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Missoula generations: How different generations of Missoulians view life in the Garden City and Big Sky Country

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MISSOULA GENERATIONS:
HOW DIFFERENT GENERATIONS OF MISSOULIANS VIEW LIFE
IN THE GARDEN CITY AND BIG SKY COUNTRY

by

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M. A. University of California at Berkeley, 1996

B. A. University of Montana, 1992

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

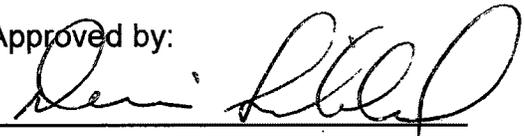
for the degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Montana

May 2001

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Chairperson



Dean, Graduate School

6-21-01

Date

Missoula Generations: How Different Generations of Missoulians View Life
in the Garden City and Big Sky Country

Director: Dennis L. Swibold 

Generational theory—the idea that the social and cultural events we experience in youth shape our outlook and attitudes of adulthood—formed the basis of this professional project. We were—and still are—afloat in a sea of cultural, financial, political and personal events that tweak our worldview. Generational theory is a fairly recent concept, but its newness makes it no less valid.

This work examined how four generations of Missoulians differed in their views of the economy, society, family life, education and the environment. I interviewed 15 Missoulians and one Western Montanan for the project—four from each generation—and wove their comments into five stories. The final project appeared as a special tab in the *Missoulian* on March 7, 1999 as the first installment of the paper's "Celebrate 2000" series.

The interviews and resulting stories showed that, for the most part, each generation tended to mirror the values and beliefs which generational theory authors William Strauss and Neil Howe, discussed in their 1997 book *The Fourth Turning*. For example, the members of Generation X I interviewed demonstrated a characteristic cynicism for life and work and a belief that they had only themselves to depend on. On the other hand, their older counterparts, the Baby Boomers, maintained a more optimistic outlook on life and the opportunities available to them.

There was one place where all interviewees' opinions appeared to converge: sheltering Montana and Missoula from the flux of immigrants from other states. Preserving the state's high quality of life was a priority they all agreed on.

Preface

Thank you to Mike McNally, *Missoulian* editor, for his repeated editing help and suggestions. Most importantly, I want to thank my professional project committee for allowing me the latitude to take a work-related project and adapt it for a professional paper. Your help, support and patience were greatly appreciated.

Finally, I want to thank my mother, whose unending love and support has meant the world to me.

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Interview questions

p. 12

Chapter 1
Foreword

For a lot of us, the most dreadful words we ever hear are, “You sound just like your mother (or father).”

Often, we have spent a good portion of our life attempting to distinguish ourselves from our parents. Yet at some point—and often to our frustration—we discover we can’t shake the habits, behaviors and values learned at our parents’ feet.

Yes, we often grow up to be like our parents, but not in every way. It wasn’t just our parents who influenced our thoughts and behaviors during those formative years, say William Strauss and Neil Howe, authors of the book *The Fourth Turning*.

We were—and still are—afloat in a sea of cultural, financial, political and personal events that tweak our worldview. Strauss and Howe’s generational theory—the idea that the social and cultural events we experience in youth shape our outlook and attitudes of adulthood—is a fairly recent concept. Yet its newness makes it no less valid.

Advertisers rely on generational theory heavily to target specific age groups of consumers. Nike’s late-90s magazine advertisements were a calculated campaign to appeal to Generation Xers’ resistance to being stereotyped or targeted, say J. Walker Smith and Ann Clurman, authors of the