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Needs analysis and the role of education in rural communities

Miriam Brown Tyson
Iowa State University

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Needs analysis and the role of education in rural communities

by

Miriam Brown Tyson

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education (Educational Leadership)

Program of Study Committee:
Larry Ebbers, Major Professor
Timothy O. Borich
Sharon K. Drake
Janice N. Friedel
Daniel C. Robinson

Iowa State University

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Ames, Iowa

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DEDICATION

Rev. Headley Cylbert Brown

Deloris Esmeralda Tulloch

John Hayes Tyson

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With appreciation to

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My friends

My Professors

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ABSTRACT

Utilizing an interpretive theoretical perspective, this qualitative case study applied the Community Capitals Theoretical Framework as a method to analyze the community. The research questions guiding the first phase of the study asked what are the: (a) strengths of the community, (b) needs of the community, and (c) concerns of the community? The research question for the second phase of the research: What are the functions of education in the community's development?

For the first phase of the study, data were collected through observations of community meetings, residents' focus groups, and city staff interviews. A selection of community residents offered their perspectives of the community's strengths, concerns, and values. The greatest strength of the findings indicated that residents valued education. To determine the impact of the school district's education on community development, additional data were collected in the second phase through semi-formal interviews with the school district's administrators who shared their perspectives about the educational services that are offered. Data collection further includes a review of school board meeting notes, and state and federal reports. The findings indicated that the educational system significantly impacted the community's development. As the largest employer in the area, the school district was an integral part of the community, and a substantial number of employees lived in the community. The school district facilities served as gathering places for community activities. Through collaboration, the school district entered into a regional school partnership that could significantly impact the social and economic environments in this rural community.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Many rural communities possess natural beauty, peace, and tranquility; but it takes an enormous amount of investment of time, talent, and money to sustain their social and economic environments. While rural communities seek quality of life for their residents, many still experience social and economic problems due to lack of resources including human and financial capitals (Morgan & Lambe, 2009).

Residents of these communities experience declining population, unemployment, and insufficient amenities. Further, because of globalization and technology, there are fewer geographic boundaries; and communities would benefit from innovation, entrepreneurship, and strong leadership (OECD, 2006).

Crowe (2006) credited structural changes and technological advances in areas such as agriculture, manufacturing, and free trade to declination of rural communities. Because of the many challenges facing rural community leaders, they have employed internal and external methods to strengthen their communities. Some communities have initiated strategies in recruiting, creating, and retaining local businesses while others recruit outside businesses to locate to their communities (Crowe). The process of implementing those strategies includes planning and assessing assets.

To determine the quality of life, communities must critically identify their assets and needs. The Center for Rural Affairs (CFRA, 2010) stated that while it is relatively easy to recognize the assets, defining a community's needs is much more difficult. In determining assets and needs, the CFRA recommended that communities address issues such as inclusiveness, activities for all ages, arts,

education, housing, pride, and accomplishments. One approach to assess the assets and liabilities of the community is known as a community needs analysis, which determines what steps are needed to enhance the community's development.

According to Walzer (2007), implementation of rural development strategies is more difficult than ever as local leaders try to stimulate a stagnant economy and reduce population losses. Rural areas have undergone restructuring as high-paying manufacturing jobs have been replaced with lower-paying service jobs (Walzer). Additionally, many educated individuals including youth have migrated to suburban and urban areas in search of jobs, social, and educational opportunities.

To improve the quality of life in rural America, communities must identify and activate their internal assets. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) asserted that "each community boasts a unique combination of assets upon which to build its future" (p. 62). In identifying these assets, community developers must appeal to individuals, families, informal and formal groups, and organizations. Education is one such example of an asset because of its link to economic growth. Although education is universally recognized as an asset, educators and community developers sometimes fail to establish and maintain partnerships (Kretzmann & McKnight). In a study conducted by Rudzitis (1999), people moved to rural areas because of the social and physical amenities. It is imperative then, that community development strategies acknowledge the value people place on their living environment, including the importance of education.

Purpose of Research

The initial purpose of this case study was to provide the leadership of a rural community with preliminary information for future planning. This community was devastated by natural disaster in recent years and continues to be in various stages of redevelopment. The results of the initial study prompted the current study, in which a community needs analysis approach was applied in two phases. The first phase of the study identified the community's strengths, concerns, and values. The second phase focused on education to determine its importance in helping to construct the redevelopment of this rural community.

Statement of Problem

To determine what steps are needed to enhance the selected community's redevelopment, a community needs analysis approach was applied to assess the assets and liabilities of the community. The analysis included both economic and educational factors.

Research Questions

The first phase of the research addressed the following research questions:

- What are the strengths of the community?
- What are the concerns of the community?
- What are the values of the community?

The second phase of the research addressed the following question: What are the functions of education in the community's development.

Theoretical Framework

The community capitals theoretical framework (Emery & Flora, 2006) was utilized for this study because it offers a method to analyze communities. This reciprocal framework allows a community to gather its resources in order to focus on a broad spectrum of issues that may lead to socio-economic sustainability. The seven capitals of this model include natural, human, cultural, financial, built, social, and political.

Natural capital addresses the environment: weather, geographic isolation, amenities, and natural beauty. Human capital focuses on the skills and abilities of people who live in the community. Cultural capital represents people's attitudes and values. Financial capital refers to financial resources that are available for investment in present and future community initiatives. Built capital deals within and surrounding infrastructure capacity of the community—buildings, roads, bridges, and services. Social capital is based on connectivity. It emphasizes the collaboration and networking within the community as well as the surrounding communities. Political capital focuses on the ability of residents' contributions to the community in a meaningful way.

Research Design

An interpretive theoretical perspective was selected, as it is used in research grounded in constructionist epistemology. The theoretical perspective is critical to the current research as it provides “a context for the process involved and a basis for its logic and criteria” (Crotty, 1998, p. 66). Constructivism is based on important realities dependent on human practices that are constructed in their world. A

qualitative case study utilized semi-formal interviews, focus groups, observations of community meetings; and the collection of census reports, newspapers, government reports, and archival documents.

The qualitative case study was conducted in two phases. First, the community needs analysis was carried out to identify strengths, values, and concerns. Second, the major strength and value identified as education was further investigated to enhance the concerns of aging population, migration, and increased taxes.

Significance of Research

Although rural areas have been attractive to many individuals because of the social and physical amenities, there are concerns about the future health and well-being of small rural communities. There are reasons to worry about rural America even though vitality may exist for some communities. Numerous rural counties have experienced population and economic decline. According to Whitener and Parker (2007), more than 1,000 U.S. counties have lost population since 2000. This poses a problem for rural communities as they have a small tax base and limited resources. Whitener and Parker purported that “low-density settlement patterns often make it more costly for communities and businesses to provide critical public services” (p. 62). As population declines, the support for facilities, services, and activities also declines. This case study adds to the literature of the challenges and opportunities for small rural communities, highlighting the importance of the community capitals in rural community development.

Definitions

The following terms were defined for use in this research:

Assets: “The gifts, skills and capacities of individuals, associations, and institutions” (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 6).

Case Study: “An intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community” (Merriam, 2002, p. 8).

Community: “A place or location in which groups of people interact for mutual support” (Flora & Flora, 2013, p. 25).

Community Capitals: A method to analyze community resources that are assessed and invested to create new resources (Flora, 2006).

Community Development: “A planned effort to build assets that increase the capacity of residents to improve their quality of life” (Green & Haines, 2002, p. 8).

Community Needs Assessment: “A process to identify the assets of a community and determine potential concerns that it faces” (Sharma, Lanum, & Suarez-Balcazar, 2000, p. 1).

Rural area: Defined by the U.S. Census Bureau (2010) as “an incorporated place of fewer than 2,500 inhabitants.”

Researcher Perspectives

I selected this topic related to rural communities because I am passionate about assisting these communities not only to survive but thrive. My interest in rural communities began when I sought my political party’s nomination for the U.S. House of Representatives in the mid-1990s, which provided me the opportunity to travel to

many rural communities. As a former economic developer, I am considered to be an “insider”; and as a researcher, I am considered to be a student. Thus as both a professional and student researcher, I am committed to fairness in presenting the opinions of rural community residents by my use of discovery and advocacy. If there was a single word to describe me, it would be ‘advocate.’

My present worldview can be identified as Subjectivism, meaning that what each person thinks along with one’s personal interpretation is maintained by that individual (Crotty, 1998). My rationale for selecting this community was based on two factors:

1. I already had interacted with the community’s economic developer during my previous community study, and she had expressed an interest in the idea of the current study.
2. My admiration of this community’s visible efforts at redevelopment was formed as I drove through the town while traveling back and forth to my hometown to visit family.

Summary of Chapter 1

Many rural communities possess positive assets but it takes an enormous amount of time, talent, and money to sustain their social and economic environment. While rural communities seek quality of life for their residents, many still experience social and economic problems. There are reasons to worry about rural America. Numerous rural counties have experienced population and economic decline. To determine their quality of life, communities must critically identify their assets and needs. In this chapter, a qualitative case study was presented that provides the

leadership of a rural community with information to assist in planning its redevelopment after experiencing a natural disaster. This case study was conducted in two phases: a) community needs analysis, and b) exploration of the role of education. The chapter introduced the research questions, theoretical framework, and research design. It also provided the research's significance, definitions, and my perspectives.

The review of literature in Chapter 2 reexamines the community capitals framework, its tenets, and assumptions; the purpose of community needs analysis, its benefits, limitations, and local constraints; and the exploration of education's functions in the development of rural community development. Contained in Chapter 3 are the methodology approaches for Phase 1 including the community profile, and Phase 2. It addresses the research questions, research design, methods, and ethical procedures used in the study. Found in Chapter 4 are the findings of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the research, including details of the community's school district. It reports the participants' responses regarding the community's strengths, concerns, and values. Additionally, the chapter includes details of its school district and summaries of the school district's administrators' interviews. The analysis of the findings, discussion, and conclusion are offered in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature discusses the role of Community Capitals Theoretical Framework, its relationship to the social and economic progress of community development; and how education lays the foundation essential to the planning of community vitality and sustainability as found in Community Capitals Framework. Specifically, the review is separated into four sections: (a) Community Capitals Framework (CCF), its tenets and assumptions; (b) community needs analysis including its purposes, benefits, limitations, and local constraints; (c) education's functions in rural communities; and (d) rural community development.

Community Capitals Framework

Motivated by their educational and practical experiences, Cornelia and Jan Flora developed the Community Capitals Framework (CCF) during the 1980s (Flora & Flora, 2012). During the 1960s, the Floras studied at Cornell University's graduate program in the Department of Development Sociology. Influenced by Frank Young, Ruth Young, and Paul R. Eberts of that department at the time, the Floras were introduced to "symbolic structuralism (community structure theory), a theoretical perspective designed to measure underlying dimensions of collectivity" (Flora & Flora, 2012, p. 6).

The Floras collaborated with Eberts and F. Young. Flora and Flora (2012) indicated that Eberts' belief in change equity led him to focus on POET variables: Population, Organization, Environment, and Technology from the human ecologist branch of sociology. The authors added that as a result of Eberts' association with F. Young, Eberts added Symbols (POET became POETS) to devise measures that

could predict positive changes in the allocation of wealth and well-being in rural and urban communities (Flora & Flora, 2012).

Although this methodology was not ideal, it served as a foundation of CCF. Now, the CCF serves as a method to analyze communities (Emery & Flora, 2006). “Its theoretical base is rich and slightly heterodox and brings together symbolic structuralism, social constructivism, participatory action research, and appreciative inquiry” (Flora & Flora, 2012, p. 1). This reciprocal framework allows a community to gather its resources in order to focus on a broad spectrum of issues that may lead to socio-economic sustainability. The seven capitals of this model include natural, human, cultural, financial, built, social, and political. According to Flora (2007): “The capitals are both ends in themselves and means to an end” (p. 3).

It is important to recognize that every community contains assets. Flora and Flora (2013) asserted that “when those assets are invested to create new resources, they become capitals” (p. 10). The authors determined that separating the resources into seven “capitals” was beneficial to developing a complete examination of the organization. Thus, the capitals may be intertwined and dependent on one another for ultimate success or failure. Flora and Flora (2013, p. 10) cautioned that when one capital is given more credence over all others, the resources are “decapitalized.”

Natural Capital

Natural capital addresses the environment: weather, geographic isolation, amenities, and natural beauty. The quantity and quality of soil, water, air, and biodiversity are elements of natural capital. It assumes that community survival depends on natural capital that may be converted to other capitals. For instance, soil

is used for the production of food and shelter used by humans and animals, resulting in the conversion of natural capital to financial and social capital. Water used for commercial and industrial development enhances built capital and financial capital. Biodiversity is also critical to the discussion of natural capital—different forms of life that contribute to clean air have an impact on financial and political capital as the government creates public policies that compensate farmers who protect our environment or support green spaces in communities.

Land resources are used in different ways that result in wealth, gifted, bought, and sold. Flora and Flora (2013) cited the U.S. Government's motivation in converting natural capital to financial capital: Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery and other explorers received land from the government for purposes of conducting expeditions. Not only did the explorers acquire cultural capital by learning about the inhabitants and the land they found, they also acquired wealth.

Other conversions of natural capital cited by Flora and Flora (2013) included the Native American tribes who used the land to grow their communities' social and financial capitals; and to the Homestead Act of 1862, signed by President Lincoln, that offered European settlers acres of land to live and work in to increase productivity for at least five years. Those efforts created villages and towns, thus impacting many elements of the community capitals.

Jacobs (2011a) defined natural capital as "all the resources available to the community" (p. 2), explaining that natural capital can be disturbed or depleted by events beyond our control such as droughts, floods, fires, or human overuse. Jacobs (2011a) further stated that our natural environment adds to the value of our

community and is worth protecting. When natural resources are used unwisely, assets that contribute to financial, social, and cultural capitals will be depleted. Jacobs recommended that communities need to consider these questions as they plan for the future: “What kind of natural capital exists in the community? What are the benefits? What is the potential? What are the concerns? What is the best use of these natural resources?” (Jacobs, 2011a, p. 2).

Human Capital

Another tenet of the CCF framework is the human capital defined by Flora and Flora (2012) as “the characteristics and potential of individuals determined by the intersection of nature (genetics) and nurture (interaction with individuals, groups, and the ecosystem)” (p. 2). This capital focuses on the skills and abilities of people who live in the community. It includes leadership capabilities, knowledge, wisdom, and information that can be used to complement other community capitals. It assumes that each person possesses assets that are gained through formal and informal education. Some elements of human capitals may incorporate “population, education, skills, health, creativity, youth, and diverse groups” (Flora, Emery, Fey, & Bregendahl, 2008, p. 2).

Building human capital through formal education is critical to the social and economic growth of any community, particularly in rural areas. Many states have reduced the number of school districts in order to reduce expenditures. Flora and Flora (2013) compared the number of U.S. school districts dating back from World War II to 2002. In 1942, there were about 108,000 school districts compared to 13,522 in 2002. With the consolidation of school districts came increased state

control coupled with standardization. Critics of standardization argue that as a result, the educational system has become unresponsive to local needs (Flora & Flora, 2013).

Not only does human capital affect built and financial capitals, it also impacts social capital, according to Flora and Flora (2013). They reported that having a school in the community increases the amount of extracurricular activities that involve students. These activities reduce idleness and impact the amount of violence and crime. Fewer schools mean having less human, social, cultural, and financial capitals.

Just as formal education is critical to a person's well-being, so too are the experiences gained through everyday learning and acquiring knowledge. Flora and Flora (2013) reported that a stymied community project reflected how formal and informal education are equally important. The project committee comprised persons who possessed formal education but lacked working knowledge of the issue of interest. The committee recruited an individual who lacked formal education but had experience with the subject matter. With input from this individual, the committee gained clarity and achieved positive outcomes.

Human capital is composed of individual attributes that allow individuals to earn a living to provide for their families and contribute to society. Flora and Flora (2013, p. 84) drew upon Becker's (2002) description of human capital, "schooling, computer skills, a healthy lifestyle, and the virtues of punctuality and honesty." Becker (2002) explained that these attributes are rudiments of human capital as they

increase earnings, enhance health or add to a person's good habits over much of one's lifetime.

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital represents people's attitudes and values. It is about their culture, traditions, language, and worldview. Cultural capital plays a role in which voices are heard. It assumes that who we know, our heritage, our ethnicities, and our races are valued (Emery, Fey, & Flora, 2006). Examples of cultural capital include ethnic celebrations, diverse populace, or characteristics of a person or a community.

Bourdieu (1986) focused on the individual, explaining that cultural capital exists in three forms: the embodied state of the mind and body, the objectified state centered on material objects, and the institutional state such as educational qualifications. To acquire cultural capital in the embodied state implies that an individual is cultivating one's self for improvement through influences from the family and surroundings. Cultural capital in the objectified state depends on its relationship with the embodied state and can be appropriated both materially and symbolically. The institutionalized state permits comparison and recognition of the academic qualifications of an individual. Bourdieu posited that the most powerful use of cultural capital lies in transmission, because it will occur dependent mainly on the cultural capital embodied in the whole family, thus bringing family legacy to the forefront.

Legacy is an attribute of cultural capital that is passed on to different generations through family or community (Flora & Flora, 2013). Parents mold their children through guidance, knowledge, and family traditions. The authors

acknowledged that those bequeaths become an integral part of their children, shaping their worldview and the decisions made about their lives. In 2013, Flora and Flora noted that the legacy parents' transfer depends on the family's socio-economic standing and is influenced by accumulated resources.

Parents hold certain expectations regarding their children's future, and accomplishments play a significant role in the types of opportunities they offer to their children. Flora and Flora (2013) acknowledged that "rural families are deeply affected by the opportunity structure in their community" (p. 72). The authors asserted that parents' experiences, knowledge of class structures, and work situations combine to impact their children's decision to stay or leave the community. Flora and Flora also mentioned that parents influence a school's character, as their legacies reveal expectations for their children's future.

Just as parents transfer their legacies to children, so do social and educational institutions within a community. The social organizations such as service and sports clubs comprise people with knowledge, power, and authority. The schools have great influence as children interact with teachers, coaches, and administrators who are seen as role models. These institutions play an important role in guiding children's position in society, as stated by Flora and Flora (2013).

While cultural capital is essential to the socioeconomic health of communities, it is important to note that certain cultures are not recognized to full extent. Flora and Flora (2013) claimed that although there are many cultural capitals in North America, one cultural capital is more valued than others and is deemed the right way "to know, act, and understand" (Flora & Flora, 2013, p. 55). Flora and Flora further

stated that cultural capital determines the meaning of knowledge, how it is achieved, and validated.

Financial Capital

Financial capital plays a critical role in developing a community. This capital refers to private and public financial resources that are available for investment in present and future community initiatives. It refers to the resources that are translated into monetary instruments making them easily converted into other assets (Flora & Flora, 2013). It assumes that the other capitals are effective if they can be converted to financial capital. Financial capital is easy to measure and “it can be used to measure other community capitals” (Jacobs, 2011b). Jacobs offered some examples of financial capital in a community:

- bond issues to aid community economic development;
- foundation grants as a source of external financial support;
- revolving loan funds;
- micro-loans to aid community economic development;
- tax abatements; and
- transfers of wealth. (p. 1)

In addition, Jacobs (2011b) noted that financial capital includes stocks, bonds, lines of credit, and real estate. Jacobs further stated that “financial capital is money that is used for investment rather than consumption” (p. 2). If someone purchases items for personal use it is not a form of capital unless the item becomes a source that produces income.

Shaffer (1989) described financial capital “as the mechanism that permits the community to purchase or develop the labor and physical capital base critical for community economic development” (p. 158). Flora and Flora (2013) affirmed that financial capital can be converted to productive labor as an investment to increase human capital and built capital. Flora and Flora explained how a potential business owner utilized start-up funding and networking to start a business. Through research at the small business women’s center (human capital) and networking with community businesspersons (social capital), this owner was able to secure expert advice about different forms of credit and opened a restaurant (built capital).

Built Capital

Built capital deals within and surrounding infrastructure capacity of the community. It is “the permanent physical facilities and services needed to support business and community life” (Flora & Flora, 2013, p. 242). It assumes that people must be able to utilize built capital in ways that enhance their quality of life. The built capital of a community refers to “the physical infrastructure [enabling] network communication and access to services and markets” (Flora & Flora, 2013, p. 214). This allows individuals to be more industrious within the community. Examples of built capital include housing, transportation, telecommunications, hardware, utilities, and buildings such as schools, hospitals, and sports facilities (Flora et al., 2008; Flora & Flora, 2013).

Flora and Flora (2013) indicated that there are two usages of built capital: access and consumption. Access may be inclusive or exclusive; i.e., the infrastructure is available to all or limited to some. Consumption can be joint or rival,

meaning that the infrastructure can be used concurrently; or one's use of the infrastructure is diminished by another. Together, these forms result in four types of built capital: private, toll, common-pool, and collective. Flora and Flora (2013) indicated that these forms of built capital may be offered and supported by public and private entities, and selection of the providing entity remains with the community.

It is well documented that rural communities have many challenges to overcome, among them being two forms of built capital: transportation and telecommunications. Few rural communities have airports, public transportation, railways, and efficient water systems, due to lack of finances. Flora and Flora (2013) claimed that when these forms of capital exist, it reduces the isolation of communities from markets and information. Flora and Flora reported that public transportation including railroads with passenger service has become nonexistent. Further, rural households were less likely to have broadband and internet access. In 2011, 70% of urban and suburban residents had access to broadband at home compared to 57% of rural residents (Flora & Flora).

Built capital is only effective when it contributes to other community capitals. Ignoring social capital, built capital may inhibit or enhance capabilities. Flora and Flora (2013) shared both positive and negative examples that built capital can produce. Positive examples included communities that invested in public and private tourism facilities which yielded positive impacts on the economy. By contrast, negative examples noted communities that built prisons and ethanol plants which

offer jobs with decent wages but do not employ local people or purchase supplies from local vendors (Flora & Flora, 2013).

Social Capital

Perhaps the most studied tenet of the community capital theoretical framework is social capital. It is based on connectivity and emphasizes collaboration and networking within the community as well as surrounding communities. It assumes that communities can develop sustained social capital through relationships and enhanced communication. The customary indicators of social capital may include newspapers, voter turnout, voluntary participation, and attendance at meetings in local organizations (Green & Haines, 2002).

There are varying definitions of social capital. Some scholars define it within the context of individualism, while others define it as a group or community milieu. Flora and Flora (2013) asserted that social capital is not an individual feature, it is “a group-level phenomenon” (p.119). They posited that individuals cannot create social capital by themselves; it is more than the summing of individuals’ social capital. Social capital involves mutual trust, reciprocity, groups, collective identity, working together, and a sense of shared future. Putnam (2000) defined social capital as “features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (p. 20). Coleman (1988) explained that social capital should be defined by its function and “it is not a single entity but a variety of different entities” (S98).

There are two fundamentals of social capital: bonding and bridging. According to Emery and Flora (2006), bonding social capital refers to close repeated ties that

develop community. Flora and Flora (2013) indicated that these ties may be emotionally charged and based on class, ethnicity, and gender, or like characteristics. Members of a group with high bonding capital tend to be familiar with one another through different community settings or roles. Emery and Flora (2006) indicated that bridging social capital involves ample ties that link organizations and communities together. This enables community groups to connect with one another as well as outside groups.

Bridging social capital brings people together for singular purposes. Flora and Flora (2013) posited that it encourages people with unique backgrounds to address different ideas. When bridging and bonding social capital are high, communities are prepared for action; and outcomes can be realized. Equally, when bridging and bonding social capital are low, communities need the ability to realize change (Flora & Flora).

Simpson (2005) stated that those who enjoy a high level of social capital are usually those who feel a strong sense of belonging, a willingness to participate in community activities, and a commitment to work toward the future well-being of the community. In these communities, social inclusion and participation by diverse community members are valued, and increased potential opportunities are an outcome of interaction and participation in networks rather than a process.

While developing social capital, communities should be careful about the exclusion of individuals and groups. Besser, Recker, and Agnitsch (2008) offered that “there is the potential for tight knit groups to use the power of social capital to exclude others or impose their will on others” (Besser, Recker, & Agnitsch, 2008, p.

582). Zacharakis and Flora (2005) indicated that while primary groups offer opportunities and resources to its members, such groups are in effect isolating the underrepresented groups in the community. Zacharakis and Flora advised that isolated groups may impede economic and social development.

Emery and Flora (2006) posited that social capital is a key community attribute, noting: “It can influence, as well as be influenced by, the stock and flows of other capitals” (p. 19). Social capital is much like financial capital as it increases with use. When it is low or absent, it is impossible for public business to get done (Potapchuk, Crocker, & Schechter, 1997).

Political Capital

Political capital focuses on individuals or groups having a voice and gaining access to power. Flora and Flora (2013) defined political capital as “the ability of a group to influence the distribution of resources within a social unit, including helping set the agenda of what resources are available” (p. 144). It assumes that communities have the ability to effect change through mobilization which then can influence the development and enforcement of standards, rules, and regulations. Political capital can be converted to built capital, cultural capital, social capital, and financial capital.

In general, political capital mirrors the prevailing culture and there is a tendency to support the status quo, according to Flora and Flora (2013). This can lead to the exclusion of other groups with different ideas. Flora and Flora stressed the importance of understanding the political landscape in rural communities. Knowing who drives the agenda and how excluded groups can be included is

critical. Flora and Flora (2013) posed a thought-provoking question: “Under what circumstances can excluded people organize and work together, know and feel comfortable around powerful people, and bring their issues forward for action?” (p. 145).

Having political power or community power means that one has the ability to influence the allocation of both public and private resources on a community level (Flora & Flora, 2013). Power is the capacity to create or prevent a situation from occurring. It is exercised in different ways including “physical force, institutionalized force or authority, and influence” (p. 146). Community power is the ability to influence the allocation of public and private resources in the community.

After studying the approaches to community power in rural and urban communities, Flora and Flora (2013) cited four ways power is exercised and how different research methodologies reveal different aspects of power. Pluralism, elitism, class-based analysis, and growth machine are formed from different assumptions about power and use different ways of gathering data about who has power and how it is utilized.

Pluralism reflects a representative democracy where there is no dominant source of power. The assumption is that power is widely disseminated among factions. Elitism is described as members belonging to the same social sphere. The assumption here is that power conforms to those who have wealth, prestige, and control. Class-based analysis of power is described as those who emphasize monetary gains and want their economic interests protected. The assumption is that those who control the corporate economic system also control the wider society. The

growth machine consists of groups that promote community growth. They work to foster growth and obtain its benefits. Members of such groups may include developers, construction companies, real estate agents, owners of commercial buildings, rental units, and banks (Flora & Flora, 2013).

For communities to operate at their highest levels of efficiency, it is essential that resources are identified, assessed, and invested. These investments become capitals. For the capitals to positively contribute to any community there must be dependence upon the broad participation of its members.

Community Needs Analysis

Both rural and urban community leaders are responsible for charting their respective community's social and economic destinies. For rural communities, it is even more critical for leaders to be armed with a development plan because of limited resources including human and financial capitals. The growth and vitality of a community depends on leadership and planning. Effective leadership means offering vision, providing direction, and collaborating with others. Planning is a process that allows for preparing and forecasting unanticipated challenges. A community needs analysis is a way of providing leaders with the answers they seek in formulating a development plan. That is, a needs analysis is the pre-planning phase of strategic planning. For the purpose of this review, the terms 'needs analysis' and 'needs assessment' are used interchangeably.

According to Witkin and Altschuld (1995): "The major purpose of a needs assessment is to gather information for setting priorities on needs of people in relation to a system of interest" (p. 18). Sharma, Lanum, and Suarez-Balcazar

(2000) posited that “the goal of a needs assessment is to identify the assets of a community and determine potential concerns that it faces” (Sharma et al., 2000, p. 1). It is a process by which people come together. In order to have meaningful outcomes, it is imperative that stakeholders’ contributions are included and valued during the needs assessment process.

Sharma et al. (2000) indicated that a way to estimate the needs of a community is to ask residents their opinions regarding the development services. There are different ways to involve residents: conducting interviews and focus groups, distributing questionnaires, and facilitating public forums. According to Shaffer (1989), communities should include citizens as much as possible. Although not all will participate, they should be given the opportunity. Fodor (1999) concurred, stating that although leaders may think they know what the needs are in their community, it is better to get input. In discussing civic participation, Porter (2008) explained that people are leery of changes in their communities because of lack of information from leaders, and see growth as a threat rather than an opportunity. This can lead to controversy and opposition to projects that would otherwise be of benefit to the community.

There are different types of community needs analyses including those that focus on programs, organizations, and infrastructures. Regardless of the type, a similar process is required in each effort. Need assessments are divided into four phases, according to Sharma et al. (2000): (a) “Planning and Organizing Phase” (p. 2), (b) “Needs Assessment Methodology” (p. 4), (c) “Needs Assessment Survey

Data Collection” (p. 10), and (d) “Summarizing and Disseminating the Needs Assessment Survey Results” (Sharma et al., 2000, p. 14).

The planning and organizing phase includes gathering information about all available community data, forming alliances with individuals or organizations potentially involved in the assessment, and identifying the goals and objectives of the project. The assessment methodology identifying the vehicle is used to obtain information such as focus groups or interviews. The data collection comprises targeting the population, providing incentives, and collecting the information. The final stage contains summarizing and presenting the results including the major strengths and concerns to stakeholders. A public forum is one way to present the results. The more open the process, the more support leaders will receive.

While it is important to conduct a community needs analysis to determine priorities and allocate resources, the process has its benefits and limitations. The Cesar Chavez Foundation (2003) identified some of the benefits and limitations of needs analysis. Benefits include:

- community involvement, resulting in more ‘buy in’;
- identifying residents priorities;
- achieving desired results rapidly and inexpensively;
- existing data supportive of community characteristics and condition; and
- public forum derived from a broad spectrum of people.

Limitations include:

- uncertainty that views represent the community;

- existing data not current;
- method of gathering information costly; and
- small number of people participating. (Cesar Chavez Foundation, 2003)

Along with benefits and limitations, there are constraints of community needs analysis that could impact the level of success a community assessment may offer. Among the many potential constraints that could significantly impede the process are (a) the challenge of getting people involved in a meaningful way, and (b) making sure the resources are available to produce useful results.

Hughes (1998) claimed that developers have confidence that people will participate in assessments. However, Hughes believed that is not necessarily true as community members may be overwhelmed with such requests or may be reluctant to participate because results of previous projects were not released. To combat 'community burnout' (Hughes), developers need to work at building trust. In discussing public participation, Green and Haines (2002) also indicated that there is a natural tendency to think people will get involved in assessment projects. However, they asserted that time is frequently cited as a reason for non-participation and "it is rarely the real issue" (Green & Haines, p. 38). Further, Green and Haines identified several reasons for non-participation by community members including lack of child care, transportation, accessibility to the disabled, and timely communication. Green and Haines suggested that organizations must provide these services to gain participation.

To conduct a needs assessment that facilitates rewarding outcomes, it is essential that the organization have support. According to Wilkins, Girdwood, and

Hackler (2011), the institutional capacity of any economic development organization is essential to the assessment process. Wilkins et al. (2011) asserted that the development organization must have leadership support, reliable data, staffing availability, and physical resources. In a discussion of organizational capacity, Brown (2012) listed management and operations, governance, and resources as needed components. The elements of these components include physical infrastructure, technology, leadership, in-kind resources, and needs assessments. It was noted that the components and elements crucial to enhancing organizational capacity were critical, especially for organizations in rural areas.

Education

For years, there have been many debates about the functions of education in society as a whole, even in small rural communities. Although opinions vary regarding its functions, there is agreement that education is synonymous with economics. From the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2012, p. 14): “A well-educated population is essential for economic and social development; therefore societies have a real interest in ensuring that children and adults have access to a wide range of educational opportunities.”

Guthrie (2003) stated: “Education is an important element in national economic progress” (p. viii). While discussing the state of America’s education, the author explained that in previous times, people’s ability to succeed was determined by what they could extract from the land. Guthrie posited: “Today, a nation is more likely to survive and prosper based on the minds of its people” (Guthrie, 2003, p. viii).

Goldin (1999) asserted that education and training of a population is an essential ingredient to realized productivity and economic growth. The author stated “formal education, especially basic literacy, is essential for a well-functioning democracy, and enhances citizenship and community” (Goldin, 1999, p. 1). Goldin indicated that education serves many functions in the community and in personal lives of people. The author claimed that education enhances skills which lead to income and spurs invention and innovation resulting in rapid technological advances.

According to Levin and Kelley (1994), economists and social scientists believe that education is the key to solving many challenges including economic growth. However, they insisted that education cannot do it alone. Levin and Kelley advocated that “education can work to improve productivity only if there are employment opportunities” (p. 240). Ozturk (2001) believed that education lays the groundwork for development of our economic and social well-being, and “it is the key to increasing economic efficiency and social consistency” (p. 2). Further, Ozturk asserted that education is not the only factor in transforming an economy; domestic and foreign investments as well as the overall policy environment are fundamental to economic performance.

While education may not be the sole complement to a community’s well-being, study of the literature indicates that education plays an important role in the development of capitals necessary for community vitality. Gibbs (2005) noted that as the demand for highly educated workers increase, rural policy makers view local education (human capital) as an essential factor of job and income growth. The

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2012) stated that higher levels of education are related to longer life expectancy, higher voting rates, and empathetic attitudes towards equal rights (social and political capitals).

Public educational institutions have broad impacts on the communities they serve. In addition to local, state and national funding, they receive monies through several means: grants, taxes, bond interests, and re-investment of the funds in various ways (financial capital). Public schools are major employers and purchasers of goods and services. Schools expend monies for salaries, building construction, materials, and supplies. According to Weiss (2004), these funds have direct and indirect economic impacts when school employees use their salaries for mortgage or rent payments, to purchase goods and services, and to pay taxes.

Miller (1995) stated that rural schools have played a pivotal role in communities. In addition to providing basic education, schools have served as cultural centers in rural areas (built and cultural capitals). "Athletics, drama programs, music, and other social activities conducted at schools have played a vital part in rural community life and identity formation dating back to the 19th century" (p. 2).

In *Building Communities from the Inside Out*, Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) highlighted students' efforts in a grant-funded project that improved the aesthetic, social, and political environments in a particular community. With the assistance of a school community facilitator, first graders elicited support from residents that resulted in students spending a day planting trees (human and natural capitals) at preferred community sites. Additionally, second graders conducted a

voter registration drive, and fifth graders implemented a recycling activity that included collecting cans from residents, crushing and depositing them at a local recycling center (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Rural Challenges

Rural communities possess a whole host of challenges; among them are inadequate educational and development policies, insufficient funding, out-migration, and broadband access. This segment explores these challenges as it relates to education and community development.

Inadequate Educational and Development Policies

Korsching and Allen (2004) indicated that many rural communities are struggling to maintain their economic and social vigor; fewer still are experiencing any type of growth or development. They credited these challenges to the lack of coherent comprehensive national policy in addressing the problems and providing assistance to rural communities. Kusimo, Keyes, Balow, Carter, and Poe (1999) also reflected the need for effective policy changes that recognize rural differences. They stated that in addition to global economic forces, state and federal policies designed for infrastructure development favored urban areas, and were biased against rural areas because of economies of scale. Kusimo et al. posited that reducing class sizes and hiring more teachers in urban districts negatively impact the quantity and quality of teachers in poor rural districts.

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Education announced the *Race to the Top* competition winners that intensified education policies discussions. According to Hart (2010), the majority of the funding was awarded to support East Coast schools.

Of the 12 grant recipients, only one western state (Hawaii) received funding. Critics described the *Race to the Top* process as “everything from a ‘geographic bias’ to a ‘strong East Coast bent’” (Hart, 2010, p. 1). Further, it was noted that large urban districts were rewarded for their policies of increasing the number of charter schools, which is unrealistic for rural districts as they lack varied resources.

Just as rural educational institutions experienced policy biases, other sectors faced the same predicament, among them agriculture and infrastructure. For example, Whitener and Parker (2007) indicated that the structure of commodity farm policies did not completely address rural economies and populations. They referred to farm payments in the 1990s that offered diminutive results regarding long-term migration from farming areas. Utilizing USDA’s Economic Research Service, Whitener and Parker noted: “Counties highly dependent on farm payments had some of the highest rates of population loss, even during periods when most other rural areas were gaining population” (p. 62).

Evidence in the literature showed there is much concern regarding rural policy development. According to the OECD (2006), a new rural paradigm has emerged. The organization observed that member-countries are employing integrated rural policy approaches. Many countries, including those non-OECD ones are concentrating on *places* (e.g., towns), rather than *a particular sector* (i.e., agriculture), and are emphasizing *investments*, rather than *subsidies*. It was noted that three factors influenced policy development across OECD countries: (a) greater focus on natural and cultural amenities, (b) recognizing the limits of agriculture policy

and international pressures for reform, and (c) decentralization and new trends in regional policy (OECD, 2006).

Insufficient Funding

Adequate funding has been a major obstacle for most rural communities. Although rural communities receive monies through tax receipts, fees, loans, and grants, it is difficult to sustain the infrastructure because of size. According to Richardson (2000), local and national governments have been funding rural development efforts for decades. The author claimed these funds “have helped reduce the impacts of crises, especially natural disasters such as floods and crop loss and have fostered economic investment in new infrastructure projects through loans” (pp. 31-32). However, federal and state reductions in available finances and personnel have limited the extent to which these loans have benefitted development efforts over the last decade. Drabenstott (2010) indicated that with increased government budgets, rural communities will face reduced funding.

Kusimo et al. (1999) stated that rural communities lacked the capacity for accessing useful funding. They indicated that rural communities do not always have the time and knowledge to locate sources, coupled with the narrow scope for funding innovative programs, and research ideas which do not fit well within their boundaries. In reference to federal grant programs, Hall (2010) commented: “Rural places have needs that result not only from poverty but also from lack of experience and comparatively smaller scale and density” (p.312). Compounding this dilemma is the fact that rural communities lag behind urban communities even for basic services, according to Hall (2010).

There are mixed opinions on the distribution of federal grants to rural and needy areas. Hall (2010) pointed to existing literature where some believe that grants should be awarded based on need, while others contend it should be based on need and capacity. Hall (2010) posited that need and capacity are inversely related: "When need is high, capacity is usually low, or the capacity that does exist is fairly weak by general standards" (p. 316). For community developers in areas of lower economic progress, Hall stressed the need for investment in capacity building in order to obtain federal awards.

Out-Migration

A revitalized rural America is vital to society, but it does not stay important for long, according to Richardson (2000). The author posited that when rural residents are hopeless, they tend to migrate to urban areas seeking a better life. Richardson asserted that the loss of youth and innovative persons from already declining areas further accelerate the decay in infrastructure and neglect of productive agriculture areas.

Youth migration has captured the attention of leaders and researchers as a phenomenon known as brain drain that has become a serious issue for rural communities. The brain drain occurs because rural communities experience many social and economic problems as resources are finite. Hence, residents encounter lack of stable employment and amenities, while also being socially isolated. These challenges offer reasons why rural youth migrate to urban areas. To create a robust social and economic environment to counter this dilemma, leaders must be creative in addressing this growing trend.

In *Hollowing out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and What It Means for America*, Carr and Kefalas (2009) took the brain drain conversation to another level. In 2001, the authors moved to a small town in Iowa to better understand the rural brain drain phenomenon, and the exodus of young people from small communities that has plagued rural America. Carr and Kefalas (2009) contended it would be a mistake to overlook the issue of the overwhelming loss of educated and talented young people coupled with the aging population, and economic decline has far reaching repercussions.

After interviewing young people who attended the town's high school in the late 1980s and 1990s about their transition to adulthood, Carr and Kefalas (2009) categorized the participants into four groups: the achievers, the stayers, the seekers, and returners. The achievers are the high achieving students who are expected to leave and the mostly likely to succeed, destined for Ivy League colleges. The stayers transition quickly to adulthood and do not attend college. They find jobs in industries prone to declining wages, vanishing benefits, and downsizing. The seekers are those who spent their young lives planning to leave looking for opportunities. They do not attend college and are likely to join the military. The returners are the achievers and the seekers who have attained their Ivy League education, left the military, and/or completed community college education.

The U.S. Census Bureau (2000) showed that from 1995 to 2000, 31 states experienced domestic negative net migration of young, single, and college-educated people. A negative net migration means that more migrants left an area than entered it. McGranahan, Cromartie, and Wojan (2010) stated that almost half of the nation's

2,050 rural counties lost population through net out-migration between 1988 and 2008. “More than a third lost more than 10% of their population over the past 20 years as a result of net outmigration” (McGranahan, Cromartie, & Wojan, p. 1). Rural areas have a disproportionate share of the U.S. poverty population, according to Tickamyer and Duncan (1990). Many communities lack stable employment, community investment, diverse economy, and social and technological infrastructures. Tickamyer and Duncan explained that rural communities are becoming more socially and economically isolated, and poverty in rural America has been on the backburner for many years.

Florida (2002) reported that communities have neglected young people until recently, having “typically been thought of as transients who contribute little to a city’s bottom line” (p. 294). However, in the creative age, they matter for two reasons. First, they are energetic, risk-takers, and work long hours. Second, young graduates are also armed with the most up-dated skills. To recruit and retain them, Florida suggested that communities should develop a “people climate” (p. 295) plan that addresses social interest and lifestyle needs.

Gibbs (2005) explained that in the past rural areas invested in job training programs via state and local jurisdictions in an effort to stem the out-migration tide. The most recent effort is to improve schools; however, rural areas have faced special challenges, as their schools cannot take advantage of economies of scale, because of their small population. Therefore, educational institutions must make fundamental shifts to align with and support new regional development initiatives (Drabenstott, 2010).

Broadband Access

Rural loss of population has enhanced the need for broadband technology. Schadelbauer (2010, p. 15) claimed that “rural America is shrinking” and the key to slowing or reversing the trend will be jobs. Schadelbauer (2010) posited: “In today’s information economy many jobs can be done from virtually anywhere . . . as long as the worker has access to state-of-the-art broadband services.” Stengberg (2013) asserted: “With the growth of the digital economy, more economic activities are taking place on the internet potentially reducing geographic constraints, increasing efficiency, and improving growth prospects for rural communities” (p. 1).

In its national broadband plan, the Federal Communication Commission (2010) stated: “Like electricity a century ago, broadband is a foundation for economic growth, job creation, global competitiveness and a better way of life” (p. xi). According to the Federal Communication Commission Guides (2012):

Broadband or high-speed Internet access allows users to access the Internet and Internet-related services at significantly higher speeds than those available through “dial-up” Internet access services. Broadband speeds vary significantly depending on the particular type and level of service ordered and may range from as low as 200 kilobits per second (kbps), or 200,000 bits per second, to 30 megabits per second (Mbps), or 30,000,000 bits per second.

(Par. 1)

Comparing electrical service to internet technology, Kuttner (2012) stated that the internet has become a necessity rather than luxury, transforming “Americans’ way of life” (p. 1). Kuttner explained that this transformation is due to the emergence

of new technologies with increased speed of data transmissions thus creating incentives for wide internet use (Kuttner, 2012). With new technology, the use of dial-up internet declined and broadband has now become the top choice for internet users; 96% urban households and 92% of rural households subscribed to broadband (Stengberg, 2013).

Broadband in rural America is taking a back seat to urban America in availability and cost. At a broadband symposium held in New York to address expanding broadband access to rural areas (Bartgis, 2012), Congressman Gibson (NY20) stated “100% access to broadband would help to grow the economy. . . . coverage was critical to education as well as for rural health care clinics that need real time advice and feedback” (p. 3). It was reported that “80% of the Fortune 500 companies only list their job openings on the internet” (p. 3). Participants cited cost as an obstacle for consumers and companies providing service in sparsely populated areas. Legislators believed that the federal government’s involvement is essential in achieving broadband to rural areas. In a study examining factors that contribute to adopting broadband in rural America, Glass and Stefanova (2010) concluded that federal financial assistance is necessary for network construction. Further, to increase the numbers of subscribers, government policies are needed to reduce internet infrastructure upgrades and multimedia (voice, data, and video) content costs.

According to Stengberg (2013), early on farmers as a group held higher internet subscription rates than rural households. Stengberg reported that “by 2010, 62% of rural households and farms in the United States had internet subscriptions

compared with 73% of urban households” (Stengberg, p. 15). Kuttner (2012) reported that the National Broadband Map estimates that 99.7% of Americans in urban areas live “where the maximum download speed available is equal or greater than 3 Mbps and the upload speed is equal to or greater than 768 kbps” (p. 5). Further, in rural America, 84.7% are estimated to live in areas that meet this standard. Kuttner indicated that this translates to 0.8 million Americans in urban areas and 9.8 million in rural areas do not have access to service that meets the Mbps upload/768 kbps download standard (p. 5).

Kuttner (2012) noted that there are benefits and opportunities for broadband usage. Evidence shows that when broadband levels of service first reach a community, “it brings economic and population growth with it” (p. 8). Kuttner reported that in an analysis comparing rural counties with and without broadband from 2000-2006, the high broadband counties experience higher growth in total employment, wage and salary jobs. The absence of broadband impacts education and health care, significantly. Kuttner outlined the opportunity costs in broadband absence:

- it is difficult for people to receive training and credentialing;
- on-line education using rich visual content are unavailable;
- lower levels of formal education equating to lower income;
- the inability to utilize health care in-home monitoring systems; and
- healthcare providers deciding to limit or not provide services. (Kuttner, 2012, p. 8)

Stengberg (2013, p. 5) stated that “while research suggests that broadband has potential economic value for rural communities, variability in the availability and

use of broadband infrastructure across the rural-urban landscape remains a challenge.” Further, Schadelbauer (2010) asserted that without high-quality broadband, “rural America will not be able to leverage its estimable strengths to lure companies and workers” (p. 15). Schadelbauer referred to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, offering loans and grants to broadband infrastructure projects that expand broadband access to unserved and underserved communities. Additionally, the Federal Communications Commission’s national broadband plan’s goal for broadband utilization by 2020 will “have the potential to dramatically affect broadband deployment and the economic future of . . . rural America” (Federal Communication Commission Guides, 2012, p.15).

Rural Community Development

According to Green and Haines (2002), community development is a planned effort to build assets that increase residents’ capacity to improve their quality of life. This means that leaders must be strategic in their planning efforts, encouraging and motivating the population to contribute. Together, leaders and their populace possess ownership while realizing worthwhile “short” and “long”-term goals. In light of the many challenges rural communities face, there is ample evidence in the literature that knowledge-based strategy, self-development strategies, and community leadership must be a part of the equation in community development.

Knowledge-Based Strategies

Blakely and Leigh (2010) asserted that a knowledge-based strategy with primary focus on developing human capital, early childhood education and beyond, skilled labor, innovation, and creativity is vital to invigorate new business and

sources. Knowledge-based communities are defined as “specific resources at their disposal” (Blakely & Leigh, p. 429). Such resources include community development organizations, educational institutions, businesses, and members from private sectors. Pender, Marré, and Reeder (2012) posited that knowledge-based development approach utilizes “nearby institutions of research, higher education and high technology to develop innovative products and services” (pp. 538-539).

Gibbs (2005) stated that education should be a rural developmental strategy. The author reported: “Educational attainment in rural America reached a historic high in 2000, with nearly one in six rural adults holding a four-year college degree, and more than three in four completing high school” (p. 1). Gibbs warned that out-migration may lessen school success, and there is evidence that improvements in rural schools are credited with boosting local economic initiatives. The author further stated that higher educational levels lead to rapid income and employment growth, and that better schools will improve economic forecasts for students.

Kusimo et al. (1999) noted that educational institutions such as day care, public schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges should play a significant role in revitalizing rural communities. They proposed that schools could serve as community centers with a focus on lifelong learning, building on self-sufficiency and upward mobility. Additionally, Kusimo et al. suggested that “public schools should offer entrepreneurial curricula and a curriculum of ‘place’ that educates students about local citizenship, local government, and economic issues” (Kusimo et al., 1999, p. 7). Further, Kusimo et al. stated that schools could serve as a major

participant in developing the next generation of rural residents and encourage residents to create new opportunities.

Self-Development Strategies

Included in this section are the definition of entrepreneurship, characteristics of entrepreneurs, and their business challenges.

Entrepreneurship. Korsching and Allen (2004) proposed that a self-development strategy known as entrepreneurship, offers great potential for improving economic vitality. One definition of entrepreneurship is “the process of creating new businesses in local economies” (Buss & Yancer, 1997, p. 230). The entrepreneurship field has evolved over time from individuals creating jobs to communities embarking on new enterprises. There are three different types of entrepreneurs: business, social, and civic (Macke, 2013). The business entrepreneur is an individual who possesses and realizes a vision and contributes to the private sector. A social entrepreneur may be found in non-governmental organizations or not-for-profit sectors. Civic entrepreneurs are located in government sites engaged in civic and governmental activities.

Characteristics of entrepreneurs. While all three types of entrepreneurs contribute to community sustainability, business entrepreneurs are essential to a community as they add to job creation and new businesses. According to Buss and Yancer (1997), characteristics of new rural entrepreneurs are:

- in their mid-thirties, married, and college educated;
- women who account for 40% of new start-up businesses;

- women who concentrate on retail sales more than men and work out of their homes;
- white farm entrepreneurs, mid-thirties and married;
- underrepresented women and minorities, especially African Americans and Native Americans; and
- unemployed. (Buss & Yancer, 1997, p. 231)

Business challenges. Entrepreneurs encounter many challenges in starting and maintaining their businesses. According to Buss and Yancer (1997), entrepreneurs deal with financing problems such as inflation and tax flow. While start-up capital access is not a problem for most entrepreneurs, women, and displaced workers still face this obstacle. Many entrepreneurs depend on their own resources or borrow from friends and families. Rural entrepreneurs rarely receive venture and seed capital. Market-size was also identified by many as an issue, according to Buss and Yancer. In addition to the previously stated challenges, the authors mentioned that entrepreneurs may have trouble recruiting workers due to out-migration.

Korsching and Allen (2004) indicated that the features of self-development projects include involvement of local organizations, ample investment of local resources, and local control of new ventures. The authors stated that local entrepreneurs generally are committed to the community, as their roots are in the community. Their commitment can be strengthened if the community actively works to facilitate their chances of developing a successful enterprise. Additionally, the authors mentioned that hopeful entrepreneurs may lack the business knowledge

needed for success, and the community may lack the resources necessary to assist them. Korsching and Allen (2004) suggested an educational program focused on asset and economic development may motivate entrepreneurs.

It is well-documented that educational programs for rural entrepreneurs are available throughout the United States. Many of the courses are sponsored by community colleges, government agencies, and non-profit organizations. In a North Carolina report on entrepreneurship, Scott (2012, p. 20) noted: "Entrepreneurship courses are available at community colleges, but most rural adults never received any business or financial literacy education in K-12 public schools." Further, Scott pointed out that entrepreneurial curricula have been available in high schools for numerous years. However, in many rural schools, it is "offered as an elective" (p. 20).

Drabenstott (2010) recommended refocusing K-12 education on creating an innovation culture and supplying entrepreneurial skills. An ingrained innovation culture means including broader analytical skills that prepare students to be problem-solvers and inventors. Marvel and Lumpkin (2007) indicated that innovation is significant to entrepreneurship because it is the catalyst to competition. Innovation may appear in two forms: incremental that offers simple improvements, and radical that creates drastic changes. Marvel and Lumpkin stated that entrepreneurship ventures and small businesses contribute about two and a half times more innovations per employee than do large firms and are responsible for radical innovations in the economy.

Educational and Community Leadership

Atchoarena and Gasperini (2003) reported:

Education in rural areas takes place at many different levels, from multigrade primary schools, to agriculture universities. In many countries social change and economic development have been organized by providing not only basic education. . . . but specific training to improve techniques employed in the rural economy. (p. 25)

In the U.S., school districts and community organizations have joined together in collaborative partnerships; but Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) inferred that there is much work to do. They indicated that educational institutions and community organizations have operated independently of each other in pursuing their goals. Kretzmann and McKnight stated that schools do not engage young people in meaningful ways, and community developers plan without input from youth and school stakeholders. The authors asserted that on numerous occasions, school leaders have relied on community leadership for assistance with fiscal and legislative issues. Kretzmann and McKnight contended that although many regard this effort as a school-community partnership, there are signs that the partnership is declining or non-existent. As a result, rural and urban schools have lost their power. The centralization of schools has been further distanced from the communities; Kretzmann and McKnight stated that the “vital links between experience, work and reduction have been weakened” (p. 209). Many economically distressed communities have begun to struggle toward economic revitalization without the contribution of the local schools.

Miller (1995) asserted that rural communities are primed for revitalization, as they often possess norms such as “strong work ethics, concern for neighbors, low crime rates, environmental quality, and community spirit” (p. 163). Miller noted that students and educators have historically participated in rural community development efforts, but those models have been limited to “text-book driven learning opportunities inside the school” (p.163). Miller contended that the role of schools and youth must be expanded in the quest for rural sustainability. This could be achieved by developing social capital through school and community connections.

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) declared that schools and communities bolster and need each other. School officials and community leaders must work together as they share similar values and interests. The authors stressed that school officials and community leaders must recognize that a strong alliance between school and the community is necessary in sustaining healthy schools and communities. Kretzmann and McKnight maintained that healthy communities produce and support excellence, and schools are the best guarantee of a community’s future.

Mattessich and Monsey (2008) asserted that successful development efforts tend to occur most often in situations when community organizations of long-tenure and solid reputation become involved early in the process. Among community development board efforts have been churches, agencies, and schools. These entities bring established contacts, legitimacy, and access to resources. One such partnership lies with the school and community development leaders.

According to Harmon and Shafft (2009), school leaders may identify with and value the rural way of life relevant to developing leadership traits consistent with rural communities. However, those leaders wrestle with the requirements of readying students for the future, while at the same time making rural communities viable. The authors insisted that it is essential for school district leaders to have a clear vision of mutual benefit and collaboration in structuring school-community process. Harmon and Shafft stated that a successful school-community process depends on the level of mutual collaboration and force between these two entities. This comes down to leadership.

Preparing effective leaders for rural communities is critically important, according to Harmon and Shafft (2009). The authors noted “more than half of all operating public school districts in the U.S. are located in rural areas. . . . more than 10 million students are served by rural schools” (p. 6). It is therefore necessary to have well-trained facilitators who are sensitive to the needs of rural communities. Harmon and Shafft believed that a beginning point for training school administrators is to utilize the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, first produced in 1996 and revised in 2008.

In Table 1, six ISLLC standards are identified. For each standard, a community development question is offered to assist leaders/administrators in guiding their thinking to achieve the standard.

Table 1. ISLLC Standards and Related Community Development Questions

ISLLC Standard	Community Development Question
1. Setting a widely shared vision for learning	How will the district or school leader gain the input and continuous support of key community leaders in setting and sharing the vision for student learning at the school?
2. Developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff and professional growth	How will the district or school leader encourage all school staff to become actively involved in the community as a means of professional growth for improving instructional effectiveness?
3. Ensuring effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment	How will the district or school leadership collaborate with community organizations to ensure a safe and effective learning environment for all students?
4. Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources	What collaborative process will the district or school leader use in identifying community development needs that mutually accomplish goals of the school and community?
5. Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner	How will the district or school leader demonstrate integrity and fairness in collaborative community development activities that involve parents and multiple community organizations?
6. Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, legal, and cultural context	How will the district or school leader seek to understand the local rural culture in ways that influence positive school-community collaboration?

Note. ISLLC = Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium. Adapted from "Rural School Leadership for Collaborative Community Development" by H. L. Harmon & K. Schafft, 2009, *The Rural Educator*, 30(3), p. 7.

Morgan and Lambe (2009) stated “make a way or find one” (p. 5), meaning it is critical to try different community development strategies. Small communities with outstanding outcomes tend to have “proactive and future-oriented leaders who will embrace change and assume risk” (p. 5). Morgan and Lambe suggested that the communities should define assets and opportunities in a broad way that will offer innovative strategies to benefit from competitiveness. Additionally, Morgan and Lambe asserted “effective communities measure progress and celebrate short-term successes” (p.10). According to Morgan and Lambe, small town development comes from within, and local leadership is an important ingredient in transforming the community.

Mattessich and Monsey (1997) posited that “successful efforts are more likely to occur in communities with existing and identifiable leadership” (p. 25). They explained that this happens when residents pay attention to individuals who inspire and are ready to assume leadership roles in community initiatives. Although local leadership is evident and available, effectiveness may be questioned if the supply of leaders is limited. As communities evolve, there are more organizations competing for active citizens’ time.

Community development organizations tend to rely on existing leadership rather than creating opportunities for new leaders to emerge. Leaders are developed through participation in community-building activities and programs. Participants often emerge as future leaders due to their involvement, developing skills and credibility with existing leaders and neighbors. The challenge for established leadership is being open to new ideas and backgrounds; it may be difficult for

emerging leaders to be accepted if they are not a part of the establishment. Regardless of whether leaders come from an educational or community development setting, there are some common necessary attributes. Richardson (2000, p. 109) asserted that the attributes of a rural leader include:

- having a collaborative style and bring that attitude to the table;
- clearly addressing cultural differences and power imbalances;
- running efficient meetings;
- trusting the others in the group or around the table;
- being open and accessible;
- not being afraid to make mistakes;
- sharing . . . vision with others, develop and strengthen it with participant input; and
- knowing when to step aside and let someone else lead and how to do so gracefully.

Summary of Chapter 2

This chapter explored the facets of the Community Capitals Framework, the community needs analysis including its purposes, benefits, limitations, and local constraints; education's functions in small rural communities; and rural community development.

Every community contains assets. When those assets are assessed and invested to create new resources, they become capitals. The Community Capitals Framework is a model designed to analyze communities. The tenets of the Community Capitals Framework are natural, human, cultural, financial, built, social,

and political. These capitals are dependent on one another and can contribute positively to a community's development when broad participation is nurtured.

The major purpose of a needs analysis is to gather information for setting those priorities people believe are their needs in relation to a system of interest. It is a process by which people come together. To have meaningful outcomes, it is imperative that stakeholders' contributions are included and valued. To conduct a needs analysis that facilitates rewarding outcomes, it is essential that the community development organizations have leadership support, reliable data, staffing, and physical resources.

Education is an important element in national progress. While it is not the sole complement to a community's well-being, it plays an important role in development of the capitals necessary for community vitality. Public educational institutions have broad impact on the communities they serve. Public schools are major employers and purchasers of goods and services. Schools expend monies for salaries, building construction, materials, and supplies. These funds have direct and indirect economic impacts when school employees use their salaries for mortgage or rent payments to purchase goods and services, and to pay taxes. Schools and communities bolster and need one another. School officials and community officials must work together as they share similar interests.

Community development is a planned effort in building assets that increase residents' capacity to improve their quality of life. Knowledge-based strategy, self-development strategies, and community leadership must be a part of the equation in community development. A knowledge-based strategy with primary focus on

developing human capital, innovation, and creativity is vital to invigorate new business and sources. The self-development strategy known as entrepreneurship offers great potential for improving economic vitality.

Successful development efforts tend to occur most often in situations when community organizations of long-tenure and solid reputation become involved early in the process. One such partnership lies with the school and community development leaders. Preparing effective leaders for rural communities is critically important. Community development organizations tend to rely on existing leadership rather than creating opportunities for new leaders to emerge. Small communities with outstanding outcomes tend to have proactive and future-oriented leaders who will embrace change and assume risk. Regardless of whether leaders come from an educational or community development setting, there are some common necessary attributes.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Included in this chapter are the methodology approaches for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of research conducted in a rural community. I have chosen to refer to the community throughout this report by the pseudonym Trelawny, to protect the community's anonymity. The chapter will address the research questions, research design, methods, and ethical procedures that were utilized. It will also present the community and its school district profiles.

An interpretive theoretical perspective was selected, as it is an appropriate research basis in constructionist epistemology. The theoretical perspective is critical to the current research as it provides "a context for the process involved and a basis for its logic and criteria" (Crotty, 1998, p.66). Constructivism is based on important realities dependent on human practices that are constructed in their world. In this model, the researcher-respondent relationship is subjective, interactive, and independent; there are multiple and complex realities; and all important aspects of the research are valued including the researcher, respondents, research sites, and theory (Broido & Manning, 2002).

Phase 1 of Study

The methodology of Phase 1 includes research questions and research design.

Research Questions

Phase 1's research questions were asked in both the focus groups and interviews (Sharma et al., 2000, p. 7):

1. "What do you think are some of the strengths of this community?"

2. "What do you think are some of the concerns of this community?"
3. "What do you value about your community?" (Sharma et al., 2000, p. 7)

Research Design

There are several techniques that could be applied to the study of small rural communities. However, a qualitative case study was selected as it is appropriate to Merriam's (2002) definition that a qualitative case study is a description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as a group, institution, or community.

Methods. I received approval from Iowa State University's Institutional Review Board to conduct Phase 1 in June, 2012. The research design encompassed focus groups, semi-formal interviews, and observations. The focus groups and the interviews were audio-taped. Each focus group session lasted an hour and a half, and each interview lasted about 45 minutes. The purpose of the observations was to supplement the focus groups, interviews, and other data. Prior to conducting the research, the focus group and interview guides were developed. The interview protocol codes were "created as tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during the study" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56) during and after the collection of data. I coded and analyzed the data manually by comparing the data and developing themes. The participants in this study will be referred to in a generic manner. Specifically, "focus group participants" will be referred to as "residents"; those who were interviewed will be identified as "interviewees."

Selection of participants. Residents and interviewees were selected based on their leadership in the community: serving as business owners, municipal

officials, city staff, city boards, and/or commissioners, professionals, or members of civic organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce or Rotary Club. To determine a purposeful population, the economic developer provided me with the contact information of persons who met the criteria.

A letter of invitation over the economic developer's name was mailed to prospective participants. In addition to the letter, the informed consent forms, and a self-addressed stamped envelope (with return address to me) were included. To the prospective student participants, assent forms were included for them and their parents to sign. Of the 27 residents invited, 16 participated in the focus groups and interviews. There were three focus groups with 12 residents and four one-on-one personal interviews with the interviewees. I made phone calls to invitees who did not respond by mail reminding them of the scheduled day and time of the focus group.

Data collection and analysis. The three main sources of data comprised in a qualitative research study are "interviews, and observations and documents" (Merriam, 2002, p. 12). Merriam indicated that the data collection depends on the question and the source of data that offer the best information. Focus groups (small group interviews) "are used alone but sometimes are combined with other methods such as individual interviews" (Esterberg, 2002, p. 109). Further, they are used to "evaluate programs . . . or when you want to know about people's opinions or attitudes" (p. 109). The goal of semi-formal interviews is to explore a subject "more openly and to allow interviewees to express opinions and ideas in their own words" (p. 87). Esterberg asserted that observations are used to gather data by observing people's interactions at a site. Merriam (2002) stated that observation "is the best

technique when an activity, event, or situation can be observed firsthand, when a fresh perspective is desired” (p. 13).

The focus groups, interviews, and observations were conducted at Trelawny’s City Hall. During visits to City Hall, I gathered updated documents such as newspapers, city council meeting agendas, and a published book with residents’ recollections of the tornado. Additionally, I made phone calls and wrote e-mails to the economic developer requesting supplemental data to guide the project and to receive clarification, along with gathering census data, archival documents, and ‘community quick facts’ from the state library, the economic developer, and the county courthouse.

Limitations. There were three limitations to the study: (a) Most of Trelawny’s small business owners were unable to participate in the project due to time constraints and few employee resources. Thus, those owners indicated they could not take time away from their businesses to participate; (b) the high school students who were identified for this project were unavailable because of other obligations during the summer, and (c) the two commuters previously identified for the project were unavailable due to personnel shortages and vacation.

Trelawny’s Profile

Trelawny is a community with a 10-mile radius and is about 25 miles from a major metropolitan area. Located in the middle of its county, the population of the city is 1,879 (U.S. Census, 2011) with little diversity. Its leadership is composed of a mayor and council, city administrator, deputy clerk, volunteer fire chief, police chief, water superintendent, and an economic developer.

The community contains the community services the residents need: fire and police protection, medical services, retail businesses, and a school system. The combined school district has K-12th grade education. The high school is located in Trelawny. Additionally, the community has a gas station, churches, a newspaper, and recreational facilities. In addition, there are retail and private businesses including farms, banks, and a manufacturing company.

Community composition. According to the U.S. Census (2005-2009), all of the residents were born in the United States with a small percentage born in other places than Iowa. This is a community that has little racial diversity. Most of the residents have been living in the same house for more than a year. Two-thirds of the households are family households. More than a third of the households have children living in them and more than half are married couples with school-aged children. More than a quarter of the population is enrolled in school and a little less than half have graduated from high school or attained an equivalency degree. Veterans make up about a tenth of the population.

Economic environment. Data regarding economic environment was obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau (2005-2009), which reported that more than two-thirds of the population 16 years and over is in the labor force, and less than 5% is unemployed. The majority of the workers commute to work driving their own vehicles or carpooling, as there are no other means of transportation. A small number of residents work at home. A quarter of the workers serve in management, professional, or related occupations. One-third of the workers are in sales and office occupations. Less than a quarter of the residents are involved in production and

transportation industries. The median family income is about \$57,000, and the per capita income is about \$22,000. The income of approximately 11% of the families living in this community in the past 12 months is below the poverty level.

Current community status. The community has just completed remodeling of the library and is currently working on two infrastructure projects: road and water/sewer. The community has a comprehensive land use plan developed in 2009 and a five-year capital improvement plan developed in 2010. Additionally, its leaders are working on a bike trail and a new ball park. Residents are concerned about how these projects will affect their property taxes which most recently were at the 37.90527 levy rate (D. Clark, personal communication, August 10, 2012). The taxes have increased since 2008, due to the rebuilding of many structures (e.g., homes; businesses; high school) caused by a tornado that devastated a significant part of the community. Hundreds of homes were damaged or destroyed; several residents died, and many were injured. The EF-5 tornado brought the community together.

While many residents were cleaning up their area, others lent assistance with a “can-do” attitude. The community’s administrative and elected leadership worked with county officials to manage the tornado aftermath. This team also reached out to economic development experts from surrounding areas and managed thousands of volunteers. There was a small percentage of residents who wanted to slow down the process of rebuilding and establishing neighborhoods, but the cleanup and rebuilding process continued at a fast pace. The local leadership team identified numerous folks who wanted to take on the responsibility of cleaning up and rebuilding.

Phase 2 of Study

Among the findings of Phase 1 of the study, which had been a needs analysis, the public school's education was a major strength. Thus, to learn more about the school district in Phase 2, I received approval from Iowa State University's Institutional Review Board in January, 2013, to expand the research for this report to include three interview guides which addressed the school district's issues including its priorities, curriculum, and special programming. In addition, the research expansion included approval for another informed consent form permitting a transcriber to be exposed to the data. Methodology of Phase 2 included the research question and research design.

Research Question

The second phase of the research addressed the question: What are the functions of education in the community's development?

Research Design

Research design included method, data collection, and selection of participants.

Method. Individual semi-formal interviews were employed during this phase.

Data collection. The collection included data from a current youth school survey administered by the state's Department of Education, the district's personnel contract including a recent salary schedule obtained from the superintendent, and semi-formal interviews complemented by school board meeting notes. Prior to conducting the interviews, I visited the school district's office to review school board documents. With the superintendent's permission, I copied most of the school board

meeting notes and informal notes from the superintendent to school board members about each month's meeting over a span of five years. In addition, special meeting notes, public hearing meeting notes, and information about the middle and high schools' curricula were collected. Finally, the school district's statistics were retrieved from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems.

Selection of participants. The participants in Phase 2 of the study are referred to in a generic manner. Specifically, those who were interviewed will be identified as "interviewees." Interviewees were selected based on their leadership role in the school district: This group was composed of three educational leaders. The economic developer mailed letters of invitation to participate. In addition to the letter, the informed consent form and a self-addressed stamped envelope with return address to me were included. I made phone calls to schedule the interviews. All three of the administrators participated in one-on-one personal interviews. The interviews were conducted at Trelawny's high school. The interviews were audio-taped and lasted about one hour. Transcriptions were made of the interviews for analysis. I sent the transcribed data to the interviewees for approval.

Goodness and Trustworthiness

Goodness and trustworthiness are presented as an assessment of quality in qualitative research. Armino and Hultgren (2002, p. 446) stated that goodness "requires that elements of the meaning-making process are illustrated; epistemological and theoretical foundations are linked to the selected methodology; and that the method of data collection and its analysis are clear." Armino and

Hultgren (2002) asserted that goodness is realized when researchers offer “evidence of trustworthiness” (p. 457), thereby proving the work is credible.

Determining the methodology for any research project is critical to the outcome of the research. A well thought-out methodology provides guidance to the researchers in a systematic way. Any researcher must identify the paradigm or the epistemology that will be employed. These worldviews could be described as constructionism, objectivism, or subjectivism, or variants of this type. Thus, the researcher addressing community analysis or assessment issues could utilize any of the world views previously stated or a combination of all three. Because needs analysis include people and their realities, the three worldviews fit nicely into the Community Capitals framework.

Another key ingredient regarding methodology is the research question that guides the study. It is important to know what the issue is, how it has previously been studied, and the current reason for studying it. This prepares the researcher in determining the problem and thus being able to articulate the question clearly. It is also critical to know why the research is being conducted. The purpose allows the researcher to develop a plan that will be effective and efficient.

There are other techniques that could be applied to a community needs analysis. However a case study would be the most practical. Merriam (2002) explained that a case study is a description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as a group, institution, or community. An assessment case study would enable the researcher to describe the phenomenon in depth.

Merriam (2002) indicated that there are several strategies that researcher could utilize to bolster the 'internal validity' of a study. "Internal Validity asks the question, how congruent are one's findings with reality?" (p. 25). The author identified triangulation as a strategy that utilizes multiple sources of data collection and methods. In this case study, I utilized (a) focus groups, (b) interviews, and (c) observations. The focus group participants were selected residents of Trelawny. Those who were interviewed were directly involved in administering the affairs of the community such as elected officials and staff. The interviews were semi-formal interviews that provided more insight into the interviewees' perspectives. To add validity to the collected data, I utilized archived documents, newspapers, census data, community 'quick facts,' school reports, official meeting minutes, historical documents, and county information.

To analyze the data, information was compared looking for differences and patterns, and using coding through a manual process. Toward the end of Phase 1 of the study, I forwarded by e-mail the report to the economic developer who then distributed it to necessary stakeholders for comments on what was referred to as "representation of the data" (Merriam, 2002, p. 26). During Phase 2, a similar process was utilized, described as member checks (Merriam, 2002), by sending the interview transcripts to the interviewees for their review and comments.

According to Esterberg (2002, p. 45), there are two issues of important relevance for researchers: (a) obtaining confidentiality, and (b) informed consent. Prior to conducting focus group and individual interviews, the purpose of the study was reviewed, and the importance of confidentiality among participants and research

team was stressed. Participants further were advised that they did not have to respond to every question, and they could dismiss themselves at any time. In addition, participants were asked to sign the informed consent form that included procedures, risks, and rights. Finally, participants were informed that research documents would only be accessed by me.

Perhaps one of the most critical elements of research goodness and trustworthiness is adhering to the standards of the profession. When researchers are ethical, it paves the way and reduces barriers for others conducting research. I adhered to those standards.

According to Armino and Hultgren (2002, p. 450), these elements are essential in determining research goodness:

- providing the epistemology and theory;
- methodology that lays out the approach;
- method that describes the procedures to collect the data;
- researcher and participants as multicultural subjects;
- sensitivity to the relationships, to participants, and the topic that is being explored;
- the interpretation and presentation that allow the introduction of new insight; and
- implications for professional practice.

Summary of Chapter 3

This chapter addressed the methodology approaches for Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Trelawny research. I received approval from Iowa State University's

Institutional Review Board to conduct Phase 1 and received approval to expand the research for Phase 2. The location for both phases of this study was described.

Trelawny is a rural community with a 10-mile radius and is about 25 miles from a major metropolitan area. Located in the middle of its county, the population of the city is 1,879 (U.S. Census, 2011) with little diversity. The community contains basic services the residents need: fire and police protection, medical services, retail businesses, and a school system. The combined school district has K-12th grade education.

The qualitative case study utilized a constructionist epistemology. The research design encompassed focus groups, semi-formal interviews, and observations for Phase 1. Semi-formal interviews were conducted for Phase 2. Residents and interviewees were selected based on their leadership in the community. Finally, I explained the importance of goodness and trustworthiness, and how they were utilized in both Phase 1 and Phase 2. Chapter 4 will include findings of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of this study.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the research. Phase 1 findings include responses from the focus groups and interviews with residents and interviewees (city officials). Phase 2 findings include the school district's profile and responses from the interviews with school administrators.

Phase 1 Findings

To identify the community's strengths, concerns, and values, I conducted focus groups and interviews totaling 16 participants altogether. There were 12 participants (also referred to as 'residents') in the focus groups, and four participants (also referred to as 'interviewees') in the interviews. The following questions were asked in both the focus groups and the interviews:

- (1) "What do you think are some of the strengths of this community?"
- (2) "What do you think are some of the concerns of this community?"
- (3) "What do you value about your community?" (Sharma et al., 2000, p. 7)

Focus Groups' Responses

The focus groups (also referred to as 'residents' in this text) identified these dominant factors sorted by strengths, concerns, and values. Strengths included attributes, education, location, and many churches. Concerns included business, young people, taxes, employment, and leadership. Values included attributes, amenities, education, and location.

Strengths. Strengths identified by focus groups are examined in depth in the following section.

The focus group participants (residents) identified several community strengths embedded in the community capitals theoretical framework that focused on quality of life (cultural and social capitals), human resources (human capital), physical infrastructure (built capital), and business climate (financial capital). The residents conversed repeatedly about attributes of those living in their community: accepting, friendly, caring, creative, having perseverance, a welcoming atmosphere, a 'can do' attitude, and a strong work ethic. Several residents indicated that people were friendly and cared about one another. Elements of natural and political capitals were absent from the discussions. Direct quotes from focus group participants follow.

“If you want to fit in this town, you can. If you want to be left alone, and mind your own business, you will be left alone.”

“This is small town mentality. Everybody speaks, everybody waves, the natives do, if you speak and wave and talk to them, you are gonna think they are nosy, maybe they are . . . but when the chips are down, they will all be there to help you, too.”

“People coming together in times of adversity.”

“People leave here but they never lose their connections.”

“I like the small town . . . you go down the street, everybody you see, they know you, they *know* where your grandchildren are. They know what your grandchildren do. They know what you do—and they are friendly and they ask you questions, and I like that.”

“They know that’s your dog that’s running loose.”

Education was a significant strength in all focus group sessions. Residents unanimously recognized that the community has great schools.

“I live in Trelawny because of family and the educational system. And because I wanted my kids to have the same teachers and coach that we had.”

“We have a wonderful school system . . . we have excellent role models, teachers, administrators. I can’t think of any other place I would want to send my kids to school.”

The infrastructure was also an important to the residents, as they identified physical assets, geographic proximity, and leadership. Residents acknowledged that there were many churches for a town of its size. Further, it was reported that the community had a good Christian base with varied denominations. It was also noted that there is a variety of homes ranging from modest to expensive, and that water and sewer services were pluses. In terms of geography, residents agreed with one another that the community is situated in a prime location that allows them to be in close proximity to major highways, shopping, and dining.

“The roads—close to the interstate now, so we can actually, maybe bring some businesses in.”

“You are close enough to [larger towns] but you are far enough away.”

“We are lucky enough to be far enough away from . . . larger metropolitan areas and that we have a very good mix of services.”

The residents pointed to recreational amenities such as a pool, golf courses, parks, a fitness center, and many organizations and activities for all ages. Some of

the residents recognized the town's history including the tornado and agriculture, while others pointed to good leadership and a variety of downtown businesses. Most residents agreed that the community had good leadership. It was also noted that leadership extended throughout the community.

“Strong leadership—lucky to now have a younger mayor and better outlook on things.”

“There are a lot of behind the scenes people here, in this area. . . . You don't really hear about them or see about them, but all of a sudden something gets done and you know they have been a part of it. . . . Those are the people when you need something done that you go to.”

“The success of our business and the fact that our downtown does not have any vacancies is unique to the entire state.”

Concerns. Focus groups' concerns are examined in depth in the following section. Direct quotes from focus group participants are included.

Elements of social, financial, human, and built capitals dominated the discussions. Natural, cultural, and political capitals were absent from the discussions. Residents identified a wide variety of social and economic concerns. The social concerns centered on opportunities for young people; and economic concerns emphasized the financial stability of residents, businesses, and the community. On the social front, residents wanted additional amenities (social and built capitals) to keep young people in town. A resident commented that there is a strong emphasis on sports, particularly football; and the community needs to develop the fine arts and design a bike trail for recreational activities.

“Individual personalities get in the way in [community]—and then the towns.”

“I think that, when we have the trail, I think that will help. . . . we have the pool, we have a fitness center, we have a lot of parks but. . . . it would be nice to have a longer trail system. . . . to go for a bike ride.”

“There is nothing for our teens. . . . they ride around.”

Other residents discussed the impact on students’ invested time in sports, and their participation in extracurricular activities. Residents also expressed concern that however competent in the past, when leadership decisions are confined to a small group of established participants, little opportunity exists for the next generation of leaders to become established. This concern also reflects thoughts about the community’s aging population and the need for a next generation of leaders to emerge. For instance, it was noted that the membership’s average age on the Economic Development Board is 45 years or older.

“We don’t have a lot of young people stepping up to leadership.”

“Young people don’t get involved like they used to.”

Residents were concerned about the aging community and business owners (human capital). They posed the question: how will they keep businesses of aging owners in future years? In one focus group, residents offered examples of young people who returned to town to start their own business or to develop families’ businesses.

Financial sustainability was on the minds of the residents during their discussions about businesses. They talked about types of downtown businesses and how they have changed over the years. In previous years, they had shoe stores,

clothing stores, hardware stores, and a car dealership; now they have specialty stores. Although there are no store vacancies downtown, residents wondered about the businesses' revenues (financial capital).

“What I have seen over the years is the switch in what we have downtown. We use [sic] to have 2 hardware stores, we had little shoe stores that are gone, clothing stores that are gone . . . transitioning into specialty shops.”

“I worry about them even able to pay the light bill.”

Property taxes (financial capital) were of grave concern, as residents discussed the high valuation on newly constructed homes and maintenance of the community's physical infrastructure as a result of the tornado. There was concern about residents building larger homes in relation to their affordability. Residents did agree that while the taxes are high, the situation will correct itself as more houses are sold.

“Property taxes, people complaining about them. . . . Why are your property taxes so high?”

“We had the tornado. These people did not have a choice . . . it is new construction.”

“After everybody built their homes they found out how high the taxes are.”

“I was tickled to death to see people re-building. . . . and sometimes when I saw what they were rebuilding, I said boy, I hope they can afford to pay for that someday.”

There were mixed reviews regarding the community's elected leadership. Although there was support for the elected leadership (human capital), some residents did not approve of the leadership currently managing the water and sewer project (built capital).

“Strong leadership—lucky to now have a younger mayor and better outlook on things. There has been a lot of stress put on our people because of the tornado.”

“Leadership—we need leaders that are stronger and ones that know a little bit more.”

Drugs were referred to as a definite problem. Residents affirmed that they are not immune from drugs. The community suffered a significant loss due to drugs after the tornado. Recently, there has been a rash of break-ins caused by people looking for drugs and money.

“We have had a rash of break-ins. . . . looking for money and drugs.”

“We are more acutely aware of some drug problem in this town going back to the tornado.”

“It made us got [sic] our heads out of the sand and we have a bigger problem than we admit.”

Values. Values expressed by the focus groups are examined in depth in the following section. Direct quotes from focus group participants follow.

Social capital was prominent for the residents as they explained what it was like to live in their community. The ‘people traits,’ attractive features, educational commitment, and geographic location resonated with residents. People traits were

described as friendly, caring, accepting, and supportive. Residents acknowledged people's commitment to improve the community. They expressed feelings about living in the community: the simplicity of life, the feeling of being home, the sense of family, and belonging to something special. Elements of natural, political, and cultural capitals were not discussed.

“We collect interesting people.”

“People leave here but they never really lose their connection.”

In terms of amenities (social, human, built, and financial capitals), residents indicated appreciation for the basic community services: recreation, utilities, businesses, health care providers, faith-based organizations, and easy access to surrounding communities.

“You can get anything for the most part in this community that you need. It may not be the cheapest, but you can get what you need.”

“Clean town. It is a good well-kept little town.”

“Location wise, it is close enough to get to something you need to—entertainment . . . not too far from family.”

“People do business locally, here.”

While residents were grateful for the businesses they have, a resident commented that improvements would include a community day care facility, an additional restaurant, and a motel.

Residents reiterated their commitment to education (built and human capitals). They liked the new school's edifice and embraced their commitment to

young people and education. They commented that the community is proud of its schools and the district.

“We all want our kids to be educated, and we want them to use their education. We keep trying to give them opportunity to come back here and use their education, and that’s where the creativity comes in.”

Individual Interviewees’ Responses

The interviewees (also referred to as ‘interviewees’ in the text) identified these dominant factors sorted by strengths, concerns, and values. Strengths included leadership, spirituality, and attributes. Concerns included taxes, drugs and alcohol, and physical infrastructure (e.g., streets and roads). Values included people, attributes and amenities.

Strengths. Strengths identified by interviewees are examined in depth in the following section.

The human capital, cultural capital, and social capital concepts were prevalent as interviewees identified community strengths. They indicated that leadership, spirituality, and attributes were important. The leadership was credited for being strong and foresighted. An interviewee stated that the leadership was focused on planning for the community’s future. Another interviewee talked about having a strong core population and keeping the strengths without losing it because of growth. There was agreement that residents had a strong belief in faith, church, and family; and residents shared a close bond. Tenets of natural, political, built, and financial capital were not addressed.

“I don’t think that they [leaders] just think about the here and now; they try very hard to think about what’s ahead. If you don’t plan ahead you won’t be ready for the future.”

“Faith and strength and something other than ourselves.”

“We are [a] very close community. Everyone knows each other. We always pull together.”

Concerns. Concerns identified by interviewees are examined in depth in the following section.

Elements of financial, built, social, and human capitals emerged when interviewees shared their concerns. Taxes, physical infrastructure, drugs, and alcohol were on the minds of most interviewees. They agreed that aside from the current road project, the property tax (financial capital) was a major source of concern, as it had been with focus group participants. Interviewees blamed the valuation on new homes and the costs attributed to updated maintenance of the physical infrastructure as explanation for the high taxes. It was mentioned that many citizens are concerned about how this small community was going to pay for infrastructure repairs (built capital). In addition, an interviewee indicated that the community held opposing views about the direction to take regarding the construction of the new ball park. Another interviewee mentioned that more activities are needed to keep youths involved. Aspects of cultural, political, and natural capitals were not addressed.

“I would like to see more youth programs. . . . more activities—you could get the young kids involved—less time to get in trouble.”

“Land values went up county-wide. Nobody’s paychecks went up with it.”

“Our infrastructure is about 100 years old. Needs to be fixed. To pay for that is daunting.”

Drugs and alcohol were ongoing concerns. An interviewee added that not only was this a challenge for the community but nationwide, as well. It was mentioned that the number of drug users is large for this small community, and alcohol played a role in the majority of police calls.

“Not only in this town but I think every community, nationwide, we have an ongoing drug and alcohol problem . . . I think most people are naïve to that.”

“But even in a community of this size, we have a pretty large drug community.”

Values. Interviewees’ values are examined in depth in the following section.

Interviewees focused on social, cultural, and human capitals when talking about what they valued. People attributes and community amenities were considered important aspects of this community by interviewees who explained that the people are caring, resilient, and hardworking. They valued their family, friends, and neighbors. Interviewees were of one accord as they shared similar feelings about the school system. They credited excellent role models, teachers, coaches, and administrators as reasons why the schools are valued. The churches were also mentioned. An interviewee indicated that he was pleased with the church system as it collaborated on activities such as vacation bible school.

“I can’t think of any other place I would want to send my kids to school.”

“Keep our strengths without losing our growth.”

“Everybody knows everybody and takes care of everybody. That’s why I want my kids to grow up here.”

“If we leave this world the same way we were brought into it, we just wasted ourselves. We should make this world better while we are here, not worse.”

For the interview guide, I included additional questions for the interviewees to gain their perspectives on priorities and needs in the community. One interviewee indicated the importance of having rules, certifications, and protocols (political capital) that are met. Another stated the importance of ensuring that the community is financially solvent, and that resources are managed adequately. Others focused on infrastructure and safety. Interviewees shared that the community needs a fire truck, upgraded recreational facilities, transportation for the elderly, and increased public safety staff.

Phase 2 Findings

Phase 2 findings include the school district’s profile and responses from the interviews with school administrators including the superintendent, Curriculum Director, and School-to Work Program Director.

School District’s Profile

The school district’s profile includes these subjects: governance, Board of Education, personnel structure, salary and contract information, student enrollment, school organizations, and athletics.

Governance. The Trelawny public school district is a consolidated public system, governed by the local Board of Education. With a \$14.5 million dollar budget, the school district serves the educational needs of two communities and

offers open enrollment. The district comprises four educational facilities: two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school utilizing a K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grade level configuration.

Board of Education. The Board of Education consists of five members each serving four-year terms. These members are responsible for setting policies regarding board governance, employees, and facilities. Additionally, the Board conducts hearings, and rules on issues and disputes confronting the school district. The regular monthly meetings are held in the communities that the district serves. Under its executive authority, the school board hires the superintendent to carry out the adopted policies and to lead the district.

Personnel structure. The personnel structure includes administration, and faculty and staff. The administrative team consists of the superintendent and three principals. Faculty and staff comprise 127 persons employed by the district, including 57 teachers and 70 staff persons

Salary and contract information. Salary ranges from \$32,600-\$64,600 for the calendar year 2013. The system has a union contract.

Student enrollment. There were 864 students the previous year.

School organizations. The school district approves of several organizations including Future Farmers of America (FFA), and Students against Destructive Decisions (SADD).

Athletics. Athletic programs include football, volleyball, basketball, wrestling, tennis, soccer, golf, track and field, softball, cross country, and baseball.

Interviews

Superintendent. Having served 26 years in education, Jeri Brown (pseudonym) served 15 years as a school principal and six years as the superintendent of the Trelawny school district. The superintendent's philosophy of education is centered on continuous learning that encompasses teachers, administrators, and all students. "If we are constantly striving to learn as much as we can, and do things the right way, it's all going to work out for the best."

Finance is number one on the list of priorities for this superintendent. When asked about topmost priorities, Brown responded that the district's finances are most important in order to keep the district financially strong well into the future. Further, Brown stated that constantly seeking ways to improve individually and collectively is another priority. This superintendent's fundamental interest is in connections, believing that most teachers have the skills to connect.

"You can have a straight A student and a teacher who was a straight A student, and you can have great curriculum and nothing good happens in the room. You have to have that ability to teach, to connect the kids, to pull it out of them. To help them discover."

The school district prides itself on inclusion and is guided by the district's mission statement. In addition to some individuals residing outside the community, a citizen advisory group, school board members, and educators developed the district's mission to promote life-long intellectual and personal growth. The mission is complemented by a set of lifelong standards. Brown shared that in developing the mission, the various representatives discussed the district's past, present, and

future, noting emphasis on lifelong skills, quality people, and assisting teachers to become masters in the classroom.

Brown described the district's strengths as "having good rock solid average [students] walking through our door each day. . . . and community support." The superintendent elaborated that the district has students who are in a "God-fearing" and "hardworking" community with most of the students well-behaved. Although residents do not attend the Board of Education meetings, occasionally there is community support in response to the district's pleas to serve on committees. Brown stated that support is displayed by not attacking or being overly concerned.

In identifying needs, Brown indicated that the district could do better with analyzing test data. The team sees inconsistencies that eventually correct themselves at the high school level, but they cannot always determine why. However, Brown claimed that the district is improving in its endeavors to note students' progress on a daily basis—responding to intervention (RTI). The RTI is a school-based multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and reduce behavior problems. "Some of our school improvement is based on feeling more than data." Additionally, Brown commented that given inadequate time and resources, it is difficult to analyze those data thoroughly.

Brown identified safety and finances as concerns. Financial resources previously earmarked for technology were expended for construction of a new high school building because of tornado recovery. There are more school safety drills and practices. Further, because of the tornado recovery, the district was forced into a

piece-meal approach for technology updates. For example, the district has laptops for classroom use but not enough for each student to take home.

Brown monitors the curriculum through discussions, walk-throughs, and reviewing data with the principals. The superintendent talked about the importance of principals; they are building leaders who are responsible for the overall effectiveness of the school district. "They are the ones that talk to the teacher on new methods they are using in their classrooms. . . . ideas that they've tried and implemented." Brown also attends in-service trainings.

The superintendent enjoys a trusting relationship with the board. Describing personal tenure with this rural district as "unique," Brown listed some of the challenges: finance, over-spending, and the tornado. Together, the Board of Education and the superintendent have survived this crisis. "I think the Board trusted me to make good decisions with or without their input. . . . there were so many decisions that had to be made in a short amount of time [following the tornado]." Brown characterized Board members as caring and concerned individuals, who currently do not have any children attending school in the district but chose to continue serving. "I respect that a great bit. There is no hidden agenda, then."

Aside from the long range goals required by the state, the district has strategic plans for facilities and school academic improvement, although the facilities plan had to be redrawn because of the tornado. Building level plans are focused on improvement, established by staff. According to Brown, the district conducts a needs assessment every five years with the community and shares its goals with the community through the newspaper and special board meeting minutes. Included in

the newspaper are school improvement plans, test scores, interesting items about what the district has done well, or what's new. The special meeting minutes documents details of actual discussion topics such as response intervention, and/or student assessment performed by teachers.

Additionally, the district has a citizen's advisory committee that meets at least once a year to address its goals and special topics that emerge. "Some years they meet once; when there is a hot topic, we'll meet more often. But they set a goal each year as community members." Another community outreach initiative is the annual business breakfast program that the school district hosts at the beginning of the school year. This is where the district thanks 50-60 businesses within the serving areas and surrounding communities for their support, and shares its school district improvement efforts.

The superintendent stated that the district enjoys a very good relationship with other educational institutions. The district collaborates with three school districts to provide job shadowing and internships, along with tours of facilities. Four school boards together set a similar school calendar, staffs are trained together, students can miss the same days of school and attend all the college classes housed in a community college facility.

In describing the district partnership with the community, Brown commented: "There is just trust between the community and the school and vice-versa. The superintendent welcomes feedback from the community." "You always want people to let you know if they disagree with something that you are doing. That's part of good communication." While the district does not receive many concerns from the

community, Brown stated that when people do have a concern, they do not hesitate to call.

Regarding the school district's role in economic development, Brown divides time by serving on the economic development board in one community and the chamber of commerce in another. The superintendent thinks that the partnership with other schools and promoting the region in general will impact economic development in the future. "The idea of kids . . . whether they boomerang back to us, or if they stay here altogether. I hope we [the district] can have a positive impact on that." Brown referred to the young people as the "best commodity" and hopes that they will return. "I think that our main goal, right now, is just to try to have our best commodity, which is our young people, to realize that this is a pretty good place to live and to come back to." The superintendent concluded: "Come back to us" should be emphasized more.

Asked when the superintendent will know that the district is successful, Brown laughed and responded: "Well, the district already is successful." Brown pointed to the test scores that remain above average in the state, and the greatly improved financial solvency ratio in the last five years. The district has a carryover 5% to 10% of the budget each year; and its spending is less than its revenues while providing the same quality services.

Curriculum director. Lani Jones (pseudonym) has 12 years of experience as a school administrator and is currently the high school principal, the special education director, and the curriculum director for the Trelawny school district for 6

years. Jones' initial greeting: "If you are in a rural district, in a smaller district, you wear a lot of different hats."

Upon receiving the state's core curriculum, Jones established a committee to review and understand the initiative. After the committee's review, Jones involved the teachers to review the curriculum. Since the school district's curriculum contained most of the core's content, the district focused on the gaps, central skills, and outcomes. Jones stated: "It was for us to take a look at what are we currently doing, what aren't we covering, is that the appropriate age level . . . for those central skills."

Jones believes that the school district needs to ensure that everything is aligned and in place, so that when students move up from kindergarten through high school, they are getting all the essential skills. The director utilized vertical and horizontal strategies when working within the core curriculum, meaning on a vertical level, working within the district at K-12 levels. The horizontal level, i.e., collaborating with nearby school districts, refers to teachers with like content being able to gather different perspectives regarding the core curriculum. This process benefits the teachers who do not have colleagues with like content in their school district, particularly at the high school level. As a result, there are about 15 such classes that are offered at the outreach center. Brown indicated that the regional school partnership enables shared resources (e.g., teachers to deliver community college coursework) that earn dual high school and community college credit.

To graduate from Trelawny's school district, a student must complete 52 credits consisting of 4 years of English, 3 years of Science, 3 years of Mathematics,

3 years of Social Studies, 1 year of Health, and 4 years of Physical Education. Once students satisfy the core requirements, they may take the remaining credits as electives. The director mentioned that rural districts are sometimes limited to the number of teachers and electives that they can offer. About three years ago, the district adopted trimester schedules. "What's that done has created some flexibility for smaller school districts." Jones indicated that trimester scheduling allows offering electives. "It's created some time slots for them. . . . With 60 minutes classes and 60 days in a trimester, students may complete a year's worth of work in two trimesters." Some of the electives are family and consumer science, vocational agriculture, business, and industrial technology.

In regard to the 21st Century learning skills initiative, Jones stated: "We've incorporated that into our curriculum here. . . . so you're talking about financial and employer ability skills, everything that's a 21st Century." Jones indicated that the teachers deliver those classes at the high school campus during a short period near the end of the day. "That way we're assured that everybody gets it before they [students] leave."

In terms of implementing and monitoring the curriculum, Jones asserted that the administration drives the implementation and makes sure that there is follow-through by the teachers. Regarding curriculum monitoring, an associate principal and dean of students, the counselor, and the curriculum director review the curriculum on an annual basis to determine needs and changes. Jones provided an example of how courses are monitored: "Teachers within our curriculum have to have . . . outcomes and some post-curriculum assessment and a course

assessment.” Further, the associate dean and the curriculum director evaluate courses through weekly and monthly classroom visits. There are evaluation meetings with teachers at the end of the year that allow for reflection by (a) asking questions about assessments, (b) looking at testing data, and (c) identifying gaps and needs. Jones commented that the administration drives the implementation.

When asked about the type of teaching and learning strategies, Jones began: “Let’s talk first of all, culturally, you know, this leads into some our professional development.” A program about building relationships with students, called Love and Logic, has come to the district’s attention. Last year, the district sent teachers to a workshop to learn about the techniques of the Love and Logic program. Within the last two years, the district began putting some of the practices in the classrooms. Jones indicated that the goal was to reduce the number of behavior referrals. “We truly believe that sometimes success within a classroom can happen if you take the time as a teacher to build that relationship with the student.”

Jones asserted that regardless of who is involved in the relationship, be it teacher or student, if one believes that the environment in which they are a part of holds the promise of building relationships, it makes a difference. The director wants the students to feel comfortable and have an opportunity to be successful. “You know, they have to feel like they are safe here, they have to feel like . . . the teachers care about them.”

In response to how technology impacts assessment and student learning, Jones indicated that technology was very important because when students enter the working world, they will face technology. The director expressed disappointment

about not having enough funds for the 'one- to-one' initiative. Jones stated that the district has enough computers and technology to meet students' needs. However: "We also know that there is a certain segment of our population, whether they are free or reduced, that they don't have those computers at home. . . . Can't go home at night, you know, and maybe turn on a laptop or have a computer there." Jones mentioned that some students checked out laptops to use at home or at the public library.

Through the partnership with a community college, the school district offers advanced classes to qualifying high school students. In addition to vocational technical classes, the district delivers certain classes at the outreach center regardless of degree focus. To name a few: Composition I, Composition II, and Fundamentals of Oral Communication. Adding to the list are series of mathematics classes including Statistics and Pre-Calculus, and Mathematics and Liberal Arts. Jones reported that the district recently expanded offerings to include Psychology and Medical Terminology. Coursework credits are transferable to most of the larger educational institutions located in and out of the state. The director indicated that about 120 students took classes at the center. The school district looks forward to offering courses to students who do not plan to attend four-year educational institutions. Jones remarked: "We're going to need plumbers, we're going to need electricians. We're going to need people in manufacturing."

According to Jones, 90% of Trelawny's graduates pursue post-high school education. The remaining 10% typically are going into the work world or the military. When there is early identification of career paths, it enables the school district to

better guide students in achieving their goal. Jones insists that the educator's job is to prepare students for the next level. The district works with students individually, providing academic guidance regarding course work that matches the student's career path.

School districts expect curriculum to prepare students so that they can contribute to the social and economic growth of the community. The reality is that in rural communities, depending on what students want to do and what their goals are, it may lead them away from the community, according to Jones. However, the director hurries to add, "but it may also lead them to stay here." Jones acknowledged that the best thing that the district can do for students is to "provide a quality educational experience." The director believes that if a rural school district has that reputation, it will draw people and it may keep people.

School-to-Work program director. Jordan Lewis [pseudonym] is serving as the first and only director of the school-to-work program. The program is a partnership among four school districts in the region. The purpose of the program is to connect students to career opportunities by assisting them (a) in making informed educational and career decisions, and (b) by promoting the region as viable communities that offer an outstanding quality of life. Currently, Lewis works with 8th-12th graders, and the program will be expanded to include the lower grades.

To date, there have been 170 job shadow applicants, 47 internships, and 150 students who have participated in worksite tours. Some of the tours focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) interests. In addition, the program has reached more than 150 students through guest speakers. Lewis

commented that students participate in this program voluntarily. It is not a district-mandated program. The students are being placed in different job or employment sectors and communities.

The internships are a 10-week opportunity open to seniors who have taken a majority of their classes and have time for electives. Students may substitute elective classes with career internships for one- to-four hours. Some students are interning three to five days a week.

Region-wide, there are 100 employers representing various sectors:

- agricultural sciences and natural resources;
- arts and communication;
- business management administration;
- education and other training resource programs;
- human services;
- finance and insurance;
- government-public administration (non-profit);
- hotels with hospitality and tourism;
- law and public safety, security businesses; and
- information technology, and manufacturing.

Lewis stated that through the 21st Century skills initiative, students make the connection, particularly in the areas of technology, communication, and networking. The director indicated that students are connecting their learning to the working world. “So far, our data has shown over 70% of the students are able to make that connection now, after they participated in our program.”

In talking about the community, Lewis noted: “The needs are knowing that there are jobs and programs for, especially for entrepreneurs. . . . if they wanted to start their own business here.” Further, the director believed that there is a strong sense of family; and “students would be comfortable raising a family here.” In regards to the school district, Lewis stated, “there is a strong sense of community.” The strengths reside in the partnership with their staff.

Analysis of Findings

Superintendent Interview. This interview was about improving the lives of people by providing opportunities for all. In discussing his philosophy of education and leading the school district, Brown touched on major themes that are elements of social, human and political capitals: connecting, involving people, communicating, continuous learning and collaborating. When referring to board members, community members, and students, the superintendent described attributes represented in social and cultural capitals, such as hardworking, God-fearing, trusting, caring, supportive, and well-behaved. School district’s needs were identified including finances, safety, human resources, and infrastructure—all elements of financial, social, human and built capitals. Elements of natural capital were not discussed.

Curriculum director interview. Addressing the curriculum was the purpose of this interview. The major themes of human, cultural, and social capitals that emerged: limited human resources, professional development, essential skills, and building relationships. When conversing about relationships with students, Jones identified attributes that are aligned with social capital comprising caring and

providing a comfortable environment. Technology infrastructure was noted as a challenge due to limited financial resources. This challenge falls into two capital categories: built and financial capitals. Aspects of political and natural capitals were not addressed.

School-to-Work program director interview. The purpose of this interview was to learn more about this special project. As the director explained the objectives of the program, prominent themes surfaced: career opportunities, informed career and educational decisions. The themes support these concepts:

- human capital;
- financial capital; and
- social capital.

Gaining skills in the areas of technology, communication, and networking falls in the category of social capital and cultural capitals. The program offers internships, job tours, and job shadowing that develop human capital. When describing the community and school environments, Lewis noted a sense of family and community that belong in the social and cultural capitals' model. The director's comments did not include natural, political and built capitals.

Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter presented the findings of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the research. To identify the community's strengths, concerns, and values, focus groups and interviews were conducted by me in Phase 1. Included in Phase 2 are the school district's profile, the responses from individual interviews, also conducted by me, and

analysis of the interviews. Chapter 5 will include discussion of the research results, implications for practice, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses the findings of participants' responses to the three research questions regarding the strengths, concerns, and values of a rural community, including the role of education in the community's development. The responses are further analyzed according to the seven community capitals—social, human, cultural, financial, built, political, and natural—to determine the extent to which the Community Capitals Framework is a useful model to apply to the study's community. The community is also viewed in comparison to other rural communities, followed by recommendations to the community, limitations of the current research, conclusions and implications for further research, and my final thoughts and reflections.

With an interest in the community development and educational condition of a rural community [fictitiously called Trelawny], the purposes of this qualitative research study were to identify the strengths, concerns, and values of Trelawny's citizens who had suffered from a devastating tornado. The study included a community needs analysis among residents of various walks of life; utilizing focus groups, interviews, and observations, along with semi-formal interviews with the school district's administrators to determine the impact of the school district's education on community development. All responses were analyzed according to community capitals.

Research Questions

What Are the Strengths of the Community?

The strengths indicated factors of resident satisfaction. Most residents identified strengths that also matched their respective values. Participants identified education, people attributes, location, many churches, spirituality, and leadership.

Residents unanimously recognized that the community has great schools. The community is proud of its schools and the district. Excellent role models, teachers, coaches, and administrators were credited as reasons why the schools are valued. The new school building is appreciated, and respondents embraced their commitment to young people and education. I was not surprised to find such support for young people in Trelawny, as my review of several community newspaper editions already had identified much interest in youth and educational activities. The articles covered sports activities, the senior graduating class, scholarship awards, kindergarten 'corners,' high school senior sketches, dean's lists, fun facts about the school, and the school district 'report card.'

I found that administrators were focused on providing an environment in which all children can learn, as reflected in the Board of Education's mission of engaging students to reach their full potential. The superintendent's passion for continuous learning was evidenced by the opportunities available to the students and teachers: character education, job shadowing, and professional learning communities. The curriculum director focused on essential skills and building relationships, partnering with nearby educational institutions for students and teachers to gain access to classes and resources. The school-to-work program

director emphasized students making informed decisions and promoted the region as a good place to live and raise a family.

In Trelawny, the school district is an integral part of the community. The community supports the school district in its educational policies and school activities. In fact, community activities revolve around the school district's sports schedule. Individuals and organizations held their functions at school facilities. Further, partnerships and connections characterized the relationship between the school district and nearby communities, in addition to Trelawny. The superintendent served on boards in those communities, and community members were asked to serve on the citizens' advisory committee. The school district was good about communicating to the public about school matters. Examples include reporting the district's "report card" in the regional newspaper and hosting the annual business breakfast. The district also assisted communities with clean-up efforts through student participation.

Of further strength, the school district was the largest employer in the area. Although some of the district's employees were commuters, some eventually moved to one of the service areas. The average salaries for teachers were higher than that for their counterparts in the region. Property tax rates were higher than for other districts in the region. Financial resources were identified as a need due to tornado debts that the school district had incurred for school facilities. In a recent special election, the citizens overwhelmingly passed a property tax request to provide funding for school infrastructure issues such as technology, transportation, and safety.

Collaboration was significant for this school district as it became a part of a regional consortium led by superintendents from four school districts. Inspired by the book *Hollowing Out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and What It Means for America* by Carr and Kefalas (2009), the project aimed at workplace readiness, student retention, and attraction of new residents, including former students. The program developed students while also having the potential of enhancing community growth. About half of the qualified students from the Trelawny's school district participated in this program.

The residents conversed repeatedly about people attributes of those living in their community: accepting, friendly, caring, creative, having perseverance, a welcoming atmosphere, a "can do" attitude, and a strong work ethic.

In terms of location, residents agreed with one another that the community is situated in a prime location that allows them to be in close proximity to major highways, shopping, and dining. Residents acknowledged that there were many churches for a town of its size. Further, it was reported that the community had a good Christian base with varied denominations. There was agreement that residents had a strong belief in faith, church, and family; and residents shared a close bond.

Most residents agreed that the community had good leadership. It was also noted that leadership extended throughout the community. The leadership was credited for being strong and foresighted, while being focused on planning for the community's future.

What Are the Concerns of the Community?

The concerns were issues to be addressed and/or improved upon. Most residents identified similar social and economic concerns, but some identified physical infrastructure as an additional concern. Residents also were concerned about community sustainability, as they were experiencing an aging population, youth out-migration, and increased taxes. Participants identified business, young people, taxes, employment, leadership, and drugs and alcohol.

Respondents were concerned about keeping businesses of aging owners in future years. In previous years, there were specific stores for shoes, clothing, hardware, and a car dealership; now only specialty stores remained. Although there were no store vacancies downtown, residents wondered about the businesses' revenues (financial capital).

To keep their young people from out-migrating, residents wanted additional amenities (social and built capitals). The community already had a strong emphasis on sports, particularly football, and respondents expressed the need to design a bike trail for recreational activities and develop programming for fine arts.

Regarding taxes, concern was expressed about residents building larger homes in relation to their affordability. Residents did agree that, although the taxes were high, the situation would correct itself as more houses were sold. Many citizens were concerned about how this small community was going to pay for infrastructure repairs.

Some residents did not approve of the leadership currently managing the water and sewer project. However, of more importance was the concern that when

leadership decisions are confined to a small group of established participants, little opportunity exists for the next generation of leaders to become established. Thus, there was unease because of the lack of encouragement for younger adults to become interested in the community's leadership.

Residents affirmed that they are not immune from drugs. A major concern was the rash of break-ins caused by people looking for money to acquire, among other things, drugs and/or alcohol. The number of drug users is large for this small community, and alcohol has played a role in the majority of police calls.

What Are the Values of the Community?

The values were aspects that made residents proud. After analyzing the results, I found that the residents cherished their quality of life in Trelawny. Values were identified as people attributes, amenities, location, and community amenities.

People attributes were described as friendly, caring, accepting, and supportive. There is a commitment to improve the community. There were strong feelings about living in this community: the simplicity of life, the feeling of being home, the sense of family, and belonging to something special. The people are caring, resilient, and hardworking. They value their family, friends, and neighbors. Further, it was reported that the community had a good Christian base with varied denominations.

Amenities include basic community services: recreation, utilities, businesses, health care providers, and faith-based organizations. There was pleasure in the church system, as it collaborates on activities such as vacation bible school. In addition, from the community's attributes, the issues of amenities and opportunities

for youth were prevalent. I sensed that the residents were proud of their youth and wanted to engage them into more community activities. Residents also wanted young people to assume leadership positions in the community. The more seasoned residents wanted to nurture young people so that they would remain in the community or return with necessary skills to help sustain the community.

The final value noted was location. The community has easy access to surrounding communities. The residents felt fortunate to be located close to shopping, entertainment, and dining activities.

What Is the Function of Education in Rural Community Development?

The greatest asset of this community lies in the educational system. The function of education in this community is significant because it:

- provides income to its residents and invests funds in the community,
- educates and trains the population,
- offers public use of facilities and enhance the health and well-being of the community,
- shapes the cultural fabric of the community,
- serves as the cultural center in the community,
- increases bridging social capital through external collaboration, and
- provides community support political benefits.

During my analysis of the findings, not surprisingly, I found that respondents included an attribute as both a strength and value. For instance, residents repeatedly compared their community to other surrounding communities when addressing the strengths and the values of the community. In addition, some

attributes were rated as a strength by some participants while being considered a concern by others (e.g., leadership). In all of the interviews, the tornado and the loss of a town's hero were referred to many times. I believe these tragedies were defining moments for the community that shaped its social and cultural environments since then. As a result, the residents shared strong affection for one another, as well as for new arrivals to this community, and expressed willingness to lend a helping hand to those in need. For ongoing healing and preservation of relationships, leaders need transparency in their operations to gain community trust.

Community Capitals and Trelawny

In this section, the extent to which all aspects of Trelawny incorporate community capitals are compared and contrasted utilizing participants' responses about their community and the role of education.

Social Capital

Residents have many opportunities to connect with one another in this community. There are several organizations and gathering places for residents to interact. Among them are educational and recreational facilities; the public library; historical sites; restaurants; retail businesses; and faith-based, civic, social, and governmental organizations. Residents, including city officials, communicate through the regional newspaper and radio. In addition, the community also holds annual celebrations.

From the focus groups' discussions, I sensed that networking among leaders could be strengthened. I believe that the community possesses high bonding social capital; however, its bridging capital could be improved. On the other hand,

Trelawny's school district has made good use of its bridging social capital that "connects diverse groups within the community to each other and to groups outside the community" (Flora & Flora, 2013). Being a part of the school-to-work consortium allowed the district to gather diverse ideas for the benefit of students and employers. Forging a regional educational strategy would be of great value to the communities involved. Longworth (2008) stated, "Clearly, an educational system created by and for in the industrial era must be reimagined for the global era" (p. 256). The school district is on its way to making this transition.

Human Capital

There is an abundance of human capital in Trelawny. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2005–2009), more than two-thirds of the population 16 years and over is employed. In addition, more than a quarter of the population is enrolled in school, and a little less than half are high school graduates. The city's personnel possess much knowledge, skills, and experiences, as they have served in different capacities throughout their employment within and outside the city. The community also contains many businesses representing various sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, and health care. Residents are hopeful that the number of businesses in the town will increase. In one of the focus group sessions, residents offered examples of young people who returned to the town to start their own business or to develop family businesses.

The community features educational institutions that are responsible for developing skills and knowledge. The teachers are developed and endeavor to transfer their knowledge to their students. Students have many opportunities to

engage themselves in order to enhance their interests and skills. Because of these rich opportunities, administrators hope that students remember the quality educational experience that they received in Trelawny and will serve as contributors and ambassadors by promoting the community.

Cultural Capital

Participants in the individual and focus groups interviews indicated that one of Trelawny strengths lies in the residents' attributes: accepting, friendly, caring, resilient, and hardworking. Additionally, they valued their faith in God. These attributes were key to the successful recovery from the devastating effects of the tornado. Residents also appreciated the amenities including schools and churches. The school district plays a part in nurturing the students. Participants credited teachers, coaches, and administrators as excellent role models for the students.

The school district has fostered civic responsibility by requiring students to make a commitment to community service prior to graduation; specifically, students must complete 15 hours of community service. This requirement was established after the tornado; because the administration was very grateful for the support they received during the tornado recovery and wanted to pay it forward. On occasion, students and staff members now assist other communities that face natural disasters. Residents appreciated the amenities including schools and churches. Additionally, they valued their faith in God.

Just as educators influence the students, so do parents on a daily basis. Parents influence their children through everyday living, family rituals, and worldviews. The community also transfers legacies to its residents. Examples

include a “buy local” campaign to support local businesses and lending a helping hand to residents in need. These values are passed to different generations as legacies, according to Flora and Flora (2013).

Financial Capital

The community receives revenues through taxes, grants, and fees. Although Trelawny has received local, state, and federal dollars to assist with redeveloping the community, it is still in need of financial funding for infrastructure improvements. The development corporation also generates financial capital and human capital by offering loans to businesses and selling lots in the industrial park. It also provides tax incentives to businesses. Many residents are experiencing economic stress as they had to rebuild their homes and businesses, thus acquiring unplanned debt due to the tornado. There are financial institutions in the community chartered under state law. The type of charter could determine how many risks they can acquire.

The school district also has several funding streams. However, recognizing its limited financial capital due to the tornado recovery, the district partnered with other districts to share personnel and transportation resources. Further, to address infrastructure deficiencies, including security, transportation, and technology, the district has asked residents to pass another levy as a previous school tax was scheduled to be reduced. The district also charges for the use of facilities including the fitness centers. Despite its limited budget, the school district invests in the community by employing its residents and patronizing local businesses.

Built Capital

The community is close to the interstate, has a highway, and some new streets. In terms of utilities, the community owns its water and sewer facilities and provides services to its residents for a fee. The gas and electric services are provided by private entities. Residents have access to telecommunication services with different technologies including cable, digital subscriber line (DSL), and satellite, which are provided by private entities. There are several public buildings including schools, post office, police and fire, health clinic, cemetery, and recreational facilities. The school district has several buildings that the community uses for various purposes. In particular, the high school's auditorium is utilized as a performing arts center. The district has fitness centers and a practice gym for public use. The school also has outdoor recreational facilities. Further, there is a railroad that supports grain elevators and other businesses in the community as well as in the surrounding areas. However, the area lacks a public transportation system.

Political Capital

It is difficult to determine how much political capital exists in a community without being present or living there for a period of time. Based on my presence at the local council meetings, I believe that Trelawny citizens do have a voice in the community. Significant issues brought more residents to local city council meetings, whereas when routine items were addressed, there were fewer residents attending.

The school superintendent also indicated a similar situation for the school board meetings. In terms of access, it appeared that city committee or board members had more access to persons responsible for running the city. For the most

part, board members were not present at city council meetings. That being said, there were other residents who were not serving in any capacity who brought issues to the council for support. During the focus group discussions, there were mixed reviews about the elected leadership in terms of handling infrastructure projects. In the 2013 general election, the incumbent mayor was defeated.

The district has strong political capital, as it receives continued support from the electorate for financial needs. Community members voted to approve a physical plant equipment levy to help the school district upgrade its technology, transportation, and safety infrastructures. Parents have access to school board members and school personnel through electronic media (e.g., website, e-mail) and face-to-face encounters such as school board meetings and functions. Further, the community at large and the school district also have access to lawmakers who support city initiatives and the district's policies and initiatives.

Natural Capital

Trelawny is located in a county that has more than 1,200 farms, according to the 2007 U.S. Census Bureau. Although this rural community does not have much natural capital, the residents enjoy a pond, the trees, rich soil, and clean air and water. Its recreational areas including golf courses, school football and soccer fields, which were beautifully landscaped.

The people of Trelawny share common values. They value one another and cherish their life in Trelawny. With external assistance and a high level of social bonds and resilience, residents were able to quickly rebuild the community after the tornado. They also believed that to sustain the community, it is necessary to educate

their children in hopes that, should they leave following high school, their children will return. If the young people remain in Trelawny beyond graduation, they will contribute to the community in various ways. Although residents identified that taxes are a concern, the community's residents are willing to make a financial investment in their children's future by voting for the additional tax levy for educational purposes. This speaks well of the educational system in that community.

How Does Trelawny Fare with Other Rural Communities?

It is acknowledged that rural communities possess a host of social and economic challenges including inadequate educational and development policies, insufficient funding, out-migration, and broadband access. Trelawny is similar to other rural communities, as it has experienced these challenges and more. It is different in the sense that the residents share a close bond with one another and possess strong attributes that lend themselves to strengthening the community.

Like other rural communities, Trelawny is affected by the lack of comprehensive national policies that address rural communities' ability to garner resources. Although Trelawny has adequate human capital, business owners could not participate in the research study due to staffing issues. Further, school and city personnel performed multiple duties. The community also has a need for financial and physical resources. This was compounded by the fact that the community is still feeling the after effects of a natural disaster. Monies that were set aside for other investments had to be diverted to cover disaster recovery expenses.

Although the community has increased population, residents still face out-migration of youths seeking social and economic opportunities in urban areas.

However, the school district has taken a creative approach to prepare students for the world of work. This school-to-work project offers students another alternative to moving away from home and has the potential to stem the out-migration tide.

Trelawny's terrain is fairly level. It is located in close proximity to surrounding communities, giving easy access to telecommunications providers. This lowers the cost of providing broadband services to the residents. The community is serviced by private telecommunications companies, and the school district telecommunications infrastructure is serviced by a government-run communications network.

The greatest asset of this community lies in the educational system. The function of education in this community is significant because it:

- provides income to its residents and invests funds in the community,
- educates and trains the population,
- offers public use of facilities and enhance the health and well-being of the community,
- shapes the cultural fabric of the community,
- serves as the cultural center in the community,
- increases bridging social capital through external coloration, and
- provides community support political benefits.

Recommendations for the Community

The following recommendations are offered on the basis of my analysis of the community. Although residents valued their educational system, I found that the elected leadership and city staff did not collaborate with the school district.

Educational and city leaders should:

- encourage and plan a community commemoration acknowledging accomplishments since the tornado,
- collaborate with the school district on community development projects including youth entrepreneurship,
- establish a youth entrepreneurship scholarship fund for middle and high school business projects,
- create a community youth council,
- start a leadership mentoring program, and
- partner with institutions of higher learning.

Further, I believe the relationships with institutions of higher learning need to be strengthened. There are several colleges located in the region that could provide resources to the district as well as encourage students to pursue higher education in the state.

My recommendations for rural communities that have suffered natural disasters, as well as personal tragedies, are as follows:

- Select capable leaders who have the skills and knowledge to lead your recovery efforts. These individuals must be positive, forward-thinking persons who embrace openness and collaboration.
- Foster a “can-do” attitude. The community has endured and survived devastating events; now it has the opportunity to continue its recovery with even more exciting gains.

- Encourage hope. When hope is absent, individuals resort to destructive behaviors.
- Maintain relationships with the individuals and groups that were helpful during the community's recovery.
- Recognize improvements during and after recovery. People will continue to be involved in community affairs when they know that their efforts are valued.
- Provide mental health counseling for all residents. Leave no one behind. Some will suffer post-traumatic stress. Others may suffer guilt. Material goods can be replaced, but the minds of people may never be the same.

Limitation of Current Research

The limitation of the current research was related to time constraints and few employee resources that highlight the challenges in rural communities. Although the sampling was purposeful, it was also one of convenience. In spite of this limitation, I believe the participants' responses were consistent with the many additional resources I used in studying the community (e.g., interviews, city council and school board meetings, census and school district data).

Conclusions and Implications for Further Research

Every community has assets. When those assets are assessed and invested to create new resources, they become capitals. The Community Capitals Framework (CCF) is a model designed to analyze communities. The tenets of CCF are: natural, human, cultural, financial, built, social, and political capital. These capitals are dependent on one another and can contribute positively to a community's

development when broad participation is nurtured. I concur with Flora and Flora (2013).

Rural and urban community leaders are responsible for their community's viability. To that end, leaders must be visionaries armed with a plan, and a community needs assessment is one way to gather information, assess resources, assets, and concerns. For successful project outcomes, it behooves leaders to include many sectors of the community. The more open the process, the more support leaders will receive. An added bonus is that when a community's social capital is high, it makes the community more productive in achieving its goal.

It is universally agreed upon that education plays an important role in society. Although education alone cannot solve all the social and economic challenges of a community, it can set the stage for improving a community's quality of life. For rural communities, education plays a significant role, as it is sometimes the center of the community. This was evident as participants discussed the strengths and values of the community. The school employs many residents; it offers many resources, and serves as cultural centers for its inhabitants.

Because rural communities have many challenges, such as inadequate policies, insufficient funding, out-migration, and broadband access, school and community leaders must create collaborative partnerships that can assist with self-development, knowledge-based, and leadership strategies for the benefit of the community. Just as "the capitals are intertwined and dependent upon one another for ultimate success or failure" (Flora & Flora, 2013, p. 10), so are the school and the community.

What comes to mind when the word “rural” is heard? Some envision the natural beauty of the landscape, whereas others visualize dying fields and empty towns. I believe that the word “rural” in this globalized era should make individuals think “opportunities.” There are opportunities for researchers in the field to discuss how challenges can turn into opportunities. A regional school partnership inspired by Carr and Kefalas (2009) is making a difference in the lives of many young people and their families. A collaborative effort is now viewed as an opportunity for new energy and creativity in workplaces. A small investment of time is now seen as an economic engine. Researchers have an ethical responsibility to improve upon what was given to them. This is a fine opportunity to “pay it forward.”

This research affirmed the usefulness of community capitals as a model with which to analyze communities. The framework represented a broad spectrum of the community and is easy in its application. It highlighted Trelawny’s resources and how leaders worked to create new opportunities. It demonstrated that positive changes can arise from adversity. With fewer resources, the community rebounded after the tornado. Rural residents and researchers must continue to tell the story. Policymakers must continue to interact with rural communities so that they can adopt policies that are workable in rural America. The urban size does not fit the rural size. The continued demise of rural America means the demise of all.

Final Thoughts and Reflections

Embarking on this research project was a great learning experience. It was a thrill for me to demonstrate what I learned in my doctoral studies and to satisfy my

thirst for knowledge about rural communities. The remarks below highlight my thoughts about this project.

Perhaps the most enlightening part of this research was reading the literature on the Community Capitals Framework. I learned how the capitals overlapped one another. It was then that I discovered another approach practitioners were utilizing in assessing communities: Appreciative Inquiry. This model focuses on strengthening the positive aspects of the community. Using a futuristic approach, the community assets were identified in this project, and the strategies and/or elements that created the assets were identified. Those strategies and or elements would be utilized for enhancing and creating new assets.

Seeking IRB approval for the initial phase of the research was a tedious procedure that included responding to technical and thought-provoking questions, thus requiring me to address the finer points of the research. The IRB staff played a major role in assisting me through this process. After completing 13 pages of questions requiring detailed answers, I concluded that I had reached a significant milestone on this journey. Gaining IRB experience during the initial phase of the research prepared me for the second phase application request.

During my data collection and analysis, I was eager to discover whether the community I selected would possess the characteristics of rural communities described in the literature. I learned that Trelawny does represent rural America because it has its share of common challenges, including the absence of financial and physical infrastructure resources. However, the community contains moderate

social capital (high bonding and medium bridging) and competent human capital that enable leaders to acquire and deliver essential resources for its inhabitants.

Unlike the first phase of the research where the findings quickly surfaced, the second phase of the research was challenging, as I was anxious to determine the function of education in community development. There were an abundance of social and human capitals that *slowly* evolved through the school board documents and the interviews. I spent hours analyzing these documents.

A “pinch yourself” moment happened when I discovered the impact of the school system on the community and the potential opportunities for all stakeholders.

The ethical standard of confidentiality was constantly on my mind. I kept asking myself: “Am I honoring my participants by keeping my pledge of confidentiality?” I tried diligently to adhere to this high standard of confidentiality, as I had previously in my work with executives, employees, and business owners who placed their trust in me. It was certainly a privilege interacting with the citizens of Trelawny. Additionally, without my gatekeepers (the community developer and the school district superintendent), it would have been very difficult for me to gather the data. Their assistance enabled me to conduct the research efficiently. Finally, I owe a debt of gratitude to my major professor and my editor for their guidance and stressing the need for *consistency*. That word is now printed on my forehead!

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