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Transformative Learning Applied to the Development of Community Capacity in a Local Grassroots Organization

Betty Sue Turner

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Transformative learning applied to the development of community capacity in a local
grassroots organization

By

Betty S. Turner

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of
Mississippi State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Community College Leadership
in the Department of Leadership and Foundations

Mississippi State, Mississippi

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Transformative learning applied to the development of community capacity in a local
grassroots organization

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This dissertation assesses the impact of structural constraints to participation on residents of a rural, non-core county and members of a local grassroots organization in conjunction with the measurement of grassroots members for the presence of transformative learning. This study was motivated by three research questions: (1) To what extent may the presence of structural constraints to participation in community action activities be found in the adult residents of a rural, non-core county? (2) To what extent may the presence of structural constraints to participation in community action activities be found in members of a local grassroots organization? (3) How many members of a local grassroots organization show evidence of the 10 phases found in transformative learning? Theoretical foundations for this work are based upon the following research; Theodori's (2008) analysis of structural constraints to participation in community action activities; Mezirow's (2009) development of transformative learning theory in adult populations; and King's (2009) Learning Activities Survey as a measurement of transformative learning. Purposefully obtained data were collected from

the general population to establish a measurement of structural constraints to participation.

Within the grassroots organization, survey data were used to determine the presence of structural constraints to participation and transformative learning. The findings utilizing regression analysis suggest significance for structural constraints to participation in the general population is minimal, and not significant at all in members of the grassroots organization. Transformative learning in members of the grassroots organization was confirmed by significance for 5 of the 15 variables analyzed. The results were contrary to expectation; yet, these conclusions do contain important implications for those involved in community development.

Key words: transformative learning, structural constraints, non-core county, grassroots organization, community development

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research to my husband, Tyra, my son, Patrick, my daughter-in-law Brandie, my grandson, Duncan, and my parents, the late Walton and Hazel James.

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I would like to thank the citizen group, Citizens for the Betterment of Greene County, Mississippi, and the staff of the Leakesville, MS, Piggly Wiggly for their enthusiasm, support, and participation in this research project. Their cooperation was vital to the success of the project.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable community development in distressed rural areas is an enduring problem. Distressed rural areas either do not experience or else are unable to sustain social and economic gains. Often, these counties are classified as rural, non-core. Isserman, Feser, and Warren (2009) utilized census population numbers and social economic factors to define rural, non-core counties in the United States. Within these counties 90% of the population is located in rural areas and the locale does not contain an urban center with a population of 10,000 or more residents. These counties also exhibit a population density of less than 500 people per square mile. Isserman et al. (2009) further define certain rural, non-core counties as non-prosperous because of high poverty and elevated school drop-out rates that are then combined with housing problems, income inequality, and a lack of significant human and social capital measures. Rural and community development policy makers may consider these communities distressed because they lack the necessary economic and social resources to develop and sustain social and economic improvements.

Community development has been defined by Theodori (2005) as a process of building and making communities stronger. Additionally, Theodori recognized a distinction between development in community and development of community.

Development in community referenced improving infrastructure while development of

community was about establishing processes that encourage communication and cooperation among individuals, formal and informal groups and organizations.

In many instances, local residents are motivated to organize formal and informal grassroots organizations and work toward community development strategies that will provide an improved quality of life. Green and Haines's (2008) discussion of community based organizations and grassroots organizations was described as community organizations whose membership was local and whose goal was to grow and improve their own communities. Green and Haines (2008) stated, "community development requires the involvement and participation of local residents in identifying the strategies they wish to use to improve their quality of life" (p. 13).

In 2005, the research of Boehm and Staples focused on leadership patterns found in grassroots organizations. Within their study on leadership, they found the one specific reason most people become associated with this type of organization. Very simply, grassroots group members found themselves directly affected by a specific issue or social condition that influenced their quality of life. Grassroots organizations according to the work of Castelloe, Watson, and White (2002) provide an avenue for people to work out problems in ways that improve the wellbeing of the community from the bottom up.

Addressing community issues and working toward community development requires community action. Theodori's (2004) definition of community action included activities that local citizens undertake as a collective body to solve local problems and meet the needs of the community. Citizen participation was identified by Theodori (2008) as vital to improving the environmental, social and economic quality of life for community residents. Salant and Kane (2007) found that community capacity results in

civic engagement which requires the emergence of leaders, building organizational capacity, and the facilitating of public dialogue which then produces decision making. Thus, community action and community development occur through citizen participation which results in civic engagement and ultimately require participants to possess the skills necessary to make decisions. Moreover, Green and Haines (2008) recognized that the capabilities of residents within communities to guide community development efforts must be considered.

Goodman et al. (1998) in a study designed to understand community health promotion recognized that community capacity was central to community development. Furthermore, the study identified participation and leadership as vital and related dimensions of community capacity. The dimension of participation requires the involvement of individual community members while leadership ensures the involvement of diverse community members. However, according to Theodori (2008) structural barriers exist that hinder participation by citizens in rural areas. Barriers act as constraints to involvement and can include such deficiencies as a lack of social and economic resources, poverty, inequality, small populations and the rural, sparse nature of communities. Theodori's (2008) study of involvement in problem solving by measuring constraints to participation on an individual level shows that barriers to participation circumvent the process of living together as a community.

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation grassroots organization report on leadership development by Sen (2003) identified the critical role of leadership in communities struggling to improve their social and economic conditions. Leadership development was identified as a strategy for changing communities because grassroots leaders have the

advantage in meeting community needs. Therefore, a need for leadership development designed specifically for grassroots leaders was discussed because their development path is different from traditional leadership development programs. Traditionally, according to the findings of Castelloe et al. (2002) individual training for grassroots leaders occurred through an informal, learn as you go, hands-on approach. The same finding was discussed by Boehm and Staples (2005) in their study of successful grassroots leaders. Successful grassroots organization leaders' self-reported leadership training was acquired by doing the job.

Leadership needs of grassroots organizations are determined by the individual capabilities of members and are directly linked to the organizational capacity of these organizations according to Castelloe et al. (2002). Organizational capacity is determined by the ability of groups to respond to community needs and the presence of organizational longevity. Moreover, the longevity of any grassroots organization is directly influenced by the development of organizational capacity. Thus, organizations must work to build their organizational capacity while carrying out the mission of the group and striving for the continued existence in the hope of maintaining an adequate life span of the organization. This multi-faceted focus on efforts within grassroots organizations proves difficult for many organizations to sustain.

Castelloe et al. (2002) cited an accompanying finding from the 2001 W. K. Kellogg Foundation Study on grassroots organizations. Their analysis focused on the fact that grassroots leaders and organizations are more likely to be successful with support from outside organizations. These organizations have the ability to provide services that help with the grassroots activities of organizing formal and informal

leadership training and other organizational capacity development activities. The Kellogg Foundation report stated that community education providers such as community colleges should consider supporting grassroots organizations with their resources.

Participatory actions by individuals in grassroots organizations may be reinforced by the presence of transformative learning. Mezirow (2000) introduced the concept of transformative learning in 1978. His study was based upon women that later in life returned to community colleges to continue their education. He identified the 10 phases found within the adult education theory of transformative learning. Transformative learning modifies the way adults perceive life situations. Transformative learning theory will provide a part of the theoretical framework for this study and should help contribute an explanation for the behavior of members of grassroots organizations. Measurement of transformative learning is based upon King's (1997) Learning Activities Survey (LAS) which she developed.

Within transformative leaning theory, Mezirow (2000) identified frames of reference as the way adults provide meaning to experiences. Personal experiences are based upon the philosophical, economical, sociological and psychological orientations obtained from our culture, or from the personal perspectives of individuals with which we are associated.

A frame of reference is made up of the dimensions of a habit of mind and the resulting points of view. "A habit of mind is a set of assumptions-broad, generalized orientation predispositions that act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of experience" (Mezirow, 2000, p.17). Thus, the multiplicity of habits of mind is found in sociolinguistic, moral, ethical, epistemic, philosophical, psychological and aesthetic

varieties that include a conservative or liberal orientation and eventually may be expressed as a point of view.

Mezirow (2000), in a discussion of the core concepts of transformative learning, described transformation as taking place through learning which occurs in one of four ways. First, existing frames of reference are elaborated upon; second, new frames of reference are learned; next points of view are transformed, and finally, habits of mind are transformed.

According to Mezirow (1991), transformative learning theory is based upon the work of several key individuals in the fields of philosophy, psychology, sociology, neurobiology, linguistics, religion, and education. For example, the social theoretical context for transformative learning theory is taken from Jurgen Habermas's theory of communicative action which is considered to be a major contribution to contemporary social theory. Two of the three domains of intentional learning identified by Habermas are instrumental and communicative. Instrumental learning entails cause and effect relationships and learning through problem solving. Communicative learning is associated with the understanding of others through all forms of communication managed by the process of social norms. Adult learning takes place in both domains. Each realm is affected by reflective learning which allows the individual to use the influence of their own history and biography to make sense of experience.

Additionally, Mezirow (1991) utilized the work of John Dewey to provide a foundation for his view of reflection. Mezirow stated, "Reflection is the central dynamic in intentional learning, problem solving, validity testing through rational discourse" (p. 99). Furthermore, he believed that the function of reflection provided for enlightened

action, made reinterpretation possible, and provided the validation process of what has been learned.

The central role of perspective transformation to adult development found in the work of Gisela Labouvie-Vief lead Mezirow (1991) to believe adult development to be highly compatible to transformation theory. Perspective transformation is considered to be the same as development in adulthood. Through perspective transformation adults transform through development and naturally move toward a more developed perspective that is described as complete, discriminate, open and inclusive.

The 10 phases of transformation identified by Mezirow (1991) are the result of his study of community college reentry programs that included structured interviews of 83 women in a dozen programs in the states of New York, New Jersey, California, and Washington. These phases have been confirmed in various other studies beginning as early as 1986 and still continue to provide high correlation results.

Thus, within transformative learning theory, the following 10 phases have been identified and confirmed in various studies. Hence, the 10 phases of transformative learning theory are:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning of a course of action

7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (Mezirow, 1991, p.168).

King (2009), believed that Mezirow's work on transformative learning theory provided an authoritative expression of the ten steps adults go through when changes occur. Furthermore, his theory explained the interpretation process adults experience as they cope with new information, and finally apply what they have learned to their lives.

A conflicting motivation to act particularly in community directed affairs may be found in structural constraints to participation in community based action. This has been determined by Theodori (2008) in his analysis of manifestations of structural constraints to collective action in individuals that live in rural areas. Structural constraints prevent the necessary interaction within the community that must take place as part of the natural process of shared experiences. Social interaction includes the understanding of community through the means of the individual. This process must take place in order to have a complete awareness of the individual and community in order for all to prosper. Collectively, constraints were identified and measured according to Theodori (2008) as "inequality, poverty, ruralness, population size and dispersion, and deficits in economic resources and social services" (p. 93). However, problem solving by active involvement, perceived influence in community affairs, and the characteristics related to education, income, race, and marital status have specific influences important to the individual.

Theodori's structural constraints to participation utilizing his measurement instrument will provide the second part of the theoretical framework for this study.

In order for members of grassroots organizations to achieve their goal of an improved quality of life for their communities, a wide array of support is needed from those that have an interest in community development. Rural community colleges and the Cooperative Extension Service (CES) have illustrated their interest in assisting community members improve their quality of life by making use of transformative learning along with leadership and participation programs. Therefore, the goal of all supporters and participants of community development may be summarized in the following statement: Mezirow (1991) believed that Jurgen Habermas anticipated within the context of communicative action that it is "essential that we develop the institutions and the communicative competence necessary to secure an effectively functioning public sphere in which practical questions can be resolved through public discussion and decided on the basis of discursively achieved agreement" (p. 72).

Statement of the Problem

The problem is that members of local grassroots organizations often experience conflicting motivations in regard to their problem solving activities. Their source of conflict may be based within the separate frameworks of transformative learning and structural barriers to individual participation. Within transformative learning, individuals question, reflect, and take action. Actions include the assumption of new roles, the acquisition of needed skills, and the gaining of a new perspective (Mezirow, 1991).

The complexity of structural barriers to individual participation identified by Theodori (2008) causes individuals to question their ability to adequately voice their

opinions, know how to become involved, and wonder if their actions will make a difference. Limitations in individual capability may be manifested by the presence of barriers to participation. Yet, through the process of transformative learning these barriers may be overcome. However, opportunities to overcome these limitations such as those found in leadership training suitable for grassroots organizations are scarce according to Castelloe et al. (2002) and Boehm and Staples (2005). So, barriers to participation hinder the motivation to act that has been awakened by transformative learning in individuals. Consequently, a fundamental approach to sustained social and economic improvements in local, non-core counties that takes place through the work of local residents in these organizations is thwarted.

The problem of conflicting motivations in regard to problem solving activities has negatively impacted community development in rural, non-core counties that lack the social and economic resources to achieve and sustain improvements. Within the boundaries of current research the application of transformative learning to local grassroots organization in conjunction with structural barriers to individual participation has not been carried out. Due to the social and economic needs of distressed, rural, non-core counties, it is imperative that a study of this sort be conducted. A descriptive, quantitative, survey research study should provide a sufficient measurement of how transformative learning and structural participation barriers are experienced by individuals in local grassroots organizations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to survey purposefully selected county residents and local grassroots organization members in terms of structural constraints to participation

and local grassroots organization participants for the presence of transformative learning. First, a sample of residents in a rural, non-core county was surveyed to determine the presence of structural participation constraints. Next, members of a local grassroots organization designed to improve the quality of life in their community and located within the same rural, non-core county were asked to complete two, separate survey instruments. These instruments measured grassroots participants for structural constraints to participation and for the presence of transformative learning.

Outcomes from the purposeful sample of non-participating county residents were used to verify the presence of structural constraints to participation found within the general adult population. Findings from the grassroots organization participants revealed the presence and extent of influence exhibited by transformative learning and barriers to participation in individuals. Within the members of the local grassroots organization a positive outcome for each framework did establish the presence of conflicting motivations to act since transformative learning requires action and structural participation barriers restrict action.

However, if members of the grassroots organization experience the 10 steps of transformative learning identified by Mezirow (1991), then Theodori's (2008) five structural constraints to participation should be reduced. Moreover, a relationship between the 10 steps in transformative learning and the five constraints to active involvement in community problem solving were analyzed for effect based upon the different characteristics of individual members. Findings revealed which member category has been most affected by the separate theoretical frameworks. In summation, the presence and amount of influence of transformative learning and structural

participation barriers will be established along with the trait identification of individuals most affected.

From these findings the extent members experience in regard to transformative learning and participation barriers which hinder problem solving success were examined and conclusions reached. Finally, the study was designed to illustrate to community residents, community leaders, education providers and those interested in community development activities the benefits that may be obtained from the support of individual capacity building in grassroots organizations.

Research Questions

This study examines the relationship of structural constraints to participation found in local grassroots participants and non-participating county residents along with transformative learning and structural constraints to participation in community action measured in members of a local grassroots citizens group.

Specifically, the three research questions are:

1. To what extent may the presence of structural barriers to participation in community action activities be found in the adult residents of a rural, non-core county?
2. To what extent may the presence of structural barriers to participation in community action activities be found in members of a local grassroots organization?
3. How many members of a local, grassroots organization show evidence of the 10 steps found in transformative learning?

Significance of the Study

Local residents participate in community action to identify needs and solve problems. Yet, structural barriers exist that hinder participation for all residents. Within individuals these constraints prohibit the desire to participate and weaken any motivation to act that has been acquired from a transformational experience.

A research project that will measure community residents for the presence of transformative learning in combination with their views of community action constraints is critical. A study that will provide a better understanding of the events experienced by members of a local grassroots organization is essential. First, it must be determined if the fundamentals of each theoretical framework are present, to what extent individuals experience them, and finally, which category of member is most affected by the conflict. Findings from this study should clearly illustrate the need for more detailed studies that result in a better understanding of why individuals desire to participate in activities that improve their communities, but at the same time face hindrances to participation that must be overcome. The number of people affected by the results of this study is considerable, because overall 36% of the nation's rural population is found in rural counties and one quarter of the population live in rural, non-core counties in 46 states (Isserman et al. 2009).

Increased insight into the theoretical foundations of structural constraints to participation that relates to individual capabilities, organizational capacity, community affairs, and learning theory is advantageous to all interested in community development. Results from this study could provide invaluable help to members of local grassroots organizations as they strive to experience substantial improvement in outcomes. A new

understanding of the magnitude, potential and overall value of local grassroots organizations to local communities should be obtained as well. A variety of disciplines contributed to this work designed to identify problems experienced by local grassroots organizations that work to improve social and economic conditions in rural, non-core counties.

Definition of Terms

Definitions utilized in this research study are defined below:

1. Citizens for the Betterment of Greene County is a 501(c) 3 grassroots citizens group organized by local citizens for the purpose of improving the quality of life in their community (Citizens for the Betterment of Greene County).
2. Community has been characterized as a place where the interrelated actions of a local population share a common sense of identity and mutual concerns for issues related to their life in the local area (Theodori, 2008).
3. Community action refers to the actions of local residents that work together to identify needs and solve problems (Theodori, 2004)
4. Community capacity refers to the ability of a community to take action through civic capacity by growing leaders, building institutions, and facilitating public dialogue and collaborative decision making (Salant & Kane, 2007).
5. Community college is a community education provider that is recognized as an institution that is regionally accredited to award the associate of arts

or the associate in science as its highest degree institution (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

6. Community development is defined “as a process of building and strengthening the community”, (Theodori, 2005, p.665).
7. Community education is a process of education that individuals may engage in to become more competent in skills, attitudes and concepts in order to have more control over the local components within their communities through participation. Community based education combined with lifelong learning utilizes the formal and informal education process to provide self-fulfillment and social, political and psychological empowerment (Galbraith et al., 1995).
8. Community participation includes four types of participation that involves public action, public involvement, electoral participation and obligatory participation. Public action is more closely aligned to community development because actions are started and controlled by citizens in an effort to influence government officials (Green & Haines, 2008).
9. Community practice refers to the three practice approaches of community organizing, popular education and participatory development used to bring about participation changes in the decision process of communities (Castelloe et al., 2002).
10. Constraints refers to structural barriers that restrict or prevent the emergence of community and limit active involvement of problem solving by local residents (Theodori, 2008).

11. Cooperative Extension Service is an organization created by Congress to assist the U.S. Department of Agriculture and land-grant universities with agricultural information (<http://msucare.com>). An educator is placed in each rural county to provide programs related to the social, economic, and financial needs of local residents (Green & Haines, 2008).
12. Grassroots leaders emerge from within the community to provide direction and guidance in efforts organized to address specific issues and are usually unpaid volunteers (Boehm & Staples, 2005).
13. Grassroots organizations are groups based in the community, which are made up of local membership with individuals utilizing their skills to engage in community development (Green & Haines, 2008).
14. Learning Activities Survey Questionnaire is a four-part questionnaire developed by Kathleen P. King to measure the stages of transformation learning experiences, learning activities, and demographic characteristics (King, 2009).
15. Leadership Practices Inventory is a 360-degree instrument, 30 question instrument developed by James Kouzes and Barry Posner to assess how often leaders engage in the five practices of exemplary leaders taught through The Leadership Challenge (Kouzes & Posner, 2003).
16. Leadership training imparts to local citizens the skills of planning, organizing, communication, leading, monitoring and working with others to undertake major socio-economic problems in their communities (Tackie, N.O., Findlay, H.J., Baharanyi, N., Pierce, A., 2004).

17. Organizational capacity describes the ability of grassroots organizations to be sustainable by having the ability to respond to the collective needs of the community residents (Castelloe et al. 2002).
18. Rural non-core counties are counties in the United States that have 90% of the population that live in rural areas or lack an urban population of 10,000 or more as well as a population density of fewer than 500 people per square mile (Isserman et. al., 2009).
19. Survey research is a means to gather data by asking questions using various variables obtained from a sample of members of a population (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).
20. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) is a statistical package designed to conduct a variety of procedures from entered data and provide results from that data for analysis. SPSS is a registered trademark (Cronk, 2008).
21. The Leadership Challenge is a leadership model developed by James Kouzes and Barry Posner. The model contains five exemplary practices utilized by effective leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).
22. Transformative leadership is a model of leadership based upon emotional appeal and inspiration which is designed to inspire people to achieve beyond the expected (Boehm & Staples, 2005).
23. Transformative learning is a teaching approach based on promoting change where educators ask adult learners to confront and critically

analyze their assumptions about how they view the world around them (Mezirow, 2009).

24. Transformative learning theory is an adult education learning theory developed by Jack Mezirow. The theory consists of 10 steps adults encounter during a learning experience (Mezirow, 2009).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background

Isserman et al. (2009) found that in the United States, 20% of the population currently resides on 97% of the land. Thus, large areas of America are considered rural. The United States Census classifies counties as either rural core or rural non-core. Rural core counties contain all or part of urbanized areas. To be classified as rural, non-core, 90% of the population must live in rural areas or the county does not contain an urban area with a population of 10,000 or more. A 500 people per square mile population density is additionally required for the classification of rural, non-core. Isserman et al. (2009) also found that some of these rural communities do well while others do not. Those that do not prosper experience a lack of resources necessary for development activities.

According to Isserman et al. (2009) the states of Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Jersey and Delaware do not contain any rural, non-core counties. Of the remaining 46 states, 26 states have 20 or more rural, non-core counties for a national total of 1,371 counties. Factors that affect prosperity related to the current study include human and social capital, knowledge and creativity. The measurements of rural, non-core counties for education and social capital are particularly relevant to the study. Prosperous counties

have lower high school dropout rates and residents have higher education attainment levels overall.

Isserman et al. (2009) measured social capital by associational activity through the total number of social capital establishments that include food, recreation, religious and civic organizations, income from proprietor, family farms, and small manufacturing establishments. Thus, counties that have more social capital also experience more income growth per capita. Above average association with groups, whether formal, informal, recreational, or service, are helpful to rural, non-core counties in developing their ability to be prosperous. Also, findings on prosperous and non-prosperous rural, non-core counties are that prosperous counties have a vigorous mix of private sector industries, strong social capital, and people that are educated. Furthermore, the findings in regard to social capital and particularly the value of religious and other groups that bring people together and promote activities that produce change are critical to rural, non-core counties.

The review of literature that follows was focused on the value of members of grassroots organizations acquiring skills necessary for building community and organization capacity and enhancing the meaningful experience found through transformative learning. The literature also illustrated how the work of community education entities and others interested in the social and economic development of rural, non-core counties can be essential to the promotion of community development by partnering with grassroots organizations to build organizational and community capacity.

Rural Communities, Development and Constraints

The definition of community is borrowed from the work of Theodori (2005). He described the term as elusive but determined for research purposes, that community is “a place-orientated process of interrelated actions through which members of a local population express a shared sense of identity while engaging in the common concerns of life” (p. 661-662). The efforts of community take place in local society where needs are met and shared problems are encountered by the local population. For society to exist, according to Theodori (2005) three minimum features must be present for community to exist. These features are a geographic locality, people living in the locality and institutions and patterns of behavior that reflect human interest. Certain characteristics are found primarily in all local societies. These characteristics are varied from society to society, and these characteristics include demographic traits, social class, social, economic and political institutions and natural resources.

Theodori (2005) also identified the concept of social fields that exist within local societies. Social fields are fluid, yet are bound together by the process of social interaction through a specific set of interest. People become actors which undertake actions and generally work through associations. Actions may be projects, programs, activities or events that are sponsored by formal organizations or informal groups described as associations. Social fields may include education, government, faith-based services, the economy, and recreation as well as other interest that has its own identity or organization.

When these fields overlap, a community field may come into place. At this point the community field follows the interest of the general community, and thus, the structure

of the community becomes the focus rather than the specific goals of interest. This process of generalization across interest lines provides structure to the whole of community and acts as linkage of organization to common interests. Actions then are carried out in an organized and purposeful manner because participants are made up of the local population. Thus, efforts become for the common good of all (Theodori, 2005).

Next, the concept of community development is used to mean a process of developing and making communities stronger, thereby, preserving the social characteristics of a local community. Theodori (2005), building upon the work of others described the actions of community development to be purposive, positive, structure oriented and to exist in the efforts of people. Purposive community development is the intentional result of people working together to commence and retain community. Community development that is positive is the shared commitment that local residents undertake to improve their community. Structure oriented community development includes direct attempts to interlink and manage human relationships. And all of these principles exist in the efforts of people, not in goals or outcomes.

Theodori (2005) distinguished community development according to the following approaches. Development in community is a type of development utilized to refer to examples of economic growth, business retention, expansion, recruitment, and other growth infrastructural improvements. Development of community is broader and involves the purposive, positive, structure-oriented efforts by local people. This type of development is used to establish, build, and maintain processes that encourage communication among all residents. Barriers to cooperation and communication can be overcome with strong relationships among the various social fields in communities.

Finally, what is important to realize is that development in community without development of community is more likely to produce temporary results in community development.

Now that the value of community development and especially the improvement of individual's ability to work toward development of community has been established, the process of community development will be discussed. Green and Haines (2008), begin in their work, *Asset Building & Community Development*, by acknowledging the process as being difficult because many individuals do not have time to be concerned. However, their desire for good schools, jobs and a safe environment remain. So, if local residents do not determine the future of a community then the job remains undone or is carried out by those hired outside the community.

Green and Haines (2008) view public participation in community development as a means to an end in order to achieve enhanced community assets. Therefore, public participation is seen as a process and developing infrastructure is seen as an outcome. Yet, they acknowledge both process and outcomes are essential to community development. The United States has been recognized as a nation that has a vibrant civil society and voluntary organizations with associations an important part of civil society. The problem is how does public participation fit into community development activities? Answers to questions such as how to motivate communities to change, how is momentum maintained and who should be involved in the public participation process must be found by those involved in community development.

Two types of public participation actions are better suited to community development according to Green and Haines (2008). These are described as public action

and public involvement. In public action, citizens initiate and control activities while public involvement means that citizen participation is controlled by government officials and others. The focus of the current research is that of public action by citizens.

The next issue analyzed by Green and Haines (2008) in regard to public participation is of why people participate. The primary response is that people become involved because an issue directly affects them. People believe it is important to seek and help find solutions to a specific problem. Others become involved because of social relationships. New relationships can be developed or relationships with neighbors and friends become stronger. Organizations that offer activities in which people are interested is another way for people to become involved in public participation activities.

A variety of constraints have been identified that may restrict participation. Child care, transportation, accessibility and a lack of information and communication may act as impediments. Public participation techniques and their objectives must be identified in order for successful levels of participation to be reached according to Green and Haines (2008).

Moreover, Theodori (2008) identified five structural constraints an individual may experience at the community level in regard to community action. These items are described as knowing how to get involved, making a difference, less worry about personal financial concerns, being listened to, and more free time. Measurement of these items was conducted as dependent variables and used to determine barriers to active involvement in activities seeking to solve community problems. Items represented in questions that relate to determining social and communication deficiencies are based upon citizens' perceptions of how to become involved in community action. Questions

about factors of inequality and elite domination are measured by residents' perception of making a difference. Questions about financial resources which allow for participation are measured by degree of concern about personal financial issues. If citizens felt their views would not be respected or considered as viable solutions to community problems, responses would be considered deficiencies found through questions of powerlessness and inequality. A lack of time by residents to participate will be considered to contribute to stratification and inequality.

For analysis, Theodori (2008) used 17 independent variables and 2 control variables, and combined them with the 5 items of participation to determine levels of association. The regression findings for each constraint to each independent variable and the two control factors provided results of the study. Twelve of the independent variables reached significance, however, many of them were associated with multiple constraints considered to be barriers to participation. The implications and recommendations for Theodori's findings include the perception that active participation builds a sense of self-efficacy in local residents, which in turn improves the quality of life as local problems are solved. Structural constraints should be better understood at the local level through theories of community and the development of a body of theoretical knowledge.

However, Theodori (2008) acknowledged that active participation on the local level is often difficult to establish and maintain due to structural and social factors. Suggestions to overcome these factors consist of educating local residents on the process of involvement and providing the assurance they will be made a part of the process of decision making and their input will make a difference. These findings have implications for the current research project. Building organizational capacity through activities found

within the acquisition of skills necessary to carry out the work of grassroots organizations would help overcome barriers to participation, because these skills would help to improve social and communication deficiencies for groups and individuals.

Social factors have a role in local and regional economic development as well. In fact, organizational networks and civic participation may affect economic growth. Green (2003) stated, “These issues surrounding the effects of organizational networks and civic participation are the heart of the community development process. Involving citizens in policy making and building broader social networks are considered essential elements of building community capacity” (p. 2). Green’s research indicated that civic participation in economic development may lead to the development of community capacity to address other issues and lead to a better quality of life for residents.

Flora and Flora (2008), in their study of rural areas described three major approaches to community development. These models are technical assistance, conflict, and self-help models. These theories take for granted that human agency can overcome broader tendencies that affect places. The self-help model builds upon civic capacity which will help residents move toward expansion of their quality of life, and should be considered for this research. Systemic change is the goal and will require the process institutionalization by institutions and making community relationships stronger.

Also, the self-help model is based upon the concept that it is likely a broad based group of community members can be motivated to participate in community affairs. Thus, participation in the democratic decision making process is vital to the self-help model of community development. In addition to the issue of participation is that of participatory skills. Different levels of skills exist in different sectors of the community

that for the most part are reflective of educational and professional skills. These skills are prevalent in the sector which contains those with educational and professional skills, because these residents have experience with participation. The self-help approach can be put into practice through a variety of means. Ultimately, it is understood that the resources needed for change are already present in the community as well as the desire for change (Flora & Flora, 2008).

Unfortunately, the resources for implementing changes are not present in many non-prosperous, rural, non-core counties. Thus, the need for training to provide the skills necessary for participation becomes even more vital to successful community capacity.

Community practice approaches to bring about changes in participatory levels in communities were described by Castelloe et al. (2002). The three approaches to community practice include community organizing, popular education and participatory development. Community organizing is the process of bringing citizens together for the purpose of specific community tasks, and developing skills in organizing, problem identification, leadership and organization formation. Popular education is based upon learning from experience and dialogue and dialogic education. Participatory development is based upon the experience of group activities that determine methods for community problems and how to fix them. Also included is the emphasis on the behaviors and attitudes necessary to implement innovations developed within group methods. The last element of participatory development is the necessity of building the capacity of grassroots groups in order for them to survive for the duration of their need.

Castelloe et al. (2002) focused on two areas important to organizational capacity. These areas are organizational capacity building and individual skill development.

Organizational capacity building includes the process of supporting members of grassroots groups as they learn to take on the tasks of guiding the organization with elements of leadership. These elements include setting up an organizational structure, strategies to achieve goals, vision statements, budgeting, and other administrative chores. Individual skill development is the process of helping individuals in the organization develop the technical skills, knowledge and leadership skills necessary to conduct the activities of the group. A learning by doing process is the one advocated to grassroots members in order for them to gain the needed skills to operate the group rather than depend on external formal and informal training opportunities.

Boehm and Staples (2005) in their study of leadership in successful grassroots organizations supported the finding that external leadership training is not a part of leaders' background. The value of grassroots leadership as a vital component for promoting participation, democracy and community empowerment in community groups has been well established. The purpose of the 2005 study was to examine the motives, attitudes, roles and actions of successful grassroots leaders, and thus, contribute to the knowledge which could be applied to the need of leadership training and the effect in community practice. Successful leaders interviewed did acknowledge their need for skill building in specific administrative and outreach activities. However, most felt that institutional approaches to training did not provide the necessary support needed, rather the preference was for knowledge to be combined with the process of experience. The experiential process may include feedback from trainers and other leaders involved in the same task orientated participation process.

Transformative Learning

The way adults learn is representative of decades of work by Mezirow. In *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (1991), Mezirow provided the foundation of transformative learning theory. Each chapter by Mezirow contributes to the emergence of the theory. The text began with a comparison of other theories of adult learning. The following chapters examined the way experience provided meaning to perceptions and structure to events. Mezirow (1991) described how he gleaned the social theoretical context for transformative theory from Jurgen Habermas' theory of communicative action. Differences between communicative and reflective learning were provided along with a discussion of the various approaches utilized by other authors. Reflection was elaborated upon to help readers understand how meaning schemes and perspectives can change. However, distortions in meaning perspectives can be a deterrent to adults' ability to make meaning of experience. Next, the text provided a description of the role of transformation in adult development by Mezirow and other authors based upon their overview of the workings of transformation in adult learners. Finally, Mezirow (1991) concluded that not all learning is transformative, but "transformative learning involves reflectively transforming the beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and emotional reactions that constitute our meaning schemes or transforming our meaning perspectives" (p. 223).

Mezirow and Associates (2000) considered the practice of transformative learning in various adult situations such as a learning community and in small groups. Kasl and Elias (2000) in their Mezirow chapter, "Creating New Habits of Mind in Small Groups" put forth the idea that when group members are transformative learners the groups are

healthier and more effective. Thus, the transformation that occurs in individuals can take place in small groups. Collective transformative learning is characterized by the same expansion of consciousness as with the individual. Members of a small group must deal with a situation that is complex and successful participation in that environment requires that the member learn to change to meet the group's uniqueness (Mezirow & Associates 2000).

Mezirow (2000) combined the study of transformative learning with social responsibility in an attempt to discover how transformative learning influenced the process while a sense of social responsibility developed. Social responsibility is grounded in the long term commitment to the common good rather than just to self which requires engagement with others. In addition to engagement with others, four conditions were identified that lead to a sense of greater social responsibility. The steps include the presence of the other, reflective discourse, a mentoring community, and opportunities for committed action. The presence of the other is recognizing that we are not all alike, that diversity exists. Critical reflection is necessary in order to change our suppositions about life. Mentoring provides understanding for transformative learning, because we are intricately interwoven into a web of relationships from which we learn. The last step of opportunity to act is vital to the process of learning. This is the process that in essence matures the commitment to the common good.

Taylor (2007) conducted an analysis of transformative learning from 1999 to 2005. His study revealed the extensive use of transformative learning theory. Reviews revealed the work of other researchers and their concept of perspective transformation and transformative learning. Perspective transformation was described as a change in a

frame of reference, and studies provided insight into how change is not reversible and can be sustained. Several studies provided evidence that change was an epistemological process. These studies involved citizen action, mission and life purpose. Taylor (2007) added to the notion of mission and life purpose by concluding that, “in addition by understanding one’s mission or call in life helps shed light on an implicit and rarely discussed aspect of transformative learning--what is its purpose?” (p. 181).

Mezirow (1991) understood that perspective transformation through transformative learning is not the goal of adult learning. However, changes in adults can indirectly lead to improvements in the personal and community life of adult learners. Adults studied have gained new concepts of themselves, a new awareness of social and political relations, and strategies and resources for action through participation in grassroots citizens’ organization. These conclusions are compatible to the needs of the citizen’s group which is the focus of this research project.

Brock (2010) developed and utilized a quantitative measurement instrument to measure the ten precursor steps for transformative learning theory. Undergraduate business students were the object of the study. There were 256 participants in the study. More transformative learning was reported when more steps were reported as being remembered by the students. Four levels of transformative learning are examined by the 10 precursor steps. These levels are the expansion of current frames and acquiring new frames of reference, and the transformation of a point of view. The study helped to quantify the frequency and steps of transformative learning in students. Since the majority of transformative learning research is qualitative, the recommendation is that

future research should enlarge quantitative research utilizing other populations of learners.

The LAS was developed by King (1997). Based upon the 10 steps of transformative learning developed by Mezirow, the survey is a quantitative measurement designed to learn about the experiences of adult learners. Within the 10 steps, a full succession of transformation occurs. This transformation encompasses the emotions, efforts, critical reflection, action and changes made because of new knowledge. The LAS is the tool that recognizes and measures these changes and what activities contribute to the changes. The full cycle of transformation is referred to by King as a perspective transformation. Thus, the LAS has two major purposes. The first is to measure if a transformation has occurred in relation to their education experience and what learning activities contributed to the learning experience. Part one of the LAS ascertains the stages of the perspective transformation. The next part determines which activities have been participated in. Lastly, demographic characteristics are collected.

Research by King (2009) and others clearly demonstrate the usefulness of the instrument in situations other than in the classroom. Reasons for this include the ability of the instrument to measure any perspective transformation within the experience of adult education. Also, importantly, the LAS can serve as a preliminary needs assessment in the process of planning and evaluation, and can be utilized by those determining program and institutional services even for community development activities.

Perspective transformation has the ability to provide empowerment according to King (2009). A significant research example provided was a group of hospital and nursing home workers. Their participation in a new training program designed for

workers of all levels to come together as heterogeneous small groups produced inspiring results. New techniques for problem solving, communication, and goal achievement were developed by the group to achieve new outcomes. Thus, the true purpose of research with LAS and transformation can be the empowerment of adults. Moreover, research has exposed changes of adults in many environments including development education, higher education, religion, and different cultural settings.

Leadership

“Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal”. (Northouse, 20007, p.3). Northouse’s review of leadership illustrated the complexity of the topic. Also, leadership may be viewed as a trait or as a process. Emergent leaders are different from appointed leaders and leadership is different from management are examples of the differences identified. Diverse approaches and theories along with measurement instruments are found within the study of leadership. “Transformational leadership is the needs of today’s work groups, who want to be inspired and empowered to succeed in times of uncertainty” (Northouse, 2007, p.175). Transformational leadership was described as a process through which people are changed and transformed. It is a process that utilized emotions, values, ethics, and a process that can be developed to meet long term goals as well as help group members meet their needs and achieve their potential. Transformational leadership was described as an approach that involves extraordinary influence that will motivate group members to achieve above average expectations.

Northouse (2007) discussed the work of political sociologist, James MacGregor Burns, which provided the classic literature for transformational leadership. Two types of leadership were described. The types are transactional and transformational.

Transactional leadership has the most models and has described the exchanges that occur between leaders and those that follow them. Transformational leadership as a process is where a leader engages with others, thereby creating a relationship that creates motivation between leader and follower alike. Successful results include meeting the needs and motives of followers and helping others reach their full potential.

Throughout the development of transformational leadership many factors and perspectives have been developed, studied and utilized. Each work has contributed to the development of the process. However, the leadership model selected to serve as an example of leadership training because it is believed to be suitable for members of grassroots organizations is The Leadership Challenge created by Kouzes and Posner (2012). Their model consists of five fundamental practices based upon information obtained from leaders when they were asked about leadership. The successful implementation by leaders of these practices is seen as a way for leaders to achieve extraordinary accomplishments. To Kouzes and Posner (2012), “leadership is an identifiable set of skills and abilities that are available to anyone” (p .30). This concept is based upon the foundation that “leadership is a relationship”, (p. 30). These are leaders and those that follow leaders, thus the relationship and the quality of the relationship is important. To support The Five Practices of the model, Ten Commitments of Leadership are provided. These 10 items are behaviors that leaders can use to achieve extraordinary

results. The practices and commitments are evidence based and have endured since their inception in 1982. In sum, the model has stood the test of time.

Furthermore, Kouzes and Posner (2012) acknowledge the value of leadership. It is important not only to individuals and institutions, but to entrepreneurs. Their ideas help create vibrant communities and essentially contribute to the well-being of the world in its entirety.

Everyone at some point has provided leadership and all individuals have had an impact on someone at some time. Leadership is important to everyone. Since leadership skills can be learned and improved upon with the right motivation, desire, training and practice, Kouzes and Posner (2012) assert that the best leaders are the best learners.

Therefore, learning must be continuous and found within the self to be the true instrument of leadership. Furthermore, the development of leadership is self-development and is not necessarily new information about leadership trends and techniques. The process of developing leadership is about finding the leader within self. So a good leader must understand self in order to be able to make stable decisions in the modern world of uncertainty. Evidence has been produced that clearly illustrates the effectiveness of leaders that engage in The Five Practices of Kouzes and Posner's model. Many examples of the use of The Leadership Challenge may be found. The model has been found to be effective within the context of both public and private organizations. Areas such as education, health care, corrections, and churches have benefited from its use.

Kouzes and Posner (2003) developed a leadership assessment tool called the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). The instrument is a 360-degree, 30 question

document that is used to determine how often leaders engage in The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership. The Leadership Challenge and competencies assessment tool is used extensively in leadership training and development. The instrument continues to serve as a reference for validation of research evidence used by Kouzes and Posner (2012).

Community Education Entities

Traditional approaches to community education are supplied for the most part by education entities located within the communities they serve. Two particular organizations that provide educational services to local communities will be reviewed under this section. The two entities are local community college and the CES.

Community Colleges

The first entity to be examined is community colleges. Social forces in the twentieth century contributed to the rise of community colleges. Cohen and Brawer (2003) identified three forces that were major contributors to the emergence of the community college. These forces included the need for trained workers in growing industries, a longer period of adolescence, and the drive for social equality.

Vaughan (2006) explained how the Michigan Supreme Court in 1874 determined in the Kalamazoo decision that public funds could be used by local school districts to build and operate comprehensive high schools. This ruling provided the basis for the emergence of the community college. William Rainey Harper, President of the University of Chicago used his influence to found the Joliet Junior College which is the oldest existing public two year college in the nation. Originally in 1901, junior college

classes were mixed with those of the high school. Growing demand for the higher level classes required an addition be built in 1915 for the purpose of a public junior college. Thus, Joliet Junior College was formally named in 1917. Today, community colleges can be found in every state. The definition of a community college is a regionally accredited institution of higher education that offers the associate degree as its highest degree. Community colleges distinguish themselves from other higher education institutions because of “their commitment to open access, comprehensiveness in course and program offerings, and community building” (Vaughan, 2006, p. 1).

Vaughn (2006) went on to discuss in his story of the community college that since community colleges are community based, it is essential that the needs of the geographic area they serve are met. Although these needs are diverse, most communities in essence desire the same thing from the community college that serves their area. First, communities want access to programs that will transfer to other higher education institutions and help them attain bachelor degrees. Next, communities need technical and vocational training to meet local workforce needs for global competition. A variety of credit and noncredit courses that will result in certificates, diplomas or degrees is an expectation by communities too. Finally, most communities want activities or courses that enhance the social, cultural or recreational quality of their community. These activities improve the quality of life for residents and enable community building. Thus, community services activities sponsored by community colleges are important to communities.

In regard to the position of community colleges in rural areas, Miller and Tuttle (2007) found that community colleges especially in rural areas have the opportunity to

increase the vitality of the local area by acting as a social mechanism to drive the community. An analysis of the response to community colleges in the various communities found among other things a theme of community inclusiveness. Community colleges serve as a crucial center for a range of civic activities. Citizens are brought together through offerings of programs, services, and activities. Thus, people rely on rural community colleges to provide the opportunity to gather, debate issues and grow as individuals. Through efforts like these, community colleges become enabling institutions for empowerment that improve communities and the individuals they serve in rural America

In sum, the mission of the community college is to provide access to postsecondary education and other services that will result in strong, vital communities. The comprehensive concept of community colleges came about in 1947 through President Harry Truman's Commission on Higher Education (Vaughn, 2006).

Cooperative Extension Service

The next organization to be analyzed for its contribution to community education services is that of the CES. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 established the CES to work with the United States Department of Agriculture and land-grant universities according to information obtained from the Mississippi CES website: <http://msucares.com>. The organization was authorized to participate in research, knowledge, instruction, practical demonstrations and publication of issues related to agriculture and related topics.

Franz (2007) in her discussion of adult education determined that the CES is the largest adult education institution in the United States. The goal of the Extension Service was expanded to help meet public needs better by engaging in transformation which

required a change in the organization. Thus, the CES moved from being a source for rural experts to offering a wider variety of services to develop human capacity. These efforts were aimed at making the Extension Service and the land-grant partners more useful through greater accessibility, accountability and by becoming more meaningful.

Franz (2007) additionally found that efforts to achieve success in this approach were based upon the adult learning theory of transformation. The work of Mezirow (2000) and the 10 steps of transformative learning theory held implications for the organization's course of action. Potential effects were found in the fact that group transformation can be a powerful occurrence and may produce effective change that can motivate other entities.

Transformative learning theory validates the role of helper and facilitator of learning which is central to the focus of Extension work in helping to solve public problems. The incorporation of the concept of adult learning theory throughout Cooperative Extension was designed to help meet the needs of adults served (Franz, 2007).

Blewett, Kein, Leser and Jones (2008) developed a conceptual model for CES that produced lasting results to be utilized in working with communities taking on serious, complex issues. Transformational education helped provide understanding of the value of partnerships built upon mutual trust, the enlargement of scholarship, expertise and the building of capacity in individuals desiring to engage in problem solving for public issues. This allowed for the opportunity of Extension educators to move into the role of public policy education and required the focus to be on issue-based needs in the public arena. The need to involve citizens in the decision making process made it necessary to

develop a process that is democratic and inclusive. Transformative learning provided the concept not only to CES personnel, but to residents as individuals and in group settings. Franz along with Garst, Baughman, Smith and Peters (2009) determined that if the goal of adult education is transformation, then individuals, groups, and organizations change to accommodate new perspectives and actions. Yet, they acknowledge scholars have paid little attention to transformative learning and adult educators within the context of informal education settings. Perhaps as was suggested by Franz et al. (2009), the goal and niche of the CES is transformative education. The result could produce profound change in individuals, families and communities.

Walker and Gray (2010) summarized that since leadership skills are necessary to the development of community capacity, and the goal of CES is to address the leadership needs of communities, an effective method to determine if leadership development occurred was needed. So, the development of a way to measure the effectiveness of leadership development on the leadership skills of community leaders became indispensable. Utilizing exploratory focus groups in northeastern North Carolina, researchers identified a modified version of Kouzes and Posner's (2003) LPI as an appropriate tool to measure leadership skills in community groups. The LPI is widely used in adult education and behaviors measured accurately measure the behaviors of adult learners. The research determined that these practices and behaviors are equally applicable to business and community groups.

Another study conducted by Walker and Gray (2009) conducted a comparison of community leaders that participated in leadership development and community leaders

that did not participate in leadership development. Findings indicated that significant impacts on leadership behaviors occurred in those that participated.

Other CES research measured the outcomes of different leadership development programs. Tackie et al. (2004) analyzed the effects of leadership training workshops. One analysis explored leadership training in a rural Alabama city. The survey questionnaire was administered six months after training concluded. Information requested in the survey was used to determine reasons why participants wanted to obtain skills and how the new skills were utilized. Effective leadership was the reason provided for participation and results confirmed the understanding of the value of leadership.

In sum, the value of leadership training to develop skills for community leaders to utilize in their efforts to improve the quality of life for all residents has been well established in CES research. Also, the use of transformative learning and The Leadership Challenge which utilized the five practices of leadership as measured by the LPI has been validated in prior community development research.

Chapter Summary

The Chapter II review of literature began with a discussion of concepts found in community development. The studies identified the perception that top down directed development strategies did little to provide lasting change to distressed communities. True community capacity building is obtained as a result of citizens themselves growing and changing in ways that would lead to greater participation in community activities. Five structural constraints were identified that restricted residents' involvement in helping to solve community problems.

The literature review next reflected the role of transformative learning in describing how adults learn. Mezirow's (1991) model of the theory of transformative learning provided the foundation for the discussion of the influence that transformative learning can have on individuals that participate in community activities. Additional studies reviewed illustrated the measurement of transformative learning in formal and informal educational settings along with a discussion of community education providers.

The literature review illustrated the need of leadership development as an acquired skill, which can become a tool for capacity building in communities. The model for leadership selected for review was The Leadership Challenge by Kouzes and Posner. The five exemplary practices of effective leaders were identified as well as the survey instrument, the LPI.

The roles of community colleges in rural areas were addressed in the literature review. The complexity of the mission of these higher educational institutions and their roles in the communities they serve was a focus of studies reviewed.

The literature review included an examination of the CES. Their role in adult education and the influence on the development of community capacity was illustrated through leadership development in the studies reviewed. The CES readily embraced the theory of transformative learning as a core concept for their programs and processes.

The purpose behind the selection of materials in the literature review was to bring together the notion of transformative learning and leadership training on structural constraints to community action. Also, along with the benefit to individuals the hope was to illustrate the value of partnerships to those community education providers interested in building community capacity to achieve economic and social gains in their

communities. The fundamentals of community development discussed in this section of the research project that may become the actions of citizens in a grassroots organization that seeks sustainability while working to improve the quality of life in their community are visualized in the following model:

Conceptual Framework of the Study



Figure 1. Pathway to an improved quality of life for members of a local grassroots organization.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Research Design

The research approach utilized in this study was that of a quantitative survey design. Survey research assisted the primary researcher in an attempt to obtain answers to questions about community participation in problem solving and transformative learning. Opinions obtained from survey participants were expected to point toward certain conclusions found within the groups surveyed that may be generalized to the population. There are three major characteristics that are found in the majority of surveys. These three characteristics are:

1. Information is collected from a group of people in order to *describe* some aspects of characteristics (such as abilities, opinions, attitudes, beliefs, and/or knowledge) of the population of which that group is a part.
2. The main way in which information is collected is through *asking questions*: the answers to these questions by the members of a group constitute the data of the study.
3. Information is collected from a *sample* rather than from every member of the population. (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p.390).

Moreover, the major purpose of the survey is to describe the characteristic of a population. In other words, how did survey partakers feel about specific variables related

to community participation? Gathering information about many issues and topics can be easily measured utilizing survey research. Also, survey research has the advantage of being economically administered with a quick turnaround on data collection. Data collection that is a one-time event is described in research literature as cross-sectional. The second type of survey is a longitudinal survey where information is collected at different points and over time to study changes that occurred in the sample. Another advantage of survey research is that a small sample can help obtain a great deal of information that can be generalized to the population as a whole (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

Within the research design under discussion, a purposefully selected sample of county residents ($N = 99$) surveyed at a peak traffic time in a major grocery store was asked to express their views about five structural constraints to civic participation. This source of data should provide reliability to test results and establish the level of structural participation constraints found in the general population. Also, a group of citizens organized into a grassroots organization ($N = 30$) was asked in a cross-sectional survey about their experiences as adults in the organization along with their opinions of constraints to community action. In this instance, the opinions of these two groups about constraints to civic action and transformative learning may provide important implications for an entire population of rural residents. This mixture of county residents was chosen for survey purposes, because their views should be reflective of the general population in the county. The particular group of residents involved in the grassroots organization was selected to be surveyed because their efforts are aimed at improving the quality of life in their communities, and because their emergence was based in grassroots

activities. These activities are important to understanding the process of building community capacity. Survey data in the current project was collected from self-administered questionnaires.

The questionnaires are validated instruments that are widely used to measure the variables utilized in this research. Survey research is the most appropriate design for this particular study since information about issues vital to rural residents was the object of interest, and validated survey instruments that had stood the test of time were available or use.

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to data collection, several prerequisites were met. First, approval was obtained from the dissertation committee at Mississippi State University. The next step was to make application to the Mississippi State University Office of Regulatory Compliance, Institutional Review Board (IRB). Additionally, required IRB training was updated. Also, a request for approval to conduct the study will be supplied in the attached exhibits section of the study. Permission from the only major grocery store located in the county seat to use as an information collection site in order to obtain information on the adult population of the county is included in the attachments. Additionally, from Citizens for the Betterment of Greene County, a copy of the letter providing permission to participate in the study is supplied. (Appendix A).

Permission from Gene L. Theodori to utilize the five constraints to community action was requested and received (Appendix A). Finally, permission from Kathleen P. King to use the LAS for measurement of transformative learning was provided with the purchase of the text, *Handbook of the Evolving Research of Transformative Learning*

(p.35). Thus, data instrument measurements included the LAS and Theodori's five measures on constraints to community development.

A questionnaire concerning feelings of structural constraints to involvement in community problem solving was completed by adult residents of a rural, non-core county in the Southeastern United States. Residents who randomly appeared at the selected public location and volunteered to participate provided the structure of the target population. Data was collected during peak traffic periods and all information collected was used to analyze survey responses. The data collected additionally contained information on demographic characteristics obtained from the general population or target population.

At a regularly scheduled meeting of the grassroots organization, Citizens for the Betterment of Greene County, questionnaires were made available to members of the grassroots organization and collected by the primary researcher upon completion. Survey responses to questions by members of the grassroots organization contained the same information in regard to community action constraints administered to the general population in the same rural, non-core county. An additional survey provided to grassroots members included questions developed to measure the 10 phases of transformative learning. Each survey instrument was administered separately because combined instruments may alter the original validity and reliability of the original survey instruments (Creswell, 2009). At the end of each survey, questions about demographic characteristic were included. These characteristics were age, gender, race, educational attainment and marital status. The goal was to provide an inclusive analysis in order to

fully describe characteristics of members within the citizen's group and residents of a rural, non-core county.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted utilizing SPSS, version 22.0 software. Quantitative data are measured in terms of scores when the variable is measured. Particularly, statistics afford the researcher techniques to provide illustrative forms or meaningful description of numerical groups. The approach to analysis for this research project was to use descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics of survey participants and linear regression to illustrate the relationship of transformative learning and community activities constraints within two separate surveyed populations. Research was conducted to determine how variables are related within the groups surveyed.

First, because the sample contains different individuals with different characteristics that relate to age, education, gender, marital status and race, results will vary. Therefore, descriptive statistics will provide data that will be useful in helping to organize, provide a summary and simplify descriptions of survey participants. Furthermore, when the purpose of research is to examine relationships between variables, a clear description of survey participants provides additional understanding to research findings.

Specifically, the method of regression analysis utilized was the ordinary least squares (OLS) method. According to Abdi (2010) OLS is a simpler version of the least square methods (LSM). The foundation of these methods are not only some of the oldest statistical methods but probably one of the most popular in use today. Therefore, these techniques are not only well studied, but work well within various approaches.

Abdi (2010) studied the works of others to find the origins of LSM. Evidence suggest initial findings in Greek mathematics and to a probable use by Galileo. However, modern usage has been traced to the French mathematician, Legendre in 1805 but, LSM was mentioned as early as 1795 by the famous German mathematician Gauss. The foundations of correlation and what is now known as regression analysis found in modern statistical framework are based upon the 1886 work of Galton. Pearson and Fisher utilized the same framework but within different context during the early development period of statistics (Abdi, 2010).

Research Questions

The study examined the presence of structural constraints to participation in solving community problems in the general population of a rural, non-core county in the Southeastern United States and the presence of structural constraints to participation and transformative learning in members of a local grassroots organization in the same rural, non-core county. Results from these findings of community action should serve as effective, valid indicators for leadership training and organizational support for grassroots citizen's groups organized to help solve community problems. Leadership skills and organizational support are required for the improvement of civic and organizational capacity in grassroots members. Meanwhile, the presence of transformative learning will make learning more meaningful for adults. Specifically, the study examined the vital research questions:

1. To what extent may the presence of structural barriers to participation in community action activities be found in the adult residents of a rural, non-core county?

2. To what extent may the presence of structural barriers to participation in community action activities be found in members of a local grassroots organization?
3. How many members of a local, grassroots organization show evidence of the 10 steps found in transformative learning?

Variables

The following includes a description of the dependent and independent variables as well as the coding measures used in the research study.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in the study were constraints to community action and transformative learning. The definition of constraints for the purpose of carrying out the research in this study included five items identified and measured to be hindrances to active involvement in communities. The existence of transformative learning was determined by seeking responses to the LSA which reflect the 10 steps identified in Mezirow's model of learning. Analysis included findings from validated survey instruments for each variable. Two separate groups were utilized for analysis. First, a purposefully selected group of county residents derived from the general population were measured to determine the presence of structural constraints to civic participation in the general population. Next, county residents organized into a local grassroots community organization were measured for the presence of the same structural constraints and for transformative learning.

Participants in the general population and in the local grassroots organization were asked if they would devote more time to helping solve community problems if someone would tell them: (1) How to get involved, (2) if it would make a difference, (3) if they had less worry about personal money issues, (4) if they would be listened to and (5) if they had more free time (Theodori, 2008). Community action refers to residents activities where they worked together to identify and resolve specific local problems (Theodori, 2004).

The variables of community constraints were responded to with choices of strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree and not sure/undecided. Responses were coded in the following manner: 1 for strongly agree, 2 agree, 3 disagree, 4 strongly disagree and 5 not sure/undecided. The structural constraint variables and the coding for each may be found in Table 1.

The dependent variables for transformative learning were measured with responses of yes and no to questions that determined if a step in the process had occurred. Assessment of steps began with a positive or negative response to a disorienting dilemma which led to the questioning of an individual's normal response to actions and their response to social roles from a specific experience. Critical reflection probed beliefs about previous feelings toward role expectations and asked if they had changed or remained the same. The recognition that discontent was shared because other people had questioned their beliefs was measured too. The fifth step of self-examination of feelings of guilt or shame were measured as well as with the question of being uncomfortable with traditional social expectations. Next, participants were asked to respond if they had tried out new roles associated with their experience in order to become comfortable with

them. A response to a planned course of action because of new information was calculated with a response to the question if participants discovered a way to assume new behavior. Measurement of acquired knowledge/skills to implement plan will be determined to occur if participant's response was that information had been gathered in order to adopt new ways of acting. Finally, reactions, feedback, adoption of new ways and review of decisions were measured to determine if transformative learning had occurred. All coding of transformative learning variables was 1 and 2 and is presented in table 2 at the end of the chapter.

Independent Variables

The independent variables include the demographic characteristics of participating members obtained from the general population of a rural, non-core county and members of a local grassroots organization organized within the same rural, non-core county. Characteristics used for measurement included race, gender, age, marital status, and educational attainment.

The measurement of race was limited to three responses for possible selection by participants. The responses were black, white and other and were coded 1 for black, 2 for white and 3 for other. Gender contained the reply of female and male and was coded as 1 or 2. Age was coded and categorized as (1) 21-29, (2) 30-39, (3) 40-49, (4) 50-59, (5) 60-69, and (6) over 70. The measurement of marital status was limited to the possible answers of married, single, and other and coded respectfully as 1, 2 and 3. For educational attainment four possible replies were used to obtain a measurement. The first item coded at 1 was less than high school, followed by code 2, for high school, coded as 3 was the response of some college, and the last category was higher education degree (s)

coded as 4. All coding for the independent variables ranged from 1, 2 to 1, 6. These variables along with their codes are found in Table 3.

Table 1

Structural Constraints as Dependent Variables

Variable Name	Coding
Dependent Variable Constraints	
Involved	1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4 = Strongly Disagree 5 =Not Sure/Undecided
Difference	1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4 = Strongly Disagree 5 =Not Sure/Undecided
Financial	1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4 = Strongly Disagree 5 =Not Sure/Undecided
Listened to	1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4 = Strongly Disagree 5 =Not Sure/Undecided
Time	1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4 = Strongly Disagree 5 =Not Sure/Undecided

Table 2

Transformative Learning as Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable	
Transformative Learning	
Questioned	1 = Yes 2 = No
Social Roles	1 = Yes 2 = No
Beliefs Changed	1 = Yes 2 = No
Beliefs Unchanged	1 = Yes 2 = No
Others	1 = Yes 2 = No
Thoughts	1 = Yes 2 = No
Expectations	1 = Yes 2 = No
New Roles	1 = Yes 2 = No
New Ways	1 = Yes 2 = No
Information	1 = Yes 2 = No
Feedback	1 = Yes 2 = No
Adopted	1 = Yes 2 = No
Not Identify	1 = Yes 2 = No
Values Changed	1 = Yes 2 = No
Review	1 = Yes 2 = No

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics as Independent Variables

Variable Name	Coding
Independent Variable	
Demographics	
Age	1 = 21-29 2 = 30-39 3 = 40-49 4 = 50-59 5 = 60-69 6 = Over 70
Educational Attainment	1 = Less than High School 2 = High School 3 = Some College 4 = Higher Education Degree (s)
Gender	(1) female, (2) Male
Marital Status	(1) Married (2) Single (3) Other
Race	(1) Black (2) White (3) Other

Statistical Analysis

This study was carried out in order to discover the connection between constraints to public participation and transformative learning found within the characteristics of survey participants. First descriptive statistics were utilized to provide a description of the characteristics of survey participants. Next, the statistical technique OLS was used to conduct linear regression in order to examine the relationship among the various variables utilized within the study. The data obtained from the purposeful sample of the general population and the population of the citizen's group allowed for the relationship parameters to be statistically discovered with predicted values for dependent and independent variables. The statistical outcomes derived from OLS data analysis are

suitable, because the data was obtained from a purposeful sample derived from a well-defined population; relationships measured are linear; the expected value of the error is zero; variance of error term is constant for all observations and error is distributed normally; and are non-correlated (Abdi, 2010).

Descriptive Statistics

Central tendency values will be utilized to provide measurement of the sample populations surveyed. The values are the mean, median, and mode. The measures of dispersion which provide information on variability are the range and standard deviation. A combination of these measures provides valuable information about the data set being analyzed. Therefore, when a measure of central tendency is reported, a measure of dispersion is also reported. For example, when a mean is reported a standard deviation is reported as well. And, a reported median is reported along with a range. While each measure requires different suppositions, the mean is the most powerful of central tendency measures, and the standard deviation is the best measurement for dispersion. Additionally, frequency distributions for specific variables will be used to indicate the number of cases and the percentages derived from the output of the demographic characteristics obtained from survey participants (Cronk, 2008).

Ordinary Least Squares

The OLS regression line are automatically computed within SPSS. Variations of the OLS formula exist but is explicitly based in the following linear regression model $Y_i = \alpha + \beta X + \epsilon_i$. where:

- Y_i is an observed value of the dependent value while Y is the predicted value of the dependent value.
- α is the population intercept point of the regression line where the line intercepts the Y axis, and is constant.
- β is the slope parameter of the population found on the regression line that illustrates the change in each dependent variable produced by each independent variable, and is constant.
- X is X_i predictor variable value placed into the equation with multiple X_i 's present for each independent variable.
- ε_i is the error term linked to the predicted value of Y_i and is expected to be zero since errors balance out (Denis, 2011).

Regression analysis was used to determine if the independent variable is the cause of the dependent variable, and furthermore, describes the relationship between the variables. Thus, a change in the value of one of the independent variables results in a change of the value of the dependent value as well.

Therefore, linear regression analysis was conducted in this particular study. Separate analysis was conducted on two separate groups. A purposeful sample of the population of a rural, non-core county was analyzed to determine the level of constraints to participation in civic affairs based upon the variables of education, age, race, gender, and marital status. Next, responses from the members of a local grassroots organization were measured to determine the level of constraints to participation in solving community problems and for the presence of transformative learning based upon the variables of education, age, race, gender, and marital status.

Chapter Summary

In conclusion, the method and analysis presented in this chapter will provide valuable insight. First, the research is original. The researcher collected data from participating members of a grassroots citizen's organization and from the general population of a rural, non-core county. The data was compiled, coded and entered into the statistical data base for analysis. The outcomes from the data can be used by those involved in community development and those that have an interest in rural, non-core counties. This is one of the few studies to bring together the concepts of community action constraints, transformative learning, and demographic characteristics of community residents. Additionally, this study is unique because the research was conducted on-site in a rural, non-core county. Most research obtained about this type of county is through the efforts of the federal government in regard to census facts. For this reason, this study can serve as a clear illustration of how land grant universities, community colleges, Extension Service personnel and the community can be brought together to improve the quality of life in rural, non-core counties.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study was to determine the presence of structural constraints to community action participation found within the adult population of a rural, non-core county along with the measurement of local grassroots organization members for the presence of the same participatory structural constraints and for transformative learning. Both groups were surveyed in separate environments within the same geographic location. The general population survey took place in a local, retail establishment while grassroots organization members were surveyed during a regularly scheduled meeting.

The results of the analyses in regard to structural constraints and transformative learning found in two separate populations are presented in this section. Descriptive statistics were utilized to provide a summary and description of the demographic characteristics of each population, and regression analysis which utilized the OLS statistical procedure was used to describe relationships among variables. Research questions were responded to as well. The purposeful sample taken from the general population of a rural, non-core county consist of 99 responses ($N = 99$) and make up one dataset. The second dataset was derived from the local grassroots organization which is made up of ($N = 30$) survey responses.

Demographics Explained by Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were utilized to illustrate the demographics of age, education, gender, race and marital status found within all survey participants. Information reported in Table 4, Table 5, and Table 6 provided a useful measure of the demographic variables.

General Population Demographics

Statistics from the general population survey ($N = 99$) were analyzed. Results suggests in terms of age, five of the six categories were fairly close in the number of frequencies.

The majority of responders were located in the age group of 30-39 and was calculated at 19.8%. This group was followed closely by the 50-59 age group with 18.8%. The 21-29 age classification measured at 7.8%. The 40-49 age group occurrence rate resulted in a 16.8% finding and 14.9% was measured for the 60-69 category. The lowest rate of occurrence was in the over 70 group age group with a proportion of 8.9%.

The demographic variable of education in the general population survey illustrated the combined categories of some college and higher education degrees had the largest cumulative percentage at 58.4% for a total of 60 participants. Additionally 32.7% of participants reported their education level as that of high school and only 3% reported less than high school.

Other categories which include gender demonstrate that 54.5% of survey participants were female and 40.6% were male. The demographic of race included a rate of occurrence of 10.9% for blacks, 81.2% for whites and 5.0% for other. The foremost

marital status of members of the general population survey was married with a result of 51.5% for this category, followed by a 31.7 percentage for single and 12.9% for other.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of the General Population

Variable name	Mean	S.D.
Independent Variables		
Age	3.2041	1.59871
Education	2.8958	0.87635
Gender	1.4433	0.51980
Race	1.9388	0.40145
Marital Status	1.6224	0.75321

Note. N = 99.

Grassroots Organization Demographics

The demographics for the citizens organization ($N = 30$) in regard to constraints to participation were next analyzed. Within the analysis of age, most frequencies occurred in the 60-69 bracket with 43.3% reported. The next largest group was in the age category of 50-59 with 26.7%. The 30-39 age group measured 13.3%. The age groups of 40-49 and over 70 group each had 6.7%. The 21-29 age bracket only had one response for a 3.3% finding.

For the demographic of education the classifications of high school and some college illustrated a result of 33.3% each. The information on higher education degree(s) was depicted at 30.0% and only one member at 3.3% did not possess a high school

education. The gender variable percentage was 56.7% for females and 43.3% for males. The race demographic was 10.0% for blacks and 90.0% for whites. The married category under marital status was 80.0% and 10.0% each for single and other. The demographic characteristics for transformative learning were derived from the same citizens group; therefore, the results are the same as those reported in the structural constraints survey.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Grassroots Organization

Variable name	Mean	S.D.
Independent Variables		
Age	4.1333	1.27937
Education	2.9000	0.88474
Gender	1.4333	0.50401
Race	1.9000	0.30513
Marital Status	1.3000	0.65126

Note. N = 30

Tables 4 and 5 in this section were used to report the mean and standard deviation of both groups that participated in the questionnaires. Likewise, the discussion of these tables contains information in regard to the frequencies and percentages found in each category. Analysis of the different categories reveals differences in the demographics between the two survey groups. Since the groups are members of the same resident population, these differences should be noted. Therefore, the frequency and percent for

each demographic characteristic measured in each group have been made available in the following table.

Table 6

Participant Demographics Compared

Variable	General Population		Grassroots Organization	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Age				
21-29	18	17.8	1	3.3
30-39	20	19.8	4	13.3
40-49	17	16.8	2	6.7
50-59	19	18.8	8	26.7
60-69	15	14.9	13	43.3
Over 70	9	8.9	2	6.7
Education				
Less than HS	3	3.0	1	3.3
High School	33	32.7	10	33.3
Some College	31	30.7	10	33.3
Higher Ed Degree	29	28.7	9	30.0
Gender				
Female	55	54.5	17	56.7
Male	41	40.6	13	43.3
Marital Status				
Married	52	51.5	24	80.0
Single	32	31.7	3	10.0
Other	13	12.9	3	10.0
Race				
Black	11	10.9	3	10.0
White	82	81.2	27	90.0
Other	5	5.0	0	00.0
Total Participants	99		30	

Quantitative Regression Statistics of Survey Participants

The quantitative statistics for all variables are described in Table 7, Table 8 and Table 9. The results of the general population participation constraints are reported in Table 7. The data suggest that the variables of time and age have an impact on

constraints to participation. Specifically, OLS was calculated to predict participants' response to time to help solve community problems based upon their age. Results represent a level of significance ($p < 05.$) or older individuals as a predictor for those with more free time for involvement in community activities. For the remaining variables none were found to be significant in the general population.

However, when utilizing the percentage for multiple regression (R^2), all adults in the general population surveyed reported a 7.1% variance of time and was explained by the predictor variables. This measure was the highest percentage for all dependent variables calculated in the general population survey for constraints. The lowest percentage for all variables surveyed was .5% for the financial variable which addressed a concern for personal financial issues, and was the least influenced by the predictor variables. The variable of involved measured 1.9%, the variable of difference was measured at 2.5%, and listened to was at 2.4% as a measure of the deviation explained by the independent variables. These percentages help to provide an explanation as to the nature of the relationship among variables analyzed.

Table 7

General Population Regression for Structural Constraints

Variable Names	R ²	df	F	Constant	β	Sig.
Dependent Variable						
Involved	.019	5.89	.343			.885
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Difference	.025	5.89	.460			.805
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Financial	.005	5.89	.086			.994
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Listened To	.024	5.88	.430			.827
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Time	.071	5.87	1.322			.262
Explanatory Variables						
Age				1.103	.107	.050*
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						

Note. N = 99

Ordinary Least Squares Regression

* $p < .05$

The results of analysis of constraints to problem solving found within members of a local grassroots organization are found in Table 8. OLS within SPSS was used to gauge the significance of the predictor variables utilized in the survey. None were found. Participants' responses to their perceptions of constraints to active involvement in community problem solving specifically could not be found. The percentage of multiple regression (R^2) found in the variables are much higher than those found in the general population survey, but still fail to provide significance. The variable of listened to measured 23.1% as an explanation of the dependent variable for the largest percentage of all variables measured. This was followed closely by a 22.5% explanation for the variable of difference. The variables of involved and time were each in the 16% range. The unusual multiple regression percent was measured in the variable of financial at 7.6%. Therefore, it can be said that the predictor variables of age, education, gender, race, and marital status can be interpreted as a proportion of any explanation of the variables of involved, difference, financial, listened to, and time. Yet, the findings are not significant. However, the percentages reported do help portray the full relationship of all variables analyzed.

Table 8

Grassroots Members Regression for Structural Constraints

Variable Names	R ²	df	F	Constant	β	Sig.
Dependent Variable						
Involved	0.169	5.24	0.974			0.454
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Difference	.225	5.24	1.394			.262
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Financial	0.76	5.24	.394			.848
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Listened To	.231	5.24	1.446			.244
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Time	.163	5.24	1.992			.116
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						

Note. N = 30

Ordinary Least Squares Regression

* $p < .05$

The analysis of members of a local grassroots organization to transformative learning is described in Table 9. The data suggest limited significance was found in some of the variables. After the calculations of OLS were carried out, a positive response to the variable of questioned and race ($p < .05$) were detected. Members of the grassroots organization felt they had an experience that caused them to question their normal actions at a percentage of 24.7. Also, education served as a predictor for the variable of changed beliefs ($p < .05$). The higher education levels indicated a willingness of members to change their previous beliefs or role expectations at 31.4%. The variable of others with the predictor of age ($p < .05$) helped members of the grassroots organization understand they were not alone in questioning their beliefs at a level of 23.1%. Gender ($p < .05$) at a rate of 27.4% was a predictor for the variable that did not identify with any survey responses about change. Finally, race ($p < .05$) was a 23% predictor for the variable that indicated at some point, values, beliefs, opinions, or expectations had changed due to their experiences as members of the grassroots organization. Analysis did not determine significance for the remaining variables that represent the ten phases found in transformative learning.

Table 9

Grassroots Members Regression for Transformative Learning

Variable Names	R ²	df	F	Constant	β	Sig.
Dependent Variable						
Questioned	.247	5.23	1.506			.227
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status				-513	.793	.025*
Dependent Variable						
Social Roles	.173	5.23	.962			.461
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Beliefs Changed	.314	5.19	1.740			.174
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Beliefs Unchanged	.152	5.21	.755			.592
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Others	.231	5.23	1.380			
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status				1.248	-.142	.028*

Table 9 (Continued)

Variable Names	R ²	df	F	Constant	β	Sig.
Dependent Variable						
Thoughts	.119	5.23	.620			.686
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Expectations	.183	5.23	1.029			.424
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
New Roles	.098	5.23	.502			.772
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
New Ways	.284	5.23	1.825			.148
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Information	.217	5.20	1.107			.388
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						

Table 9 (Continued)

Variable Names	R ²	df	F	Constant	β	Sig.
Dependent Variable						
Feedback	.308	5.20	1.783			.162
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Adopted	.125	5.20	.571			.721
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Not Identify	.274	5.22	1.660			.186
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender				1.223	.431	.035*
Race						
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Changed	.230	5.23	1.374			.270
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race				-5.23	.767	.031*
Marital Status						
Dependent Variable						
Review	.096	5.23	.488			.782
Explanatory Variables						
Age						
Education						
Gender						
Race						
Marital Status						

Note. N = 30

Ordinary Least Squares Regression

p<.05

This study analyzed results to determine the presence of constraints to civic participation found in the general population in a rural, non-core county and in members of a local grassroots organization. This was followed with an analysis of grassroots organization members for the presence of transformative learning. Specifically, the study examined three research questions:

1. To what extent may the presence of structural barriers to participation in community action activities be found in the adult residents of a rural, non-core county?
2. To what extent may the presence of structural barriers to participation in community action activities be found in members of a local grassroots organization?
3. How many members of a local, grassroots organization show evidence of the 10 steps found in transformative learning?

Finding I

Structural barriers to participation found in the adult residents of a rural, non-core county are only significant in regard to age and time.

Finding II

Structural barriers to participation were not found to be significant in members of a local grassroots organization.

Finding III

The characteristics of age, education, gender, and race in members of the local grassroots organization did exhibit an influence on the variables of questioned actions,

realized others questioned their beliefs, no longer agreed with previous beliefs or role expectations, while others did not identify with any statements of the survey. However, some felt their values, beliefs, opinions, or expectations had changed through their experiences in the local grassroots organization.

Chapter Summary

The results of the analysis conducted on adult residents of a rural, non-core county and members of a local grassroots organization located in the same rural, non-core county are offered for consideration in this chapter. Descriptive statistics were used to provide a description of all survey participants. Regression analysis of the data was then carried out on the two separate population samples. The population sample for the adult residents of a rural, non-core county consisted of a sample of 99 ($N = 99$). The sample size for the local, grassroots organization in the same rural, non-core county comprised a sample number of 30 ($N = 30$). The adult resident general population sample contained a larger percentage of females at 54.5% with 19.8% in the age range of 30-39, 81.2% were white, 51.5% were married and 32.7% had obtained a high school education. Descriptive data for the local, grassroots population included a 53.3% response rate from females, with 33.3% in the 50-59 age group, 90% were white, and 73.3% were married and 36.7% for a high school education was the most frequent response to education. The data also clearly illustrated that structural constraints to participation were not a hindrance to active involvement in community problem solving for either group surveyed. The adult general population survey only found significance in one of the five structural constraints analyzed. The constraint of more free time measured significance for gender for this

group. None of the five structural constraints to participation were found to be significant in members of the local grassroots organization.

The data measuring transformative learning analyzed in members of the local grassroots organization resulted in limited significance. Overall, as a group the 10 phases to transformative learning were not realized. However, various steps were found to be noteworthy. Members of the grassroots organization did have an experience that caused them to question the way they normally acted. Furthermore, age was a factor in the realization that others questioned their beliefs and members were not alone in the way they felt. Race was significant for members that realized their experiences from the activities of the group had resulted in a time they knew their values, beliefs, opinions, or expectations had changed.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter consists of a summary of the research study. A summary of findings along with conclusions that may be reached from the study are included. Implications for practice and recommendations for further research conclude the chapter.

The purpose of the study was to determine the extent of structural constraints to involvement in public problem solving in the general population of a rural, non-core county, and then, in members of a local grassroots organization located in the same county. Next, members of a grassroots organization were measured for the presence of the ten steps found in transformative learning. After the examination of the data, an understanding of how rural, non-core residents responded to structural constraints which may inhibit involvement in solving public problems was gained. Additionally, information obtained about transformative learning in members of the grassroots organization will contribute to conclusions drawn about citizens' role in civic engagement.

Summary of Findings

The findings obtained from this study indicate that residents of the rural, non-core county, regardless of membership in a local grassroots organization, are not hindered by structural constraints to participation in solving public problems. Within the general

population survey of adult residents in the selected rural, non-core county only one of the five independent variables reached significance with any of the five structural constraints.

Within the variable of free time to help solve community problems, age was significant ($p < .05$). Results from members of the grassroots organization revealed that none of the variables reached significance when measured against participation constraints. These results are different from those found by Theodori (2008). His results indicate that 50 to 75% of the sample reported at least one if not more of the five constraints as reasons for a lack of participation in helping to solve community problems. The structural constraint variables of knowledge of how to become involved measured at 53% while personal financial concerns measured 54% in Theodori's study. Also, the concern of being listened to was determined to be a constraint for 65% of survey members while free time to solve community problems was measured at 67%. The constraint of concern about making a difference was the largest percentage at 77% overall in Theodori's study.

The regression analysis of transformative learning measured in members of the local grassroots organization resulted in significance for 5 of the 15 variables analyzed. The 15 variables represent the 10 steps of transformation as described by Mezirow (2000). King (2009) condensed the variables analyzed in the prospective transformative process into the categories of learning activities, people, and life change for individuals. Similarly, the variables reported in the following summary were condensed into the categories of questioned ideas and experiences, learning activities, and life changes. Analysis reported in the summary show the variables of questioning event, changed beliefs, beliefs of others, and a lack of identification were all significant ($p < .05$) for

race, education, age, and gender. Kasl and Elias (2000) believe that transformative learning occurs in small groups if members are truly dedicated to the success of the group. Furthermore, Kasl and Elias (2000) believe that groups can not only learn, but “the health and effectiveness of our organizations and communities depend on the capacities of small groups to be transformative learners” (p. 229).

Demographics and Structural Constraints

Findings of significance for structural constraints to participation in solving community problems were limited to age and time in the general population and not found at all in the local grassroots organization. Based upon current U. S. Census information a total population of 14,352, resides in the rural, non-county selected for study. Within the population total, 8,482 are males and 5,870 are females.

In regard to significance found for age and time, the sample ($N = 99$) for the characteristic of age included the categories of 21-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, and over 70. The first category of age, 21-29, comprised 17.8% of sample contributors while making up 14.3% of the county population. The 30-39 age category makes up 19.8% of survey contributors and 17.6% of the entire population. The age category of 40-49 had 16.8% of survey responses and a county population of 15.0%. The 50-59 age category survey percent was 18.8% compared to a county population percentage of 12.4%. The 60-69 age category made up 14.9% of the survey while the county percentage is 9.3%. The over 70 age category for survey participants was 8.9%, while that age group makes up 7.4% of the county population.

Further demographic analysis reveals that the largest age group to participate in the general population survey was in the 30-39 age category. Comparing this information

with current data from the U. S. Census shows that this same age category makes up the largest percentage of the total population (17.6%) in the county as well. The age group of 25 to 44 years also makes up 55.2% of the work force which consist of 4,502 individuals over the age of 16 years. Workers employed within the state of residence make up 85.2% of the group, while 38.5% worked in the county of residence. Thus, many workers commute and 81.1% of them drive alone with a mean travel time of 38.4 minutes. However, 28.7% of commuters traveled 60 or more minutes to work. While 20% began their commute from 6:00 a.m. to 6:29 p.m., 14.9% had a commute time from 12:00 am. to 4:59 a.m. and 11.0% traveled between 5:00 and 5:29 a.m. Additionally, 82.2% are white and 15.1% are black. The majority of males traveled to work 60 or more minutes at a percentage of 41.3 while 21.5% of females traveled 30 to 34 minutes for work. Educational services, and health care and social assistance make up 19.8% of the industry that provided employment followed by 15.1% in construction. 84.8% of the labor force reside in owner-occupied housing units. Consequently, many residents of rural, non-core counties spend a great deal of their time out of the county each day and for the most part chose to travel alone; yet, return to their own homes daily.

Demographics and Transformative Learning

The data suggest that after measurement for transformative learning in members of the local grassroots organization, significance was evident in some instances. Within the category of questioned, several relationships were found. Race was significant at ($p < .05$) for the activity of a questioning event for members. For the sample ($N = 30$), 90.0% were white and 10.0% were black. This is the primary question found on the LAS administered to members. The presumption could be applied that this first step is critical

to begin the experience of transformative learning based upon the premise that an event caused an individual to question normal responses to activities.

The data also suggest that education and changed beliefs have a significant relationship ($p < .05$). The educational levels of the grassroots organization include 36.7% for high school, 33.3% for some college, and 30.0% have higher education degree(s). These are comparable to participants in the general population survey from the same rural, non-core county with 32.7% high school, 30.7% some college, and 28.7% higher education degree(s). The less than high school was 3.0% for the general population survey.

The results of this study also propose significance for the relationship between realizing others questioned their beliefs and age ($p < .05$). The largest age group for members was in the 50-59 category at 33.3% followed by 30.0% in the 60-69 age category. These findings show that grassroots members are older and make up a larger percentage of members than what is found in the county's general population. The twenty year span of 50-70 age ranges comprise 21.7% of the study's total county population.

As to the category of life changes, another relationship of significance revealed through the results of this study was that of not identifying with any of the statements about transformative learning and gender ($p < .05$). The demographics of gender for the group include 53.3% females and 43.3% males. However, this is not reflective of the make-up of the county since males make up over 50% of the population, whereas females make up less than that.

For the variable of an overall change to values, beliefs and opinions and expectations a significant relationship with race was found ($p < .05$). Again the make-up was 90.0% white and 10.0% black.

The category of learning activities included the questions related to traditional social expectations, new roles, new ways of acting, and acquiring the information needed to take on new ways of acting. None of these were found to be significant from the results of the study.

Brock (2010) in her study of undergraduate business students summarized that the occurrence of the 10 precursor steps while useful, has not systematically established the relationship and occurrence of transformative learning through quantitative methods. Also, Brock (2010) notes that Mezirow (1991) stated that all 10 phases do not have to occur in order for transformative learning to take place. Her findings included results that held significance for questions about social roles, critical reflection and the trying of new roles. The questions that held significance for grassroots members related to questioning actions and beliefs plus the realization that others were questioning their beliefs. Some held that overall their values, beliefs, opinions or expectations had changed. Yet, paradoxically, grassroots members' response that they did not identify with any of the statements was significant for gender. Likewise, most respondents in Brock's (2010) study reported not changing their beliefs or role expectations similar to those found in the members of the grassroots organization.

Conclusions

This study examined the extent of structural constraints to participation in solving community problems found in the general population of a rural, non-core county, the

extent of structural constraints to participation and transformative learning in members of a local grassroots organization. Specifically, the study examined the following research questions:

1. To what extent may the presence of structural barriers to participation in community action activities be found in the adult residents of a rural, non-core county?
2. To what extent may the presence of structural barriers to participation in community action activities be found in members of a local grassroots organization?
3. How many members of a local grassroots organization show evidence of the 10 steps found in transformative learning?

The results of the study reveal that structural constraints to participation in solving community problems are not present to any extent in the rural, non-core county.

Transformative learning in the members of the local grassroots organization was found to be limited as well. Significance was limited to the characteristics of race, age, education, and gender for the activities of questioning actions, and life changes. Thus, significance for all of the 10 steps found in transformative learning was not found in members of the local, grassroots organization.

Implications for Practice

A multiplicity of disciplines focus their research on the concept of making rural, non-core counties better places to live through community development and civic engagement efforts. This study utilized an unusual approach to investigate the elements of structural constraints to participation in the general population along with

transformative learning residents involved in civic engagement. Characteristically, the data obtained from traditional studies emphasize the need for leadership skills and training along with a variety of measures designed to support community development efforts as a means to improve local communities. Apaliyah, G.T., Martin. K.E., Gasteyer, S.P., Keating, K., Pigg, K. (2014) acknowledged that these skill sets are important. They suggest that it is vital for community leaders to know how to hold a meeting, administer the decision making process and practice inclusion of all people. Therefore, individual participants must gain knowledge of new personal and interpersonal skills. Apaliyah et al. (2014) stated that the nature of the twenty-first century has resulted in many challenges to rural communities, and described rural places as in-transition because of the change in traditional identities. The value of leadership training has been documented; however, this study sought to understand if there are barriers present in individuals that prevent them from participating in community development activities that will improve the quality of life in their communities. This study shows that the data obtained in this particular instance is useful in helping to understand individuals that chose to reside in these rural, non-core locations.

Policy makers that implement community development strategies should seek to gain insight into the nature of individuals that reside in these communities. In many instances the requirement for local participation is built into the process and implementation is required. Malik and Wagle (2002) stated the fundamental principle in civic engagement is that people have a right to be a part of the process and make decisions about their lives. Malik and Wagle (2002) additionally acknowledged that participation takes place within the framework of structural norms, social relationships,

and self-imposed limitations. Structural constraints to participation and transformative learning may also exist within the frameworks identified by Malik and Wagle and even act as costs that hamper success. Grassroots level participation produces benefits to local communities and efforts to support the work of grassroots problem solving should be encouraged by all entities that have a vested interest in rural, non-core counties.

Delimitations and Limitations

The delimitations found within this study include the location study, participants, variables measured, theoretical foundations, survey instruments and the ability to generalize the findings. First, limitations were set by the researcher and define the scope of the study. The geographic location of the study is a rural, non-core county situated in the Southeastern United States. Participants include thirty members of a local grassroots organization concerned with community development activities and a random sample of adult county residents. Variables from the theoretical foundations of transformative learning and structural barriers to participation will be measured using two separate survey instruments validated through other studies. Results can only be generalized to (a) adult residents of rural, non-core counties, and (b) members of local grassroots organizations that live in specific counties. Additionally, conclusions reached from the research are based upon the belief that participants responded to survey questions to the best of their abilities.

Limitations cannot be controlled by the researcher. The current study is limited by time, because the topics of transformative learning and the structural constraints analyzed are measured in members of a local grassroots organization that has matured. Currently, emotions and activities are less intense, because the group has been organized

since 2010 and has achieved some success as a group. However, this group was selected because many organizations of this type suffer from a lack of participation as well as the basic economic, social, and political structure necessary to achieve and sustain gains in community development.

Thus, the research obtained and analyzed in this study is limited because the sample is small, not randomly selected, but chosen because of availability. These two factors should affect the ability to generalize to the population as a whole and thus reduce external validity. However, it should be kept in mind that the population density of rural, non-core counties is limited in all instances.

Since random sampling is not always feasible, Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) suggest that the sample should be described as completely as possible using age, gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Characteristics of survey participants were obtained in the current study. Another alternative suggested by Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) is the use of replication when random sampling is not feasible. Therefore, this study will provide the means for other grassroots organization in rural, non-core locations to determine if the same results can be obtained. Results of this type are referred to as ecological generalizability, because findings may be extended to those obtained from similar settings. Therefore, study results should produce findings that may be replicated and become useful to individuals concerned with the wellbeing of rural, non-core counties.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research study utilized randomly acquired and on-site survey information provided by residents of a rural, non-core county. The random nature of the general

population surveyed when compared with the relatively close percentages of those that took part in the surveys and the actual numbers found in the population support the belief that the research reported in this study is reliable. Yet, it cannot be said with complete certainty that structural constraints do not exist in adult county residents. Consequently, this study should serve as a groundwork for other studies that would seek to fully understand the role of rural citizens as they work together to improve the quality of life on a grassroots level. The role of citizens is essential in determining how to solve problems; however, assets must be present in communities in order to act collectively. A determination of these assets along with research that would provide a better insight into the unique nature of rural, non-core locations would improve the ability of policy makers on all levels, educational entities, and citizens to appraise the needs of communities.

Barker et al. (2011) in his work for the Kettering Foundation put forth the notion of rather than a community of leaders to solve problems, the focus should be on civic innovation. Barker maintains that civic innovation is comprised of a focus on the characteristics of the community followed by a process of adaptation to new challenges making the public responsible for change and building the capacity of citizens. In sum, citizens become the innovators. The Kettering Foundation study referenced the landmark study of Tupelo, Mississippi as a community in which innovative activities increased civic capacity. According to Barker et al. (2011), the result is citizens acting in their best interest. Therefore, research designed to gain a better understanding of the motivations that result in rural citizens acting to solve community problems should be a focus for those interested in community development.

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APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL

**Mississippi State University
Informed Consent Form for Participation in Research**

Title of Research Study: Transformative Learning Applied to the Development of Community Capacity in a Local, Grassroots Organization.

Study Site: Greene County, Mississippi, Leakesville Community Center, Center Street, Leakesville, MS, meeting of Citizens for the Betterment of Greene County.

Researchers: Betty Sue Turner, Mississippi State University.

We would like to ask you to participate in a research study. If you participate in this study, you will be asked to complete two separate surveys. One survey will be about your opinions toward obstacles that prevent you from working to solve community problems. The second survey is about your experiences as an adult learner and a member of the organization, Citizens for the Betterment of Greene County. The survey on participation in community problem solving will ask questions that relate to how to be involved, making a difference, being listened to, about time and personal reasons you cannot participate. The second survey will ask questions to see if your feelings have changed in the way you view your role in the community, values, beliefs, opinions, and expectations and what you have done if anything to adapt to these changes. It will take about 25 minutes to complete both surveys. Your responses are anonymous.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact Betty Sue Turner at 601-394-4118 or Dr. Arthur D. Stumpf at 662-325-1850.

Voluntary Participation

Please understand that your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.

If you decide to participate, your completion of the research procedures indicates your consent. Please keep this form for your records.

APPENDIX B
CORRESPONDENCE LETTERS AND SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

November 12, 2012

4931 St. Ellen Road
Leakesville, MS 39451

Citizens for the Betterment of
Greene County
Rodney Courtney, President
1549 Vo-Tech Road
Leakesville, MS 39451

Dear Members:

I am a PhD student in the Community College Leadership program at Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS. As part of my dissertation process, I am investigating the opinions of rural residents about their experiences in adult learning and constraints to community participation. I believe your group, Citizens for the Betterment of Greene County, can provide valuable insight into my research project. Therefore, I am asking for permission to survey group members. Members will be asked to voluntarily complete two questionnaires at a one-time event such as a regularly scheduled meeting. Personal information required will be limited to demographic characteristics such as age, gender, race, education and marital status. Survey responses will be anonymous and cannot be linked to signed participation consent forms. Survey questionnaires can be quickly completed so, only a few minutes of time will be required. If your group approves of my request, I will need a formal letter granting permission for my dissertation file. Thank you for your consideration of my request. As a fellow Greene County resident, I am excited about my research project. If you have any questions, I may be reached at 601-394-4118.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sue Turner

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey is designed to obtain information about your experiences as an adult learner as a member of a rural, grassroots organization, Citizens for the Betterment of Greene County. The survey will only take a few minutes to complete and all responses will be kept confidential and remain anonymous. Thank you for your cooperation and for being a part of this research project.

Thinking about your experiences as a member of this citizen's organization, please respond to the following statements.

1. I had an experience that caused me to question the way I normally act.
_____ Yes _____ No
2. I had an experience that caused me to question my ideas about social roles (Example: how a citizen should act if they disagreed with public policy, what a mother or father should do, how an adult child should act).
_____ Yes _____ No
3. As I questioned my ideas, I realized I no longer agreed with my previous beliefs or role expectations. _____ Yes _____ No
4. Or instead, as I questioned my ideas, I realized I still agreed with my beliefs or role expectations. _____ Yes _____ No
5. I realized that other people also questioned their beliefs. _____ Yes _____ No
6. I thought about acting in a different way from my usual beliefs and roles.
_____ Yes _____ No
7. I felt uncomfortable with traditional social expectations.
_____ Yes _____ No
8. I tried out new roles so that I would become more comfortable or confident in them.
_____ Yes _____ No
9. I tried to figure out a way to adopt these new ways of acting. _____ Yes _____ No
10. I gathered the information I needed to adopt these new ways of acting.
_____ Yes _____ No
11. I began to think about the reactions and feedback from my new behavior.
_____ Yes _____ No
12. I took action and adopted these new ways of acting. _____ Yes _____ No

13. I do not identify with any of the statements above. _____ Yes _____ No
14. Since you have been involved in activities with this group, do you believe you have experienced a time when you realized that your values, beliefs, opinions, or expectations had changed? _____ Yes _____ No
15. Would you characterize yourself as one who usually thinks back over previous decisions or past behavior? _____ Yes _____ No

Sex: _____ Female _____ Male

Age: _____ 21-29 _____ 30-39 _____ 40-49
 _____ 50-59 _____ 60-69 _____ Over 70

Race: _____ Black _____ White _____ Other

Marital Status: _____ Married _____ Single _____ Other

Education _____ Less than High School _____ High School
 _____ Some College _____ Higher Education Degree(s)

The primary researcher may be reached at 601-394-4118.
 Questionnaire was adapted from the Learners Activities Survey with permission from Kathleen P. King, Fordham University.

November 12, 2012

4931 St. Ellen Road
Leakesville, MS 39451

Dr. Gene L. Theodori, Chair
Department of Sociology
Sam Houston State University
Box 2446
Huntsville, Texas 77341-2446

Dr. Theodori:

I am currently a PhD student enrolled in the Community College Leadership program at Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi. Portions of my dissertation research project will examine community development. I am particularly interested in constraints to community action. I am requesting your permission to use the five items for measurement of constraints to active involvement in community problem solving you utilized in your research. I plan to survey members of a rural, grassroots citizen's organization that was organized to improve the quality of life in their communities. Results from the constraints measurement, combined with other measures will be used as indicators to provide effectiveness and validity for providing leadership training to rural residents. Findings have implications for community colleges, land grant universities and the Cooperative Extension Service. Leadership training provided by organizations to citizens should help provide sustainability to economic and social improvements in rural communities. If you have any questions, I may be reached at 601-394-4118 or at suetr67@yahoo. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Respectfully,

Sue Turner

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey is designed to obtain information about your perceptions toward constraints to active involvement in community problem solving. Your experiences as a member of a rural, grassroots organization is important. The survey will only take a few minutes to complete. All responses will be kept confidential and remain anonymous. Thank you for your cooperation and for being a part of this research project.

Questions are related to perceptions of constraints to active involvement in community problem solving. You are asked to rate your responses from strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.

1. I would devote more time to helping solve community problems if someone would tell me how to get involved.

_____ Strongly Agree _____ Agree
_____ Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

2. I would devote more time to helping solve community problems if I thought it would make a difference.

_____ Strongly Agree _____ Agree
_____ Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

3. I would devote more time to helping solve community problems if I could worry less about personal money issues.

_____ Strongly Agree _____ Agree
_____ Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

4. I would devote more time to helping solve community problems if I thought I would be listened to.

_____ Strongly Agree _____ Agree
_____ Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

5. I would devote more time to helping solve community problems if I had more free time.

_____ Strongly Agree _____ Agree
_____ Disagree _____ Strongly Disagree

Gender: _____ Female _____ Male

Age: _____ 21-29 _____ 30-39 _____ 40-49
_____ 50-59 _____ 60-69 _____ Over 70

Race: _____ Black _____ White _____ Other

Marital Status: _____ Married _____ Single _____ Other

Education: _____ Less than High School _____ High School
_____ Some College
_____ Higher Education Degree (s)

If you have any questions, the researcher may be contacted at 601-394-4118.

Questionnaire was adapted from the work of Dr. Gene L. Theodore, Chair, Department of Sociology, University of Sam Houston, Huntsville, Texas

March 22, 2014

4931 St. Ellen Road
Leakesville, MS 39451

Mr. Richard Hale, Manager
Piggly Wiggly
Hwy 63
Leakesville, MS 39451

Mr. Hale,

I am a PhD student in the Community College Leadership program at Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS. As part of my dissertation process, I am seeking the opinions of county residents in regard to how they feel about community participation. Questions will pertain to residents' feelings about community activities that involve time for involvement, making a difference in their communities, and concerns about their ability to participate along with basic demographic information. Information will be obtained through a self administered questionnaire. My need is an avenue to reach county residents in order to obtain information about these issues. Therefore, I am requesting the use of space at the main entrance of your store at a location that will not interfere with the normal movement of customers. The survey is limited to ten multiple choice questions so the questionnaire will only take a few minutes to complete. Also, as a participation incentive, I plan to provide a fifty dollar gift card from your store. The winner will be determined by a random drawing of survey participants. If your company allows me to utilize the front of your building for your research, I will need a formal letter granting permission for my dissertation file. Thank you for your consideration of my request. If you have any questions, I may be reached at 601-394-4118.
Respectfully submitted,

Sue Turner

APPENDIX C
SAM HOUSTON STATE APPROVAL LETTER

On Monday, November 26, 2012 8:49 AM, "Theodori, Gene" <GLT002@SHSU.EDU> wrote:

Hi Sue:

Thanks for the letter. Absolutely, go ahead and use the items. If possible, please send me a summary of your findings. I am interested to learn how the items worked in Mississippi.

Best,

Gene L. Theodori

Professor & Chair, Sociology

Director, Center for Rural Studies

Sam Houston State University

http://www.shsu.edu/~soc_www/people/theodori.html

APPENDIX D
PIGGY WIGGLY APPROVAL LETTER

PIGGLY WIGGLY
816 MAIN ST.
LEAKESVILLE MS.
601-394-2357

Mrs Turner;

As the manager of Piggly Wiggly I give you permission to use our store for your project. As a person who is very involved in community events I am excited to see what your results will be. If you need anything else just let me know.

Richard Hale

Store Manager

APPENDIX E

CITIZENS FOR THE BETTERMENT OF GREENE COUNTY APPROVAL LETTER

March 21, 2013

1549 Vo-Tech Road
Leaksville, MS 39451

Ms Sue Turner
4931 St. Ellen Road
Leaksville, MS 39451

Dear Sue:

We have received your request to interview members of our group "Citizens For The Betterment Of Greene County", and would welcome assisting you with your survey. From your letter and our conversation, we think any insight gained into the constraints and the rewards of community involvement is definitely a worthwhile cause. We are very proud of our small group and the results we have been able to achieve since we formed. We intend to carry on and in fact grow our group so that we may be able to make a positive difference in the entire county and perhaps even beyond.

Please let me know when you would like to take the survey and we will go from there.

Regards,

Citizens For The Betterment
Of Greene County

Rod Courtney
President