, and 60 years or over)

Research Data

The researchers selected elderly residents from the four categories of households by conducting convenience sampling. As soon as an elderly person who met the interview criteria was identified, they were explained the purpose of the survey and asked for their consent to interview. Next, the researchers made appointments to return to conduct in-depth interviews (IDI) with consenting respondents. Before the IDI, the interviewer provided more detail on the nature of the project and assured the respondent of the strictly confidential nature of their responses. The entire IDI was tape-recorded and took an average of 50 minutes. The researchers used an open-ended discussion guide for the IDI but were careful to let the respondent lead the discussion, with the interviewer acting as a sympathetic conversational partner. Respondents were asked to casually describe their daily life, atmosphere and interactions and emotions. The interviewer would probe as necessary to clarify or elaborate response.

In the second stage of the research, the investigators reviewed existing documentation and conducted interviews with managers of the Udonthani Three Generation Weaving Family Love Center. The purpose of the interviews was to compile information about concepts and activities of the center as they pertain to promoting inter-generational solidarity. The researchers were also interested in the level of understanding and support by the center managers of the concept of inter-generational solidarity. Further, the interviews attempted to determine what methods or guidelines the center used to promote inter-generational solidarity, the nature of those activities and processes, and whether the emphasis was more on social welfare or family strengthening through greater appreciation of the value of the elderly to society. The researchers were interested in knowing whether the center staff viewed the elderly as mere recipients of center services or more as contributors to society and the younger generations. This line of enquiry looked at how involved the elderly are in center activities. The researchers were also interested in determining the role of the center in stimulating the elderly to fill their life with more love, warmth and mutual assistance for children and grandchildren in areas of need, and how well they were able to address these needs. Finally, the researchers wanted to know to what extent the center motivated the younger generations to care for their elderly relatives, and how well they met the needs of the elderly in the community.

Following the collection of the primary and secondary data, the researchers then convened group meetings of representatives from three groups of stakeholders to brainstorm policy recommendations for the Samprao TAO to promote inter-generational solidarity. These sessions were conducted in the TAO meeting room during mid-February, 2014. The participants included 16 persons. One session included the chief executive officer (CEO) and deputy of the TAO, the president of the TAO Council, and the TAO clerk. A second group of participants included six permanent staff of the Samprao TAO including the chief of the Finance Section, two community development officers, one public health officer, and two policy and planning analysts. The third group consisted of six community leaders including one male and one female each from: (1) the working age group of the local population, (2) the elderly age-group, and (3) the younger generation (age 15 – 19 years). In conducting these sessions, the researchers used the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) as developed by Delbecq and VandeVen (1971). The sessions involved three steps: (1) Problem identification; (2) Solution generation; and (3) Decision making.

Each of the three sessions was conducted using the same structure. A moderator (one of the researchers) led discussion to encourage full expression of opinion, and a rapporteur recorded key points of discussion. When there were differences of opinion on key issues, the moderator guided the group members to achieve consensus, if possible. If this was not possible, then the issue was put to a vote in order to be the basis for prioritizing policy recommendations for inter-generational solidarity. Often, the moderator could reformulate what appeared to be irreconcilable differences of opinion into a group consensus by integrating concepts or altering the paradigm. The application of the NGT for this research was used effectively to integrate a diverse array of opinion into a single general conclusion.

Further description of the steps in conducting NGT as part of this research is warranted. (1) First, the moderator introduced participants and described the results of the first stage of the research regarding the association between cohabitation and mutual support with children and grandchildren and elderly happiness, and how this represents a key foundation of inter-generational solidarity. The moderator highlighted the finding that elderly living in

positive relationships with their children and grandchildren had more happiness than those living by themselves (based on results that will be reported in Chapter 4). During this first step the moderator also explained the purpose of the brainstorming session. (2) In this step, the moderator encouraged the group members to express their opinion about guidelines or ways to promote elderly happiness through a process of inter-generational solidarity. In particular, group members were asked to brainstorm ideas for activities which would bring the elderly together with the younger generations (particularly their children and grandchildren) to promote their sense of well-being. If some participants were reluctant to express their opinion to the group, the moderator allowed them to write their opinions on paper and submit these for discussion. The moderator assured participants that all opinions were welcome and that no one should try to censure another. This application of the NGT differs from the standard approach in which participants usually submit viewpoints on written pieces of paper. In the case of this research in Samprao, participants were allowed to voice their opinions verbally if they preferred. (3) In the third step, the facilitator encouraged the participants to provide further detail about their opinion or to seek clarification of other's opinions. (4) In the final step, the moderator requested the rapporteur to read back the summary of recommendations offered by the group. At that point, any participant could correct errors or suggest improvements in the wording of the recommendations.

The researchers then synthesized the findings from the NGT with the data from the interviews with staff of the Udonthani Three Generation Weaving Family Love Center to produce policy recommendations for the Samprao TAO for promoting inter-generational solidarity. The researchers jointly analyzed the draft recommendations with full participation from the senior TAO managers (including the CEO, president of the TAO Council, TAO clerk, Finance Section chief, and staff responsible for TAO operations related to the elderly. The analysis focused on three dimensions: (1) The availability of budget for investing in a strategy of promoting inter-generational solidarity; (2) The feasibility of acceptance of the strategy by the community and society; and (3) Management feasibility of the strategy including the need for sustained support by the local politicians.

Data Collection Tools

The tools used for data collection in this study include the questionnaire for use with the sample of 60 elderly in the 15 villages of the TAO. After careful review of related research, this questionnaire was designed by the researchers and pre-tested for use in this study. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: (1) General information about the respondent; and (2) Information about the interaction and relationships between members of different generations in the Thai household context. Items in the first section include sex, age, marital status, education, occupation, economic role, income, other members of the household, and structure of the family. The second section included questions on daily activities that might involve interaction with other members of the family, e.g., interaction with children, grandchildren, and children-in-law. The questionnaire documented the extent of conversation and sharing meals among members of different generations in the household. In addition, there are items on provision or exchange of money or valuables between the elderly persons and children and grandchildren, and other forms of mutual assistance. The questionnaire explored the role of the elderly as a source of counsel on life issues of their children and grandchildren, feeling of mutual love, and elderly sense of well-being from living with and/or being assisted by children and grandchildren.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the first stage of data collection were subjected to analysis by descriptive statistics (e.g., frequency distributions, percentages, etc.) prior to inferential statistical analysis to detect associations between elderly happiness and inter-generational solidarity. Proxy variables for inter-generational solidarity include interaction or shared activity on a close and regular basis, mutual support and caring between the elderly and children and grandchildren in the household, dining together, and other intergenerational activities with blood relatives and in-laws in the extended family.

In order to test the proposition that elderly who live in the context of inter-generational solidarity have more happiness than those elderly who live by themselves, the researchers applied bivariate logistic regression to the data and measurement of the statistical significance of the outcome values (odds ratios). The researchers were interested in measuring how many times greater the value for happiness is among elderly, living with children and grandchildren compared with that for their counterparts who live by themselves, and whether this difference is statistically significant.

The next phase of the data synthesis consisted of the development of guidelines for strengthening inter-generational solidarity based on an analysis of opinions of the participants in the NGT sessions. All of the recommended strategies and approaches to increase inter-generational solidarity had to be feasible and potentially cost-beneficial before presenting these for consideration by the senior managers of the Samprao TAO. Recommendations had to be economically feasible before they were assessed for social feasibility. And only those recommendations deemed to be socially feasible were assessed for management feasibility. Economic feasibility was simply determined by the availability of required budgets for investing in programs to increase inter-generational solidarity. Social feasibility was estimated by the attitude toward, valuation of, and acceptance of the elderly by other members of the community. The researchers looked carefully at the extent of agreement that inter-generational solidarity was worth pursuing in the eyes of the stakeholders and other relevant persons. This involved a qualitative assessment of the results of the NGT across four dimensions: (1) Does the community want its elderly residents to be happy? (2) Do younger members of the community see the elderly as a projection of themselves in the years and decades ahead? (3) How does the community want its younger generations to behave when they are elderly? (4) Would any of the recommendations for policy or action adversely affect the lives of the stakeholders?

Management feasibility was determined by answers to the following five questions: (1) Is there a likelihood that the recommendations for inter-generational solidarity will receive budget support for policy to action by the TAO? (2) Is there potential for monetary and material contributions from members of the community and, if so, would this be enough to support the recommended strategies? (3) Do any of the strategies require the gathering of new knowledge or technology which is currently lacking in the community as a condition for success? (4) If implementation of the recommended strategies requires additional level of effort by the TAO, are there enough staff on hand to carry out these additional tasks and, if so, do those staff have the requisite interest, knowledge, and skills to take responsibility for these tasks? Proposed strategies that would require hiring of additional staff by the TAO are not to be recommended. (5) Are the recommended strategies consistent with the work of related agencies? For example, does the TAO pursuit of inter-generational solidarity overlap

with local programs of the Ministry of Public Health? Alternatively, would implementation of the TAO strategy to increase inter-generational solidarity involve collaboration with other local organizations, such as Samprao Tambon Health Promotion Hospital, as a key implementing partner and ally in boosting elderly happiness and quality of life?

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

This chapter presents results from the two stages of the research. Stage 1 establishes that elderly who live in the same household and have regular, positive interaction with children and grandchildren will have a greater sense of well-being than elderly who live by themselves without positive interaction with children and grandchildren or others of the younger generation. Having positive interaction and inter-generational relationships are indicators of inter-generational solidarity. Toward the end of this chapter, we present information on the relevant local agencies which are disseminating concepts of inter-generational solidarity to catalyze thinking and motivation for a movement toward a social model which provides more support and happiness for the elderly, as exemplified by the *Three Generation Weaving Family Love Center* model. Finally, this chapter concludes with policy recommendations for promoting inter-generational solidarity by the TAO based on the results of the Stage 2 research.

General Characteristics of the Sample

All of the sixty elderly in this study have been married and have children. About half (51.7%) are between the ages of 60 and 70 while 42% are between 71-79 years (Table 1). Only 6.7% of the sample is age 80 or over. More than half (56.7%) are female and nearly all (96.7%) are Buddhist, with six years or less of formal schooling (93.3%). About half (53.3%) were still economically productive (in that age was no impediment) such as working in agricultural endeavors, unskilled wage labor, or small trade. Despite this economic activity, fully 62% of the sample had less than 10,000 baht monthly income. Just over half (51.7%) were living with a son or daughter and, of these, half of the households included the spouse of the elderly person's child. Fully 46.7% of the elderly were still living with their spouse. It is noteworthy that, in this sample, one-fourth of the elderly were living by themselves (i.e., not with a child or grandchild). But in one case, the children and grandchildren came to share meals regularly, and this is a form of positive interaction and demonstration of caring (as well as a cultural expectation in traditional, rural society).

Inter-generational solidarity

As noted, about one-fourth of this sample of the elderly was not living in the same household with a child or grandchild. However, this fact is not an impediment to the study of inter-generational solidarity because, in theory, inter-generational solidarity is a framework for analyzing relationships and interaction between the elderly and members of the younger generations, not necessarily their own children and grandchildren. Thai culture prescribes that, in casual social interaction, people are referred to (by those of younger age) by their generational position (rather than a name) such as "grandfather" or "grandmother" for the elderly, and "father" "mother" "aunt" or "uncle" for those of middle age. Addressing persons this way confers respect by the speaker since it establishes that the referent is a person of an older generation and, thus, venerable. Conversely, the elderly will commonly refer to those of

younger generations as "child." This custom is especially prevalent in the northeast region of the country (where this research was conducted) and least practiced in Bangkok.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Sample of Elderly

	N =60	%
Sex		
Male	26	43.3
Female	34	56.7
Age (years)		
60-70	31	51.7
71-79	25	41.7
80 or over	4	6.7
Religion		
Buddhist	58	96.7
Other	2	3.3
Formal Education		
Completed primary school or less	56	93.3
Higher than primary school	4	6.7
Play an economic role in the household		
Yes	32	53.3
No	28	46.7
Monthly Income		
Under 10,000 baht	37	61.7
10,000 baht or higher	23	38.3
Other Household Members (Living with the Elderly Respondent)		
Child	31	51.7
Spouse of child	15	25.0
Spouse	28	46.7
Eat Meals Together With Other Household Members		
Yes	46	76.7
No	14	23.3

The data from the interviews with the elderly shed light on inter-generational relationships as they relate to inter-generational solidarity, and the fragility of these relationships (especially in the traditional Thai family context). The analysis first looks at indictors of the strength of inter-generational relationships. Table 2 presents data which show that 18.3% of the elderly do not have children/grandchildren who are interested in them. In 11 out of the 60 sampled households, there is little or no communication between the elderly and the younger generations in the family in the course of daily life. In addition, there were approximately 17% (or ten households) in which the children or grandchildren only rarely talk with the elderly members of the household. These findings of elderly neglect deserve urgent attention.

The cultures of many industrialized nations (especially in the northern hemisphere) look at health of the population as an indicator of social development and cohesion. A reflection of this is that a common greeting in these countries is "How are you?" (i.e., "Are you well?") and, at least on the surface, is an expression of caring. By contrast, cultures of East Asia which have experienced deadly famines tend to greet each other with the question "Have you eaten yet?" In France, where alcohol consumption (especially wine) was traditionally part of daily life for men and women, an archaic greeting was "How is your liver?" Thailand* has had a history of population migration throughout its evolution, thus leading to the common greeting of "Where are you going?" or "Where have you been?" However, given the stationary living conditions of most elderly in rural areas it seems less appropriate to ask about their travels and, thus, reduces the opportunity to show caring, even as superficially as a colloquial greeting. In this way the younger generation is gradually abandoning the customs of past generations which conveyed an implicit sense of mutual concern and compassion. The younger generation needs to see that a greeting has both cultural and psychological effects, especially when directed to the elderly. While today's greeting does not need to be the same as spoken in the past, it should convey a sense of sincere concern about the other's well-being. Promoting inter-generational solidarity will require organized campaigns and orientation for youth on how to properly greet the elderly in their household and community in the course of daily life.

Not greeting one another compassionately, or worse, lack of communication between the elderly and their children and grandchildren might be both a cause and consequence of emotional conflict or discordance between the generations. Regardless of whether it is the cause or effect, lack of positive interaction between the elderly and members of the younger generation, as found in this study, was disturbingly prevalent at the level of 28%. Among those who reported inter-generational conflict, a common cause was lack of respect for the elderly, disobedience or not heeding the admonishments of the elderly. Another cause was heated arguments between the elderly and their children and grandchildren on various topics in which both sides had difficulty controlling their emotions. Other triggers for disharmony could be an elderly's dissatisfaction with a son- or daughter-in-law which then expands to their own son or daughter, resulting in a situation with no or perfunctory communication, and that can be long-term.

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* Many historians believe that ethnic Thais originated from an area that is now part of China in the Yellow River basin and the Yangtze River areas. Important settlements in those times include Loong in the north near the headwaters of the Yellow River, not far from the Great Wall. Another significant settlement of ancestral Thais was at a place called Pah in the southern part of this region in what is now Sichuan Province. At a time estimated to be 5,000 years ago, these indigenous Thai settlements were invaded by the Han Chinese who pushed the Thai settlements to the south into what is now Yunnan, Guangzhou, Guangxi, and Guangdong (Canton) Provinces. This resettlement of the early Thais did not occur in a single mass movement, but took place in small groups and sporadic travel when conditions became intolerable. The more independent and freedom-seeking members of the 'Tai' tribe migrated first. Later, this migration extended throughout what is now called the Indochinese sub-region. The new settlements initially were clustered along the Salween River to the West and the Mekong River to the Southeast. The former group populated the area now called Myanmar and were of Shan (or Tai Yai) ethnicity. Those who continued on to the Northwest settled the area now called Assam and were of Assamese (Tai Ahom) ethnicity. The other major migration stream populated the Mekong River Basin, passing through and settling the Xishuangbanna, Sipsongjutai, and Tongkin regions (now northern Vietnam and Lao PDR). These settlers were of the Tai Noi ethnicity. Splinter groups of migrants moved southwest to settle the Thai Lanna region in what is now northern Thailand. The final stage of this migration from historical China proceeded southward through the Chao Phraya River basin and on to the Malay Peninsula. Thus, modern (Siamese) Thais are most directly descended from the Tai Noi. (Source: Thai History: Ordering Important event, 2014).

Table 2:   Relationship between the Elderly and their Children/grandchildren in the Household

Characteristics of the relationship	N = 60	%
Conversation with the elderly in the household		
None	11	18.3
Rarely	10	16.7
Daily	39	65.0
Conflict between the elderly and others in the household		
Yes	17	28.3
No	43	71.7
Sources of conflict between the elderly and others		
Children/grandchildren do not respect the elderly	9	15.0
Cannot control emotions	2	3.3
Other	6	10.0
Daily activities performed together with the elderly		
Meals	29	48.3
Housework and/or cooking meals	17	28.3
Watching TV	14	28.3
Casual conversation	14	23.3
Work in the gardens, orchards, fields	8	13.3
No activities involving the elderly	14	23.3
Elderly gives money/material to children/grandchildren		
Yes	42	70.0
No	18	30.0
Elderly provides life advice to children/grandchildren		
Yes	51	85.0
No	9	15.0
Elderly provides assistance to children/grandchildren		
Yes	50	83.3
No	10	16.7
Elderly receives care from children/grandchildren		
Yes	49	81.7
No	11	18.3

At the same time, when an elderly person lives in a separate domicile or village/town from his children and grandchildren, this necessarily limits the opportunity for positive inter-generational communication and interaction, and this separation further erodes inter-generational solidarity. In the present day, with modern information technology, the ubiquitous cell phone surely increases the opportunity and amount of communication between the elderly and their children and grandchildren, despite living far away from each other. Thus, it is not beyond the capability of the local manager or policy maker to promote inter-generational communication as a gesture of mutual caring and love, or at least reduce inter-generational conflict.

Any analysis of inter-generational solidarity needs to begin with an examination of the activities which the elderly share with their children and grandchildren on a daily basis.

Table 2 presents data on daily interaction which show that sharing meals or dining together was practiced by nearly half the sample of elderly and their children or grandchildren. Conversely, nearly half the elderly eat alone. It was presented at the outset that only three-fourths of the sample of the elderly lived in the same household with their child(ren) or grandchild(ren). Thus, it is more accurate to examine the interaction and sharing of daily activities among elderly who are co-habiting with children and grandchildren. With this new denominator, it is calculated that only 64.4% of the elderly dine with their child(ren) or grandchild(ren) on a regular basis. Further, during casual conversation between the interviewers and the respondents, the elderly remarked wistfully about earlier times when they would help feed their child(ren) or grandchild(ren) and how those encounters gave them considerable happiness. It was the sharing of the meals that was the principles source of happiness, and that memory continues to provide a source of comfort, in that they fulfilled an important role in nurturing their children and grandchildren. It was also the act of selfless giving, not receiving, that gave the elderly a sense of fulfillment by eating with their children and grandchildren. As such, they still aspire to be a source of assistance to other family members today. They also inferred that sharing meals (in earlier times) was also a source of contentment for their children and grandchildren. This observation poses an interesting question: Would today's younger generations derive the same sense of well-being as the elderly by sharing meals?

Another activity which the elderly could practice with their children and grandchildren without much effort is watching television. But despite the ubiquity of the household TV, less than 30% of the elderly in this sample reported watching TV with their children and grandchildren. But since television-watching is not an essential activity for well-being, it could be said that this lack of joint activity merely represents latent demand for an enabling factor for increasing inter-generational solidarity. In other words, watching TV together is an indicator of inter-generational joint activity, but does not mean that there is a desire for the elderly to engage in this somewhat passive activity.

The researchers also found that the elderly did not give as much emphasis to self-entertainment or commercial entertainment outside the family context as does the younger generation. Thus, members of the younger generation need to view TV-watching as a means to remain close to their elders and the elderly in the household and as a source of entertainment for the elderly in the context of family interaction. That nearly one-quarter of households have no shared activity between the elderly and the younger generations points to the need for interventions with today's youth to help them understand that good inter-generational relationships begin with everyday-shared activities in the household (e.g. sharing meals, watching TV together, conversing casually). These activities require no extra spending and very little effort to do. However, if today's youth does not value inter-generational relationships, then the roots of the problem are deeper and will require more profound strategies to overcome.

This study found that only 13% of the elderly participate with children or grandchildren in agricultural activities (e.g., farming or kitchen gardening). At least in the traditionally rural areas of Thailand, agricultural knowledge and skills are still important for the economic advancement and sustenance of the younger generations, and their elderly relatives are an important source of wisdom in this area.

It is generally accepted and an admirable feature of Thai society that a good child or grandchild must look after their parents and/or grandparents when they are older and frail. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that there will be some wealth transfer from younger to the

oldest members of a family. However, this research found that 70% of the elderly were the ones to provide financial or material support to the children and grandchildren and not the other way around. This assistance can be in the form of help with school tuition for grandchildren, or help with down payments for large purchases by their children. More constructively, this study also found that 85% of the sampled elderly provided counsel to their children/grandchildren on life issues, and reinforced cultural expectations for behavior. In addition, fully 82% of the elderly reported receiving physical care from a children/grandchildren in the household. Young children will help their grandparents to lift heavy objects, retrieve items of need, or massage sore arms and legs. These minor activities may not seem to have economic worth, but the psycho-social value of this assistance and contact is priceless. It is also a method of promoting inter-generational solidarity as well as an indicator of inter-generational solidarity itself.

What Factors Contribute to Elderly Sense of Well-Being?

This volume has already asserted that people, generally, do not define happiness solely in terms of money or income. Indeed, many lower-income communities probably have greater happiness than the millionaires in a society. The wealthy are often unsatisfied with their riches and continually strive to obtain more, which is psychologically no different from the striving of the lower income to improve their status. Similarly, the highly educated person is not necessarily happier than the lower educated. Human sense of well-being is a subjective state of mind. Anyone who feels they have less than another will suffer, no matter how much that person already possesses. This begs the question: What is the root of genuine human happiness?

This research does not attempt to answer this philosophical question. Instead, the relevant question is where can people derive the greatest happiness as they age, and how do they value happiness? Table 3 presents data which show that higher income does not mean greater happiness: Those elderly with monthly income over 10,000 baht did not have significantly more happiness than those with income equal to or less than 10,000 baht (odds ratio = 0.840). Indeed, that the odds ratio (OR) is less than 1.000 suggests that this variable is moving in the direction of a negative correlation (though not statistically significant in either direction at the 95% level of confidence). Being economically active (i.e., having a job or working with children in agricultural pursuits) would seem to be associated with greater sense of elderly well-being (OR= 1.288) but, after controlling for other variables, this association is not statistically significant. However, the results do suggest that trying to increase elderly happiness through income or economic contribution is not likely to have the intended effect. Indeed, it is possible that greater income might be accompanied by greater stress.

Income and economic role tend to be associated with education. Thus, educational attainment was included in the bivariate logistic regression analysis to explore its relationship with elderly sense of well-being. The OR for this association is 0.217 which also suggests that it is moving in the direction of a negative correlation (i.e., that more education – with completed high school as the reference – might be associated with less happiness). However, this OR is not statistically significant (at the 95% level of confidence) and any inferences of direction of association are conjectural. In sum, the data from Table 3 suggest that income and economic role (including the associated variable of education level) are not responsible for a person's sense of happiness at older ages (at statistically significant levels of confidence).

Table 3: Adjusted Odd Ratios of Variables Related to Elderly Happiness

Variables	Adjusted Odd Ratios of Elderly Happiness
Dining with children	14.000**
	(3.207-61.125)
Living with son or daughter (and possibly their children)	4.200*
	(1.008-17.500)
Living with spouse	4.579*
	(1.097-19.114)
Living with son or daughter in law	1.000
	(0.232-4.310)
Income higher than 10,000 baht	0.840
	(0.232-3.045)
Still plays an economic role	1.288
	(0.358-4.631)
Secondary education or higher	0.217
	(0.027-1.733)
Age range (60-70)	1.655
	(0.460-5.953)

Note * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

The next stage of the analysis explores the association of a demographic variable (age) with elderly sense of well-being. The researchers are keenly aware that age is directly associated with health status, and health status is related to happiness. Therefore, a proper analysis of age would control for health status. However, in this study, the sample of elderly were not subjected to health examinations and, thus, it is not possible to control for this factor in the analysis. That said, direct observation of the elderly respondents in this study suggests that the sample had a similar level of health status. If that is the case, then not including this variable in the analysis should not have an effect on the ability to test for an association between age and happiness. Data in Table 3 show that age between 60 and 70 years (i.e., young elderly) has an OR of 1.655 times more probability of experiencing a sense of well-being than old elderly. However, this ratio is not statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence, and thus it cannot be assumed that the younger elderly will have more happiness than their older counterparts.

None of the economic, social or demographic variables measured in this research were statistically significantly associated with elderly sense of well-being (i.e., happiness). Thus, the next stage in the analysis turns to the influence of family relationship factors on elderly happiness. It has already been hypothesized that inter-generational solidarity can only be manifest if there are positive interactions among the different generations in the household, which then translates into good inter-generational relationships. To test this hypothesized relationship, two statistical tests were involved. First, a principal component analysis was conducted to reduce the measures of intergenerational relationship identified in Table 3 into a few principal components. Then with the varimax rotation method, three (3) components were identified. The first component consists of economic activity ($r = 0.869$), living with spouse ($r = 0.769$), and income ($r = 0.602$). Dining with family members ($r = 0.787$), living with son or daughter ($r = 0.852$), and living with spouse ($r = 0.170$) are included in the second component. The third component has only one measure with high correlation, which is level of education

(r = 0.848). Therefore, this third component was dropped from further analysis. Based on this result, the next step was to use a binary logistic regression model to find out which component has the highest correlation with the elderly's happiness level. Clearly, the results in Table 4 show that the second component which consists of dining with family members, living with son or daughter, and living with spouse has a statistically significant relationship with the elderly's level of happiness.

Table 4: Results from a Binary Logistic Regression Analysis of Intergenerational Relationship and Happiness Components

	df.	Adjusted Odds Ratio S.E.
Component 1	1	1.330
		(0.332)
Component 2	1	2.389**
		(0.374)

Note   ** < p = 0.05

At this stage of the analysis, only three variables are proposed as proxy indicators for inter-generational solidarity: regularly eating meals with children/grandchildren; living in the same household with a son or daughter (and possibly their children); living with a spouse; living with a son-or daughter-in-law. It was evidently clear that living with a child-in-law was not significantly associated with elderly sense of well-being any more or less than not living with a child-in-law (see Figure 1).

The results of the principal component analysis show that two variables in particular (sharing meals and living with a child or grandchild) had higher positive associations with inter-generational solidarity (0.859 and 0.848 respectively). Residing with a spouse had a weaker association with inter-generational solidarity in the component analysis (0.170). One interpretation is that not living with a spouse increases the role of the children/grandchildren for companionship and care. This is consistent with the conceptual framework of inter-generational solidarity which proposes that inter-generational relationships must be stronger than co-generational relationships (i.e., spouse) for inter-generational solidarity to be manifest.
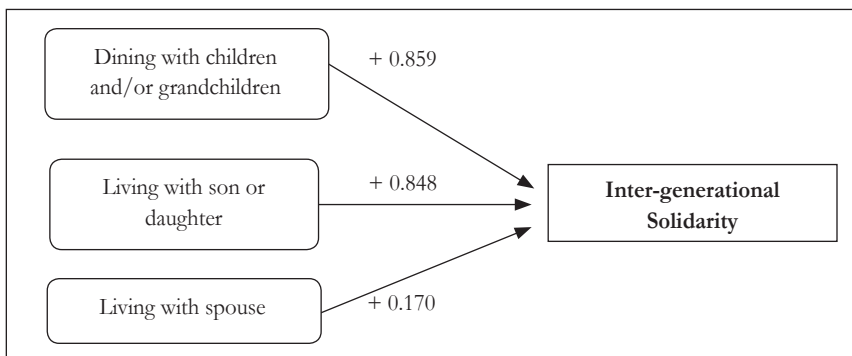

Figure 1: Relationships of Variables with Inter-generational Solidarity through Principal Component Analysis

Table 5 presents the results of the factor analysis for the three variables. The findings show that dining with children/grandchildren can explain 55.6% of the variance in inter-generational solidarity, followed by living with a children/grandchildren (30.1%), and living with a spouse (14.3%). The results of the factor analysis support the principal component analysis (as depicted in Figure 1).

Those elderly who live in the same household with children/grandchildren will have more opportunity to dine together, though the location of the meal is probably insignificant compared with merely being with children/grandchildren at meal-time in order to have a positive impact on elderly happiness. That said, it is important for the reader to understand that this analysis does not prove that inter-generational solidarity is either a cause or consequence of elderly sense of well-being. The findings from the logistic regression and factor analysis are associative findings and not causal. Also, factor analysis generally requires a larger sample size than used in this study to attain a proper level of robustness in the findings. The relatively small sample size in this study may cause instability in the values of statistical relationships of the variables.

Table 5: Ability of Variables to Explain Variance in Inter-generational Solidarity

Factor	Percent of variance explained by each variable (Eigen value)
Dining with children	55.6%
Living with son or daughter (and possibly their children)	30.1%
Living with spouse	14.3%

Strengthening Inter-generational Solidarity in Thailand

As discussed in Chapter 2, Thailand has begun to recognize the significance and necessity of inter-generational solidarity, as exemplified by the royally-inspired "Three Generation Weaving Family Love Center" model which is being expanded to every province in the country. This model has identified three demographic units of focus: (1) Youth from childhood to pre-marital age; (2) Married persons under age 60 years; and (3) The elderly (age 60 years or older, regardless of marital status). The Center uses three approaches to implementation as follows: (1) Application of the principles of sufficiency economy through reducing non-essential costs, promoting health and holistic agriculture for family health; (2) Promoting healthy households and communities through breastfeeding, adopting proper nutrition from the five food groups for each of three daily meals, and maintaining a clean house, with organized sections of the household for safely conducting different activities; and (3) Directly promoting inter-generational solidarity through positive interaction and good inter-generational relationships among members of the household.

Her Royal Highness Princess Srirasmi, the Royal Consort to the Crown Prince of Thailand is the Royal Patron of this initiative and has formulated the guiding principles, a key component of which is integration and involvement of multiple organizations at the central and peripheral level to work together, without compartmentalization of activities. Princess Srirasmi has delegated responsibility for overseeing this initiative to the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), the Ministry of Health (MOPH), and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS). This network of agencies has expanded the strategic partnership to include

12 ministries (at the time of this writing). The additional ministries include Natural Resources and the Environment, Education, Interior, Labor. Other agencies in the network include the National Breastfeeding Center, Kasetsart University, Rajabhat University (local branch) Network of Mothers and Infants, and local administrative organizations (LAO). These agencies work collaboratively to promote the model Center's goals of health and quality of life for all.

Ideally, this should be an effective strategy. In practice, however, it is quite challenging to create an entity which can generate and maintain the needed collaboration. Staff from participating agencies will continue to focus on their own agency's target population as a priority. For example, the MOA focuses on the household economy and encourages the working age population to pursue integrated farming for household consumption. The MOPH looks after the health of mothers and children through promoting breastfeeding, post-partum and well-baby care. The MSDHS conducts surveys and registration of persons enrolling in the Center programs to help inform plans and projects for assistance and social welfare. In the absence of close and powerful oversight, these independent agencies will gravitate back to their compartmentalized mandates and eventually work independently of each other.

In the course of reviewing the operations of the model Center program, the researchers came upon an intriguing observation which has implications for the public affairs management sector. Each province with at least one of the 80 Centers appoints a task force to advocate for the Center, with the provincial governor as the chairperson of the task force, and the provincial agricultural officer as the secretariat. Any resolution or recommendation from the task force is passed on to the responsible officers in the field as a directive as opposed to guidance for a new way of collaborative implementation. Thus, local implementation is not driven by indigenous motivation to be part of an avant garde movement. Despite the orientation of staff at all levels about the new integrated approach, the actual implementation is still in the traditional top-down form of centralized government administration. At the minimum, the implementing staff will feel a primary allegiance to the Family Love Bonding Project Coordination Division of the MSDHS and, in the first instance, must adhere to the policies and guidance of the home Division. Thus, in the end, each personnel of the collaborating agencies works first and foremost for the employing institution, rather than the intended beneficiaries in the family setting.

Despite these potential limitations, the "Three Generation Weaving Family Love Center" Project is the most experienced and prepared entity to promote inter-generational solidarity. The Department of Social Development and Welfare has stipulated the following as part of its mission: "Promotion of the status of the elderly, their role in the society, to enjoy quality of life with their families and community in happiness, as valued and venerable citizens who can fully access the relevant social services." This stipulation is consistent with a strategy to promote inter-generational solidarity with the elderly as the focal point. Nevertheless, it will take some time for government agencies to emerge from a welfare mind-set in assisting the elderly and transition to approaches which promote interaction, good inter-generational relationships and togetherness among members of the extended family of grandparents, parents and children.

The researchers conducted on-site visits to one of the Three Generation Weaving Family Love Project Centers to see how they generate inter-generational solidarity and to conduct in-depth interviews with the Center staff. At first we had the impression that the Center staff viewed the elderly as just one group of potential clients of the Center services and

not as a focal point for building intergenerational solidarity. However, after a conversation and an answer from in-depth interviews in which we asked how the Center involves the elderly, we were able to see that the Center staff actually did view the elderly as an important and valuable resource who could contribute significantly to society. They recognize the traditional wisdom the elderly possess and the importance of transmitting this knowledge to younger generations. In the words of one Center staff: "The elderly are like a mobile library which the younger generation can tap into for greater knowledge." Accordingly, the Center arranges activities in which the elderly are invited to serve as guest speakers to share their knowledge and experience with younger folk. Some of these activities and presentations consist of the following: (1) Instruction in thatch weaving for roofing, and bamboo weaving for walls. The youth who participated in the training successfully learned and applied the basic skills; (2) Banana heath carving for producing ceremonial objects at cremations. In the visited local community, there was only one elderly person remaining who could properly carve the banana sheath. Because of the pressing need to transfer the skills to younger members of the community in time, the Center arranged training for others; (3) Instruction in tying fish net knots and boiling the nets in animal blood to strengthen and fasten the knotting for better casting. All of these activities improve the prestige of the elderly in the community by revealing their special knowledge and skills, and making them feel useful, rather than having to sit at home doing nothing of practical value. This is especially important for elderly whose children and grandchildren are living in other provinces and only visit a few times a year during Songkran and New Year's holidays. The Center activities help build self-esteem for the elderly and combat depression. When done on a regular basis with good participation, these inter-generational activities increase elderly happiness and, as such, buttress inter-generational solidarity.

The Center further contributes to inter-generational solidarity by arranging a variety of activities which entail multi-generational interaction to promote positive inter-generational relationships and to help people become more familiar with the members of the community and their attributes. If done effectively, this should result in the growth of mutual compassion and caring across generations. The Center is attempting to recruit more and more members of each generation to view each other as part of one larger extended family. One of the strategies is to arrange camps (two days, one night) which involve group preparation of meals and other joint activities. Initially however, it was found that most of the participants in these camps were younger children, thus defeating the purpose of promoting better inter-generational relationships. The Center considered changing the activity from an overnight camp to a study tour outside the locality, but found that most of the target community members did not have the time to spare for such a trip. The next approach by the Center was to arrange a sports competition with involvement of all generations. This strategy proved to be the most successful in getting the community together. The local TAO provided budget support.

From this site visit to one Project center, it is clear that the Three Generation Weaving Family Love Project is directly promoting inter-generational solidarity through positive interaction and improved inter-generational relationships. The Center staff feel that if the Center is able to convert the thinking of the community toward the elderly such that younger generations see the need to remain closely connected to the elderly, then the Center feels it may be feasible to set up a 'life security fund' for the elderly with participation and contribution from all the stakeholders in the community. The key stakeholders include the LAO, community residents and the central government. The seed funding for this fund would come from a percentage of

the profit of the local occupational support groups which the Center has helped to establish. A second source of funding would come from individual contributions of one baht per day per fund member. The fund membership would include individuals from all generations in the community. In addition to being a form of social security for the elderly, the fund would also be an on-going source of financial assistance for any member. For example, when a fund member delivers a child, an amount of money will be provided as a 'child welcoming' dividend. When a member is suddenly ill or has an accident requiring hospital care, then the fund would provide assistance to needy members for the cost of transportation and medical care (if not eligible for routine government assistance). The fund would represent a tangible manifestation of inter-generational solidarity.

Looking at the Center's overall financial capacity, it is clear that the Project needs more funding in order to more fully promote inter-generational solidarity. One Center staff made the following observation: "The Center has a limited operating budget and this limits our ability to conduct activities in support of inter-generational solidarity. We need more buy-in from the collaborating partner ministries and agencies in order to reach the full potential of the Center. It can't just be the Project Division as the sole financial supporter." This key informant also recommended that the Center be allowed to allocate the budget in an integrated fashion to improve flexibility and better suit the dynamics of integrated implementation. This recommendation suggests to the researchers that the Centers need their own independent system for budget allocation, as opposed to the traditional reimbursement procedure through sectional categories. This key informant added that "In the past, the Center staff faced considerable difficulty in segregating the various costs into approved categories and by source of funding. For example, some of the Center budget comes from the MSDHS, while other parts come from the LAO and public contributions. "It would greatly improve our flexibility if we could pool these funds without having to account for them separately. In other words, each partner agency which contributes some funding to the Center operations and activities should not view this as a form of ownership of the activity since this is a communal effort. Indeed, the Center building and the local school were constructed with funds from community contribution and the LAO."

From this site visit and the data presented earlier, it is possible to conclude that the Center model is moving in the right direction in preparation for Thailand's inevitable aging society of citizens. Yet, the concept of inter-generational solidarity is still vague to many people and not something concrete that they can easily envisage. The level of love and compassion that is required for inter-generational solidarity is different for each individual and may not be adequate to achieve the goal in some families and communities. This solidarity may require a lengthy process of learning to acquire the minimum required threshold of mutual care. It is admirable that the Project and its Centers do not view the elderly as weak and problematic, who only deserve welfare and have little use for society. On the contrary, the Center visited by the researchers views the elderly as the cornerstone for an evolving society based on love and compassion. In this enlightened view, the elderly are not merely passive and needy, awaiting handouts. Instead, they remain valuable members of society into old age, especially as an unselfish source of love, compassion and wisdom for the younger generations. If done properly, the younger generations will be more than willing to return the love and compassion to the forebears in their community.

Policy for Promoting Inter-generational Solidarity

It was earlier noted that Thailand is putting in place a program and structure to promote inter-generational solidarity through the Three Generation Weaving Family Love Project Coordination Division of the MSDHS. Initially, the Center and activities were driven by conceptual thinking from central government offices, and locally managed by provincial task forces, chaired by the governor. The task force members are not that close to the target communities and, thus, much of their guidance is in the form of directives based on central policy rather than local needs. While the LAO are more in touch with the local communities and issues, their role in this Project is primarily as a co-sponsor of activities mandated by the provincial task force or central government policy (unfunded mandate).

It is the belief of the researchers that the LAO must drive the policy agenda for inter-generational solidarity given their greater proximity to the peripheral communities and the populations in need. The central agencies can provide general direction, goal setting, and transfer its lessons learned from past implementation in support of inter-generational solidarity to the LAO. This policy recommendation is based on the premise that the LAO has the capacity and readiness to implement support for inter-generational solidarity, and is able to formulate local policy and guidelines for implementation that is tailored to the local context and needs. Thus, before advancing this recommendation, the researchers first need to make the case that the LAO recognizes the importance of taking on the role of supporting inter-generational solidarity development and is prepared to support the center concept in their area of jurisdiction.

Importance of the Problem

To assess the interest and readiness of the Samprao TAO to take on the task of inter-generational solidarity promotion, the researchers relied on data from the proceedings of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT). The first issue for consideration was the NGT participants' interest and motivation to support inter-generational solidarity. The discussion was initiated with the question: "Does Samprao Tambon have many elderly residents?" The response was a unanimous "yes". When asked the next question "How many elderly?" the response was a bit uncertain ("About 2,000"). Next, the moderator asked whether these elderly were a burden on the community. The group was unanimous again in responding, "Most are not a burden." It was observed that at least 10% of the elderly are living alone and that these persons could become a burden on their neighbors in the future. Another NGT member observed that "Thai youth today are adopting the Western custom of leaving the household once they finish school, and are not particularly interested in caring for their parents. They just look out for themselves. This is a problem that will get bigger. More and more of today's elderly are being abandoned by their children and grandchildren. As soon as they can fly, the children abandon the nest. At some point, these solitary elderly will not be able to care for themselves anymore. Then what do we do?" The moderator followed up on this question by asking the group what should be done. Respondents said that the TAO should take responsibility. The moderator then posed the question whether the problem might become more than the TAO could handle. Members of the group responded that there is a need to build capacity of the elderly and their families to take care of themselves too. But this sentiment may be unrealistic, as observed by one participant: "The root of the problem is much deeper. For some reason, today's youth do not feel any responsibility to their parents and grandparents, the people who brought them into this world and raised them. I think this is the result of Western influence. Even though the parents

might have hundreds of acres of land, the children are not interested in coming back to manage the farm. If they can make it on their own in the city, there is no reason to return home to the boondocks. It's only if they've failed in their career that they return, but with empty pockets and debt. This problem is only going to get worse and we have to find a solution now."

The moderator then shifted the discussion to the issue of whether the participants felt that the elderly in Samprao Tambon had a sense of well-being (i.e., were happy in their life). The response was that most (between 70-80%) probably had emotional well-being and felt they had a quality life, and did not see themselves as a burden on society. One participant observed that "The elderly here have productive daily routines. Most seem content and smile when you greet them." The flip side is that at least one out of five elderly are not happy with their life (if the group estimate is accurate).

The group was also unanimous in assuming that an elderly person living with children and grandchildren would be happier than one living alone or living just with a spouse or elderly sibling. "Elderly happiness is greater if the children and grandchildren are there in person and there is mutual care, support and interaction." The moderator then reversed the question by asking what makes elderly people sad. One response was "Missing one's children and grandchildren and being lonely living alone without someone to care for them." Others observed that elderly sadness comes from worrying about the future of their children and grandchildren. They said that the elderly sadness would be worse if their children or grandchildren ignored their advice about how to create a secure and stable life, and how disagreement about this could worsen the generation gap.

NGT participants observed that another important source of elderly sadness comes from declining health, followed by economic insecurity. But the group also said that both these problems could be lessened if the children and grandchildren and others in the community took better care of the elderly: "Our physical and emotional happiness comes from having children and grandchildren with us, with enough money to get by. But when the children leave that makes everything worse (for the elderly person who is left alone at home)."

The NGT was also conducted with local youth. They were asked if they wanted their children and grandchildren to live with them when they become elderly. The response: "Yes, I would want my children and grandchildren to help look after me if I am old and frail." The youth expressed a perceived value in doing daily activities with their elderly relatives and learning from them, but this seemed to be more of a normative response than a personal value. However, at the very least, this response shows the seeds of a value system that still cherishes the elderly and implicitly endorses the importance of the TAO to promote inter-generational solidarity.

Solutions

The topic of the NGT then shifted to how to prepare for an aging population in Tambon Samprao to best prevent problems affecting the elderly. The moderator asked participants to consider the future, and focus in particular on the situation of those elderly who live alone or who lack positive interaction and good relationships with their children and grandchildren. One question put to the group was as follows: "How can we motivate members of the younger generation to show more consideration for the elderly?" An associated question was "What can we do to increase the elderly sense of well-being?" And: "How can we create

a society in which the elderly and their children and grandchildren care for each other compassionately through mutual support and assistance?"

The participants were generally of one mind that any approach should build upon existing Thai values and norms, which traditionally have venerated the elderly as a foundation of the community. In the words of one participant: "We need to revitalize the traditional culture so that it is actively applied today. This should not be that difficult. It just needs a champion to lead the way." Another participant observed that "Even when children and grandchildren go far away to find work, the Thai tradition tells them to return to their parents and grandparents at least once a year for Songkran (Thai New Year). But increasing the number and length of visits by children and grandchildren to their elderly relatives is a much bigger challenge. That is because people need to find work in order just to survive and, these days, that means moving to the cities or industrialized areas of the country. Also, the types of jobs they can get usually do not allow many leave days. The group considered ways to increase family happiness through togetherness, and they agreed that this must begin by re-instilling the traditional value of "katanyu" (obligation to one's parents and grandparents) into today's youth, at the very least. This would not require that the working age population live with their elderly relatives, but it does mean more frequent visits and meaningful contact. Today's youth must be made to see the value of the elderly. One community leader observed that "I think that I want to take on this challenge, and I have met with the TAO leadership on ways to maximize the recognized value of the elderly in our community." One approach would be to increase the number and variety of group activities for the elderly with involvement of the younger generation at least once a week. But this community leader also cautioned that "Today's youth may not see themselves as a factor in the happiness of their parents and/or grandparents. Indeed, having to live in an extended family situation my increase domestic conflict. As long as the elderly have regular, positive interaction with youth, that is probably enough to maintain a sense of well-being, without the need to live in the same household." Another concept is the strategy of setting up 'Community Elderly Associations' as earlier promoted by the MOPH. The goal was to promote health and active participation of elderly in society. However, these elderly associations were only comprised of the elderly themselves, without involvement of younger generations. So the focus of discussion returned to the challenge of promoting constructive inter-generational interaction, and the strategy of the Three Generation Weaving Family Love Project Centers as "virtual centers." As noted earlier, the Centers promote multi-generational activities and good inter-generational relationships with support from the local TAO. The NGT participants all agreed that elderly happiness should be derived from doing ordinary, everyday activities with members of the younger generation and in ways that the elderly can make a meaningful contribution.

Thus, the NGT group consensus on the appropriate way to address the challenges of the solitary elderly deviate from the traditional social welfare model of handouts. While the group acknowledged that the elderly who receive the monthly stipend appreciate the assistance, they cautioned that this monetary handout is not a source of happiness for the elderly in Samprao. Instead, the elderly need to feel honored and useful members of the community in order to derive a genuine sense of well-being. In the words of one participant "We need to take an inventory of what traditional wisdom or valuable experience the elderly in our community possess which is applicable for today's younger generation. In that way, the elderly can be providers, not just receivers. Or, at least what they receive from this is more valuable than a cash stipend." The moderator built on this point and asked the group to list

some of the traditional knowledge or special experience of the elderly in their neighborhood which would be valuable to pass on to the next generation. Responses include Moh Lam (traditional Northeast folk opera), Fon Ram (regional dance), fables (which employ word play in the Northeastern dialect), banana sheath carving, bamboo weaving, rice container weaving, and spiritual leadership.

In promoting inter-generational solidarity, it was suggested that there needs to be an intensive public relations effort based on effective communication and information dissemination techniques to increase awareness and concern about the challenges and response. "We need to indoctrinate the younger generation about the value of the elderly in their lives. This could be done in conjunction with public awards for model citizens which the TAO arranges on an annual basis by including special recognition of the elderly with special capabilities." One participant raised the concern about how elderly who live alone would travel to the Center to partake in activities. It was suggested that the TAO could arrange transportation, just as if this were a school for the elderly. This is similar to the Grey College approach used in Japan and is an idea worth pursuing.

The NGT session was impressive for the level of consensus expressed. The researchers are confident in paraphrasing this consensus as follows: "Promoting elderly happiness in Samprao should use a community center-based approach which organizes multi-generational activities for constructive interaction with the elderly for mutual benefit of young and old."

Elderly Policy by the Samprao TAO

Based on the consensus viewpoint summarized above, one clear policy avenue for the TAO is to support a community center for multi-generational interaction. Initially, this could take the form of a virtual center without the need for its own building, and rely on available space in the TAO headquarters. TAO staff could be tasked with the responsibility to coordinate with relevant agencies in the public and private sector to arrange activities and projects in support of inter-generational solidarity.

The NGT participants drafted a policy statement for the TAO as follows: "**The Samprao TAO has the policy of promoting good inter-generational relationships to increase community solidarity and improved quality of life, which will help the members of the community to recognize the value of the local elderly citizens who should be cherished and included in all aspects of community affairs."**

Putting this policy into practice requires the implementation of projects and activities which exploit the attributes of the local elderly which are applicable to the lives of the younger generations. Some of these activities could consist of banquets to promote communal dining, entertainment events, or any other activity which would involve inter-generational interaction.

The NGT group participants recognized the need to first conduct some orientation sessions for members of the different generations in the community so that they understand the purpose of the virtual center and associated activities. The group also considered feasibility and sustainability of the center and projects to promote inter-generational solidarity. One member of the group who is an executive of the TAO estimated that an annual budget

of one million baht would be needed for such a center and associated projects. After consultation with other executives of the TAO it was determined that there is enough room in the routine budget to support this initiative. Once the center and activities are underway and are well-received by the community, it would be reasonable to expect the community members to help support the center in the form of paying for cost of meals or transportation. At least initially, however, the Samprao TAO sees the concept of an inter-generational solidarity center as financially feasible.

As far as community acceptance of the center and participation in activities, the group participants felt that community relationships are already favorable and collaborative. As one member observed: "Overall, the elderly interact often and well with others in the community; they know they can voice their opinions and be heard and respected." Another said that "The elderly here seem generally happy. There are only a few situations that pose a challenge." Thus, the researchers have drawn the conclusion that the inter-generational solidarity center and activity concept is socially feasible.

Finally, in terms of management feasibility, the prospects are also favorable given the support by the TAO and mobilization of community resources. The representative of the TAO who participated in the NGT group sessions said with confidence that "There are adequate personnel in the TAO at present who have good knowledge and skills, and could effectively implement an integrated concept such as that being discussed." The group observed that participation would be beneficial for all sectors involved including public health, community development, vocational development, conservation of the culture, arts and religion, among others. It is also likely that such a local initiative would attract the interest from central agencies given its conformance with national policy and grassroots support. If the Samprao TAO policy and projects for inter-generational solidarity are successful, it is possible that central agencies such as the MSDHS would provide supplemental support to the TAO as a learning center and model for other TAO to study and emulate.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapters reviews the Thai context of the research, the research questions and answers, presents a discussion of findings, and academic and policy recommendations based on the findings.

Summary

At the time of writing this volume, Thailand is experiencing severe political conflict and resulting economic turmoil. The media, government, private sector and probably most of the country's citizens are transfixed and potentially impacted by this clashing of power centers. These convulsions are occurring in tandem with the (slower) socio-demographic transition that is also occurring at an unprecedented pace. To remain intact and productive, Thailand will somehow have to find a way to accommodate these changes peacefully, efficiently and compassionately. There is no doubt that Thailand is an aging society (if considering just Thai nationals) given the extraordinarily rapid fertility decline of the past 50 years, which has gone well below replacement level and continues to drop. While Thailand's national policy makers and planners are beginning to recognize the seriousness of the challenge, they are not responding fast enough with effective and widespread programs. To-date, Thailand has produced two multi-year plans for addressing issues of the elderly, but the strategic approach has not changed and tends to view the elderly as a problem segment of the population who can be appeased by providing a meagre monthly stipend (for persons over 60 with no pension or alternate source of government-funded income). In fact, Thailand as a whole has adequate resources to treat all its elderly more constructively than providing a cash handout to the poorest. More importantly, there is no guarantee that the monthly stipend contributes to elderly happiness and, may in fact provoke depression or a sense of helpless dependency among the recipients. Accordingly, Thai policy must transition to a more positive view of the elderly as productive citizens who have valuable potential for their local communities and younger generations of relatives and neighbors. This will have the added benefit of promoting better inter-generational relationships which is the only feasible approach to implementing a timely response to the greying of society; i.e., inter-generational solidarity as: ***"The link between members of at least two generations, founded on a shared purpose, through positive interaction and relationships for mutual support, love, caring and understanding."*** However, Thai policy makers and planners for the elderly have not yet fully recognized the value and feasibility of this strategy and how to apply it. Even in academia, there is a dearth of research in the area of inter-generational solidarity in the Thai context as a goal for an aging population.

This research report is one of a few which recognize the importance of inter-generational solidarity and the need to study the factors interacting with this phenomenon. This study had the objective to assess the extent to which inter-generational solidarity is associated with elderly sense of well-being (i.e., happiness) and collected data from a sample of elderly residing in the villages of Tambon Samprao, Muang District, Udorn Thani Province in Thailand's lower-income northeast region. The setting of Samprao is provincial urban as it transitions from the predominately agricultural society to a more municipal environment. There are

approximately, 2,000 elderly residing in the 15 villages of Samprao. The data collection in this research study focused on households with elderly persons in residence and can be further classified as follows: (1) Three-generation households in which the elderly are living with a married child (possibly with other children who have not yet married) and grandchildren; (2) Two-generation households in which the elderly are living with a childless married or unmarried child; (3) Households in which the elderly are living with their grandchild(ren) because their child(ren) has left the household for work outside the community; and (4) Households in which the elderly are living alone because they have been abandoned by the children and/or grandchildren. For each of the 15 villages, the researchers sampled one household for each of the four categories and one elderly resident, thus yielding a total sample of 60 households and 60 elderly persons.

The first stage of the research involved bivariate logistic regression to clarify the relationship between inter-generational solidarity and elderly happiness. Before revisiting those findings it is important to note that this study documented the disintegration of the provincial urban extended family as measured by the amount of positive inter-generational interaction and relationships. Approximately 28% of the elderly reported that there is friction and conflict with their children and grandchildren, resulting in a lack of mutual caring and respect across generations. This is contrary to traditional Thai households which held to the tradition of unreserved respect and caring for the elderly members of the family. Further, nearly all of the households with inter-generational conflict reported that there was little or no positive communication between the youngest members of the household with their parents or grandparents. By contrast, the households with good inter-generational relationships reported conducting daily joint activities such as preparing and eating meals together, which was highlighted as a major source of elderly sense of well-being. It is also noted that over 70% of the elderly provide financial or material support to children and grandchildren, and not the other way around as might be expected. That said, over 80% of elderly reported that the younger members of the household did assist them with physical tasks and cared for them when ill or sore.

The results from the data analysis are that living in the same household with children and grandchildren, sharing meals, and living with a spouse are all independently associated with elderly happiness (at a statistically significant level). It should be noted that some of these factors are proxy indicators for a deeper level of interaction. For example, dining together often entails joint preparation of food and the dining area. Also, eating together usually involves conversing with all members at the meal (to a greater or lesser extent). Younger members of the extended family are invariably involved in routine household chores and recreation (e.g., watching TV with elders) or reading books to the elderly (with vision impairment). In return, the elderly may recite an indigenous fable for the youngsters in the household. The number, frequency and constructive nature of these intergenerational interactions should, in theory, constitute greater inter-generational solidarity and greater happiness for all members of the family, not just the elderly. This research also found that these three factors had different levels of influence in explaining the variance of inter-generational solidarity. Dining with the extended family members was most powerful (explaining 55.6% of inter-generational solidarity variation), followed by living in the same household (30.1%) and living with one's spouse (14.3%).

The researchers recognize that these findings potentially extend well beyond the extended family to the community and society at large. Thus, the second phase of the research explored the readiness of the national government and local infrastructure to accommodate a greying of the population. One indication that the country is moving in the right direction is the establishment of the Family Love Bonding Project Coordination Division in the MSDHS to promote the network of "Three Generation Weaving Family Love" Centers throughout the nation. This initiative most closely matches the centrality of inter-generational solidarity as the best opportunity to accommodate Thailand's elderly in constructive and cost-effective ways. These royally inspired Centers also help the policy makers and planners to move away from a welfare approach to the elderly and to more actively engage the elderly in community activities. These Centers represent a visionary approach to restoring the extended family support structure with a view of the elderly as valuable members of every community and the cornerstone to quality inter-generational relationships. The only shortcoming observed by the researchers is the top-down policy and management process among participating agencies in Center activities. Nevertheless, this initiative is the best model that the government has put forward to promote inter-generational solidarity.

The researchers also believe that the potential for development of Thai society rests largely with the LAO, while the central agencies can serve in an advisory and support capacity for general policy direction and targeting to meet national goals. Thus, there needs to be close collaboration between the Centers and LAO (such as the TAO) for grassroots financial support and local coordination. This research looked at the financial, community and administrative feasibility of the Samprao TAO to spearhead a replication of the Three Generation Weaving Family Love Center approach in that Tambon. The results are the Samprao seems ready, able and committed to pursue inter-generational solidarity, at least initially through a virtual center, followed by a stand-alone facility to promote the activities of the Center Project model in ways that are consistent with the goal of inter-generational solidarity. If the experience with Tambon Samprao is any indication, then there is genuine potential for replication the Center Project model with a goal of inter-generational solidarity throughout the country. In the words of one key informant who is also an executive of the Samprao TAO:

"The Samprao TAO has the policy of promoting good inter-generational relationships to increase community solidarity and improved quality of life. This policy will help the members of the community to recognize the value of the local elderly citizens who should be cherished and included in all aspects of community affairs."

Discussion of Findings

The findings from this research suggest that elderly who live with children and grandchildren have greater opportunity to share meals with the extended family. However, it is important to note that this study did not probe whether the location of the shared meal was significant or not. It is likely that any shared dining no matter where it occurs promotes elderly sense of well-being. That said, the researchers also must caution the reader that the findings from this study do not explain the extent to which inter-generational solidarity is the cause or effect of elderly happiness, since the research design did not provide for that level of analysis. This was a cross-sectional study and any inference of causality or direction of effect would require a prospective study with a larger sample.

Also, a limitation of the study is that the researchers visited only one of the 80 Three Generation Weaving Family Love Centers and, thus, the findings and observations from that visit are not necessarily applicable to all centers. But because of the uniformity of centrally-funded and managed government projects, it is safe to assume a certain degree of homogeneity among the operations of the 80 Centers. If there are differences, this would probably reflect adaptation of the Project model to the local context rather than variation in management or core design.

This research also found that the Samprao TAO has appropriate concern about the challenge of an aging society, even in its relatively small, provincial urban setting. As noted above the TAO has a clear policy to support inter-generational solidarity, and they have the capacity and resources to do this. The TAO has set clear goals for optimizing elderly happiness. However, these are merely plans and intentions. It remains to be seen how successful the TAO is in this endeavor. To this point, this research has only gone as far as policy formulation. Future studies need to examine policy transformation and policy evaluation in promoting the concept of inter-generational solidarity for elderly well-being.

The Samprao TAO represents the most peripheral of the government's LAO and, as such, the TAO should be the most familiar with the local population and its strengths and weaknesses. But the thousands of TAO throughout the country have different levels of resources, capacity, and development contexts. Thus, it should not be presumed that what works (or doesn't work) in Samprao can be replicated seamlessly to other LAO.

Policy Recommendations

This research has confirmed that inter-generational solidarity is founded on a process of regular activities of extended family members, conducted together naturally in the course of daily life. This interaction should be a cause and consequence of positive inter-generational relationships and mutual love and understanding. Thus, national leaders should give greater priority to inter-generational solidarity by formulating new supportive policies, and by moving away from the welfare (handout) model toward greater engagement of the elderly in family and community life. Policy makers need to understand that elderly happiness is not driven by money or income as much as it is by feeling useful and respected members of society. Based on the findings of this research, national policy and programs which promote elderly well-being through inter-generational solidarity are a more appropriate and sustainable strategy.

A final recommendation is the need to strengthen the LAO to take the lead in promoting inter-generational solidarity. This study found that the TAO, such a Samprao, has the commitment, resources and readiness to take on this role as catalyst. Only through a collaborative, grassroots effort, with involvement of members of all generations can there be a profound cultural shift to re-establish the extended family and broaden its reach to include those elderly who have no children and grandchildren to provide mutual care. These inter-generational solidarity communities will be the ultimate safety net for all members of society as Thailand continues through its irrevocable transition from a younger to an aging population.

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