LEARNING FOR REVITALIZATION:

EXPLORATIONS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

by

GLORIA FERGUSON POBST

(Under the Direction of Lorilee R. Sandmann)

ABSTRACT

Rural communities in the United States matter. As stewards of natural resources, producers of high-quality food and fiber, and options to urban overcrowding, rural communities' differences negate "one size fits all" prescriptions for economic development. This study addressed the problem of U.S. rural decline and how community members learned to revitalize. Informed by Wenger's communities of practice theory (1998) and its key concepts of identity, boundary processes, and levels of participation, the purpose of this research was to understand how community members learned to revitalize their rural town and what facilitated or blocked learning for revitalization. A case study concerning one small community in the southeastern U.S. undergoing revitalization, this study generated data over a two-year period using ethnographic methods of participant observation, document review, informal conversations, and in-depth interviews. Participants included city residents, business owners, and local government officials, as well as county residents and business owners with current and former connections to the community. The research led to three conclusions: (1) community members learned about revitalization in groups constituting

communities of practice designed to implement rural community revitalization projects with informal, incidental, and tacit learning in virtual work spaces; (2) rural entrepreneurs' business operations intertwined with community economic development; and (3) rural community revitalization required leadership to develop and nurture communities of practice, as well as civic leadership to direct an overall plan, protect citizens and property, and maintain order. Small towns with few resources, especially financial resources, benefit from identification of all assets including human talents which can be mobilized toward revitalization projects. An implication from this study is that rural policy should focus on small business development, community development, and leadership capacity development to benefit the majority of rural citizens. Future suggested research includes case studies with different rural contexts focused on learning, action research, and evaluation of learning interventions to foster learning and positive change in rural communities.

INDEX WORDS: Rural Community Revitalization, Communities of Practice, Rural Entrepreneurship, Adult Learning, Case Study, Ethnographic Methods

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Gary D. Pobst, and my children, Lori J. Schroeder, M.D., Ph.D. and Kamron Gene Randall Pobst. The three of you are the rocks of my world, my heroes, and my greatest sources of love and joy.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

> *The pathway to success or innovation in small town development will be discovered, created, and built by local leaders" (Morgan & Lambe, 2009, p. 13).*

At one time "rural America was America" (Stauber, 2001, p. 63) and most Americans were farmers or small business owners serving farm families. Indeed, for most of our nation's history, the majority of the population was located in rural areas (Murray & Dunn, 1995, 1996). Rural America in the United States is often defined by what it isn't—rural is all the area that isn't urban and suburban. In this study I use the United States Census Bureau definition of rural as "open countryside or towns of fewer than 2,500 [persons] outside urbanized areas" (Flora & Flora, 2013, p. 5).

Rural Americans became a minority in 1920 when the rural population fell to 49% of the total (Murray & Dunn, 1995, 1996). At that time there were 31 million Americans living on farms, representing 30% of total population, and 61% of rural population (Gibson, 2013). By 1990, the proportion of Americans living in rural areas dropped to 22%, less than half of the 1920 level. However, the number of Americans living on farms dropped from 31.4 million in 1920 to 3.9 million in 1990, representing less than 2% of the total population, and 7% of rural population (Gibson, 2013). Figure 1.1 on the next page shows the population trend of urban and rural areas in the United States at census measurements from 1920 to 2010. With such a long history of rural America being agriculture-based it is understandable that the myth of rural being

synonymous with agriculture continues. But, it is a myth (Castle, 1993; Flora & Flora, 2013; Stauber, 2001). In this study it is important to understand the current rural U.S. context in which agriculture still plays a part, but a much smaller part of the overall economy.

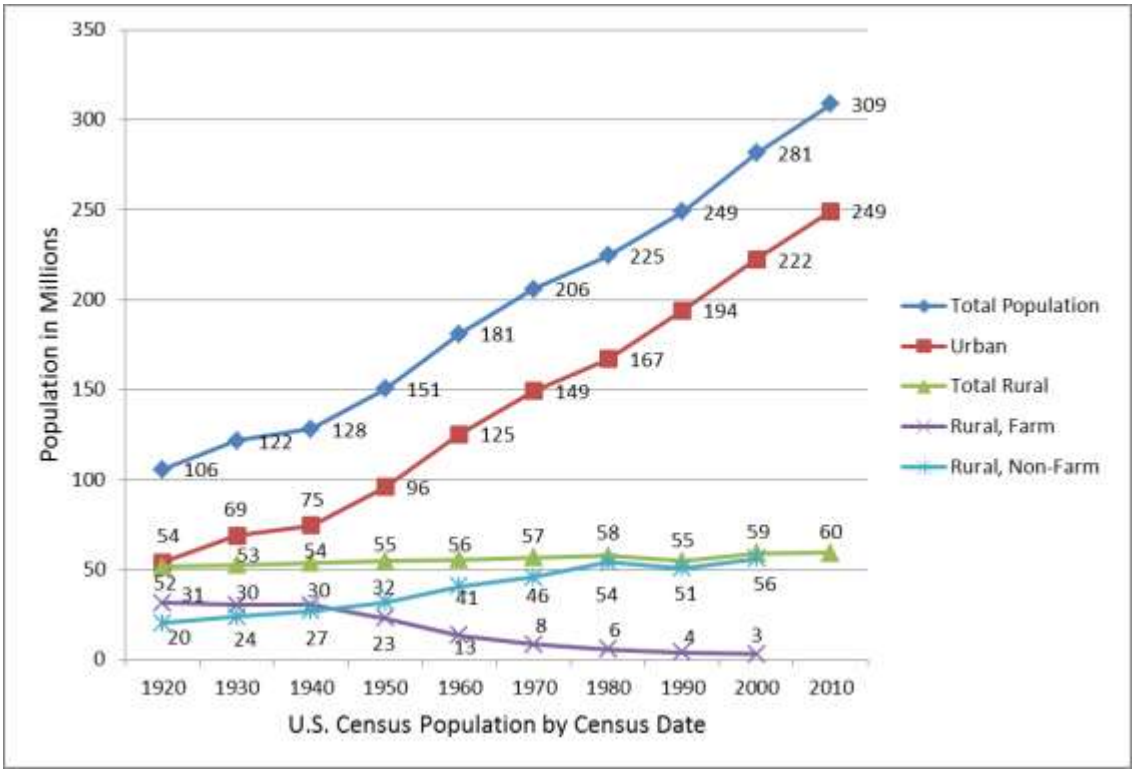

Figure 1.1 Population Trend in United States—Total, Urban, Rural Farm-based, and Rural Non-Farm-Based
Note. Data compiled from Gibson (2013). Beginning with 2010 Census, farm population no longer reported

Current Rural Context

It is difficult to create a profile of rural America. Castle (1993) called rural America "an exceedingly diverse place" (p. 12). As a result of their various U.S. research studies Flora and Flora (2013) concluded "in the twenty-first century, rural communities differ more from each other than they do, on average, from urban areas" (p.

3). Notwithstanding this diversity, federal U.S. government policymaking and investments in research for rural U.S. continued to be focused on farming even as farm-based population fell to one percent of total population by the 2000 census (Bowns & Stevenson, 2010; Castle, 1993; Murray & Dunn, 1996; Stauber, 2001). It appears the U.S. Census expected the population trend to continue since beginning with the 2010 census, farm population was no longer reported (Gibson, 2013).

For many years the social contract between rural and urban U.S. involved rural areas producing food and supplying resources such as timber to support the urban population. In return, policymaking supported rural subsidies, or lower prices, for services such as rural electric and telecommunications systems and rail and water transportation. Rural areas benefited from massive irrigation projects, research benefiting primarily farmers and ranchers, and direct subsidies to farmers (Stauber, 2001). Using my experience and knowledge as a practitioner in pricing telephone services for over 15 years I next provide an explanation of rural subsidies.

Rural subsidies occurred when pricing for a product, such as telephone service, was based on an average of infrastructure and operations costs for both urban and rural areas. The resulting average cost per customer was then marked up for the regulated rate of return. This resulted in customers in urban and rural areas paying the same rate for service although infrastructure and operations costs per customer were lower in urban areas. For example, a one-mile long telephone cable in an urban area might serve 100 or more customers. A one-mile long telephone cable in a rural area often served only a few customers. As a child in rural Pasco County, Florida, my family had three neighbors within a mile. The telephone company received revenue to recover costs for that one

mile of telephone cable from only four customers. Our urban neighbors paid higher rates for telephone service which helped the telephone company recover their costs and enabled rural customers such as my family to have telephone service.

President Carter led a shift away from rural subsidies as representatives for urban areas argued for pricing relief. Without these subsidies, prices in rural areas increased since new regulations required pricing to be computed on the specific costs to serve the rural area. This resulted in less availability of important services like telephone service and broadband in rural areas (Stauber, 2001). During the same time period many manufacturing firms moved from rural areas to offshore locations (Pages, 2003) which led to rising unemployment. In the late 1970s unemployment in rural areas surpassed the unemployment rate of urban areas and continues to be higher (Drabenstott, Henry, & Gibson, 1987; United States Department of Commerce, 2013b). With higher prices, fewer jobs, higher unemployment, and loss of population many rural communities faced declining economic, social, and political influence (Stauber, 2001).

Federal government support in rural areas continued to be focused on agriculture rather than on community programs to develop new businesses or nurture existing businesses. Bowns and Stevenson (2010), citing a 2005 Kellogg Foundation report, noted a mismatch between the needs of rural areas and federal government support. The Kellogg Foundation reported more than 90% of jobs and about 90% of income in rural areas came from non-farming industry sectors. However, government support in rural areas focused on agriculture which contributed less than 10% of jobs and income. Bowns and Stevenson stated, “More federal support goes to farming subsidies than to rural

businesses and community development efforts (which would benefit a majority of people living in rural America)" (p. 1).

Stauber (2001) argued the federal government should invest in rural America for a number of reasons, and recommended the U.S. should "change both *why* and *how* we invest in rural America" (p. 83). Stauber's reasons for investments in rural America included protection and restoration of the environment; production of high-quality, specialty food and fiber; and prevention of urban overcrowding. Referencing the 2010 U.S. census, Johnson (2012) reported rural America comprising 19% of the total population (or 60 million Americans), and covering approximately 75% of the total U.S. land mass. Rural America is home to national treasures such as the Grand Canyon, Mount Rushmore, Glacier National Park, the Great Smoky Mountains, and numerous lesser-well-known rivers, lakes, mountains, and valleys.

Rural communities were less likely to have the internal expertise to find and apply for development grants, or to have funds to hire a part-time economic development position or a project-based consultant (Murray & Dunn, 1995). Concerned rural citizens often realized they were on their own to bring about community improvements. By exploring learning as community members perform rural revitalization work, scholars and practitioners gain understanding of learning for revitalization, and how to better facilitate that learning. This study explored that understanding by bridging two knowledge bases—rural community revitalization and adult learning theory.

Rural Community Revitalization

Community, community development, economic development, community economic development and community revitalization are key terms in this study.

Community is derived from a Greek word for fellowship (Flora & Flora, 2013). Green and Haines (2012) provided a distinction between communities of place and communities of interest. Examples of communities of interest included religious organizations and professional associations. This study concerned a community of place which is defined to include "(1) territory or place, (2) social organizations or institutions that provide regular interaction among residents, and (3) social interaction on matters concerning a common interest" (Green & Haines, 2012, p. 2).

Flora and Flora (2013) described community development as "what people do to improve the overall quality of the community" (p. 392). Green and Haines (2012) defined community development in terms of building assets which are then used to improve quality of life for residents. Community assets are numerous forms of community capital such as "physical, human, social, financial, environmental, political, and cultural" (Green & Haines, 2012, p. xi). Learning helped build human capital and form social capital through social relationships (citing Flora, Thacheen & Lauzon, 2006). Since human and social capitals were prerequisites to building other forms of capital, Thacheen and Lauzon (2006) concluded a focus on learning was important to the development of rural communities.

Practitioners often considered community development as a necessary prerequisite to economic development (Green & Haines, 2012). Lambe, University of North Carolina School of Government, and North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center (2008) further contrasted economic development and community development, asserting that economic development typically had a narrow scope. The explicit goal of economic development was to improve the economic health of an area

with additional jobs, businesses, and financial prosperity. Community development was a more holistic and broader goal encompassing social, environmental, political and cultural goals in addition to financial objectives (Lambe et al., 2008). President Clinton's Council on Rural America connected rural development with this holistic idea of community development in its 1992 report, stating "Rural development is and must be fundamentally, development of the whole community, and not merely its business sector. Community development is not an act but a process, by which the community's level of well-being is increased" (Murray & Dunn, 1995, p. 96).

Until the 1990s the traditional approach for economic development was "smokestack chasing," a somewhat critical term for recruiting industrial development. People sensitive to environmental issues saw industrial development in opposition to preservation of the many natural treasures of the U.S. countryside (Bowns & Stevenson, 2010; Morgan & Lambe, 2009). Traditional industrial recruitment proved to be problematic for many rural communities. As competition increased between communities, the cost of incentives such as tax abatements, low-interest loans, and community-funded infrastructure improvements, made it more difficult for communities to show a positive economic return (Sharp, Agnitsch, Ryan, & Flora, 2002). After collecting incentives, a large industrial company sometimes moved overseas for lower labor costs and fewer pollution controls (Bowns & Stevenson, 2010; Flora & Flora, 2013; Morgan & Lambe, 2009). For rural communities without large tracts of available land and financial resources, industrial recruitment proved to be too expensive and community officials were unable to show long-term benefits.

Over the last two decades there was a movement for rural communities to develop from within, as the country experienced major shifts of industrial jobs (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) and as federal and state budgets were cut (Green & Haines, 2012). This trend resulted in the new term of community economic development (CED). Through a CED process, local community members decided what projects to undertake and how to implement them (Virgil, 2010). Virgil (2010) described sustainable CED projects within rural contexts as those with local government support, structured to match resources of the rural community, and which included collaborative action of many community members. Revitalization is another term for this integrated community and economic development (Bowns & Stevenson, 2010; Morgan & Lambe, 2009; Murray & Dunn, 1996). Merriam-Webster defines revitalization as "to give new life or vigor to" (Revitalization, 2013). Several research studies explored small town community revitalization success stories in the search for best practices (Lambe et al., 2008; Ezzell, Lambert, & Ogle, 2012; Morgan & Lambe, 2009).

In their study of 45 exemplar small towns undergoing revitalization, Lambe et al. (2008) confirmed the intertwined nature of community development and economic development in small communities. Lambe et al. argued "in small towns, economic development is community development, and vice versa" (p. 8) and defined CED as "action taken locally by a community to provide economic opportunities and to improve social, civic and environmental conditions in a sustainable way….CED is a process through which communities initiate their own solutions to local problems" (p. 237).

Other terms for CED included community-led development or self-development (Flora & Flora, 2013; Flora, Green, Gale, Schmidt & Flora, 1992). Morgan and Lambe

(2009) described CED as a long-term, transformative process. Morgan and Lambe told a story of community leaders who based decisions about community projects in part on whether or not their grandchildren would be proud of their decisions when those grandchildren became adults. Because of the long-term nature of revitalization efforts, Morgan and Lambe emphasized the importance of measuring progress and celebrating short-term successes "to maintain momentum, invigorate volunteers and donors, to convince skeptics [sic] and, most importantly, to keep the focus of development on the vision or the goals established in a communities strategic plan" (p. 10). Similar to good health, revitalization is not a destination, but a process of improving and maintaining community and economic health.

CED programs included alternative economic development approaches such as economic gardening (a metaphor for growing entrepreneurs), place-based development, leadership development, and innovative industrial development (Bowns & Stevenson, 2010; Lambe et al., 2008; Morgan & Lambe, 2009). Innovative industrial development included clustering of businesses, regional collaboration, and an emphasis on environmental-friendly, or "green" development (Morgan & Lambe, 2009). Innovative industrial development was plausible for larger rural towns and regions having land, infrastructure and financial resources suitable for industrial development, but often not feasible for smaller rural communities. Economic gardening developed as a strategy for small towns to "grow" their own small businesses. Place-based development referred to economic growth projects based on distinctive assets in the local area (Morgan & Lambe, 2009). Scholars studied economic gardening and place-based development as innovations in CED. I now turn to a discussion of these programs.

Innovations in Community Economic Development

For more than twenty years community development scholars have pointed to fostering entrepreneurship as a key solution for rural areas sometimes using the term "homegrown entrepreneurship" (Cornwall, 1998; Drabenstott & Henderson, 2006; Gladwin, Long, Babb, Beaulieu, Moseley, Mulkey, & Zimet, 1989; Morgan & Lambe, 2009; Robinson, Dassie, & Christy, 2004). In 1989 Littleton, Colorado, first used the term economic gardening to mean developing a supporting environment from which to "grow your own" local businesses (Morgan & Lambe, 2009, p. 7). The literature provided suggestions of *what* a supporting environment for small business development might include—information gathering and sharing, physical and intellectual infrastructures, and networking support (Castle, 1993; Cornwall, 1998; Gladwin et al., 1989; Green & Haines, 2012; Lambe et al., 2008; Morgan & Lambe, 2009; Morgan, Lambe, & Freyer, 2009; Pages, 2003; Robinson et al., 2004). However, none of the studies cited above included recommendations of *how* community members might learn to develop a supporting environment.

The second innovation, place-based development focused on distinctive characteristics of a particular place, such as the natural environment, historical and cultural heritage, special infrastructure, and arts and crafts traditions (Bowns & Stevenson, 2010; Morgan & Lambe, 2009). Tourism, downtown development, and a focus on arts and cultural events were popular place-based development strategies. Collaboration was a key differentiator of those towns who were successful and those who were not when following a place-based development approach (Bowns & Stevenson, 2010; Ezzell et al., 2012; Lambe et al., 2008; Morgan & Lambe, 2009; Murray & Dunn,

1995, 1996). The literature provided recommendations of *what* communities might do to implement place-based development, but did not explain *how* community members learned, or failed to learn, to collaborate and build successful place-based programs. Studies identified local leadership as a critical factor for communities pursuing revitalization strategies of all kinds (Lambe et al., 2008; Murray & Dunn, 1995). Local leadership included both official elected leaders and non-official leaders such as leaders of civic organizations. The next section's discussion focuses on leadership for rural community revitalization.

Leadership for Rural Community Revitalization

Morgan and Lambe (2009) implored leaders of rural communities to look within their communities to find or create a way to revitalize their towns. There were many viewpoints of leadership in the literature. Emery, Fernandez, Gutierrez-Montes, and Flora (2007) described leadership in the context of rural revitalization as "an emergent property, continually socially constructed as volunteers, leaders, and community members come together to create a vision for the future and to find new ways of doing things" (p. 68). Majee, Long, and Smith (2012) defined community leadership as a process which "is interactive and fosters significant relationships between and among community members" (p. 82). Emery et al. (2007) further elaborated that leadership is more than skills and relationship building; it is about an inclusive vision that mobilizes the entire community and aligns individual projects toward a comprehensive plan.

Morgan and Lambe (2009) suggested in the early stages of small town revitalization there is a greater need for vision and leadership than for financial investments in projects or programs. Several researchers have found leadership

development or leadership capacity development important for revitalization progress (Lambe et al., 2008; Murray & Dunn, 1995, 1996). Murray and Dunn (1996) defined capacity building as "increasing the ability of people and institutions to do what is required of them" (p. 91) and recommended a view of capacity building as a long-term investment necessary to build a sustainable foundation. They identified creativity and talent cultivation as a strategy of rural revitalization. Creativity and talent cultivation focused on attracting talented people, equipping them with skills, and preparing them for community leadership.

Leadership and collaboration were closely linked and crucial in rural community development (Murray & Dunn, 1996). However, there was no single prescription for small town development (Flora & Flora, 2013; Green & Haines, 2012; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Lambe et al., 2008; Morgan and Lambe, 2009). Community leaders were instructed to look at their community's own situation including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to create a revitalization strategy. The literature did not include recommendations for *how* community members learned, or failed to learn, to create a supportive environment, foster collaboration, and facilitate change while working toward revitalization. Adult learning theory provided insights into how community members learn. I next turn to a discussion of adult learning for rural revitalization.

Adult Learning for Rural Revitalization

Throughout the rural community development literature in the United States, little attention was paid to adult learning and how it nurtured emergence of new community leaders, fostered innovation from community leaders, and facilitated change required for

revitalization. The rural revitalization studies discussed previously were informed by public policy, economics, and sociology theoretical frameworks. Those studies described exemplar communities who innovated, adapted to change, and developed new leaders. Absent from those studies was a deep understanding of *how* community members brought about leadership, change and innovation as they worked through the revitalization process. This study searched for additional insight from studies of rural revitalization in the international literature informed by Wenger's (1998; see also Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002) communities of practice theory.

Glover (2012) studied rural revitalization in which a rural community was facing crisis situations. Glover described social learning and lifelong learning as important tools for family farm resiliency in rural England. Thacheen and Lauzon (2006) studied how farmers in Thailand learned through social learning to move away from non-sustainable farming practices to sustainable agro-forestry, and in the process transformed and revitalized their community. Bertella (2011) found communities of practice helpful in describing the learning process as community members developed place-based tourism in rural Norway.

Communities of practice theory (Wenger, 1998) informed this study exploring learning for rural community revitalization. Communities of practice theory views learning as active social participation in a shared practice. Lave and Wenger (1991) asserted "learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice" (p. 31) and a result of "participation in communities of practice" (p. 31). Wenger (2000) defined a community of practice as any group sharing a cultural practice, such as cave people huddled around a fire in prehistoric days, members of a Mechanics Institute, a

professional association, or a street gang. In this study, I proposed community members sharing an interest and practice in specific revitalization projects constituted communities of practice. The application of communities of practice to the U.S. rural revitalization context aims to help enrich a multidisciplinary approach to rural revitalization.

Problem Statement

The U.S. Census and several scholars documented the decline of population and economic vitality of rural America. As of the 2010 U.S. Census, rural America included 75% of total U.S. land mass, most of its natural resources, and most of its national treasures. The 2010 census reported rural America comprised 19% of total U.S. population (308.7 million), which equated to approximately 60 million rural Americans. The proportion of rural farm households to total rural households fell precipitously since the 1940s. The last census to include an estimate of farm households (2000) reported three million U.S. citizens living on farms, representing 1% of total population and 5% of rural population. Despite the small portion of rural citizens deriving their livelihood from agriculture, federal support in rural areas focused on agriculture rather than community or small business development. The result was concerned citizens in rural towns were on their own to bring about improvements in their communities.

The rural revitalization literature in the United States explored examples of small communities who successfully revitalized their towns. The literature base included scholarly work in public policy, sociology, and economics. The learning component of community revitalization in rural America was under-researched. The literature indicated a need to approach revitalization of communities holistically. The international knowledge base of rural revitalization included studies informed by communities of practice theory applied in rural areas of England, Norway, and Thailand. This study

intended to bridge the interdisciplinary knowledge bases regarding rural community revitalization and adult learning to further inform scholars and practitioners in their efforts to assist rural American communities.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research was to understand how rural community members learned to revitalize their towns and what facilitated or blocked learning for revitalization. The questions guiding the research were: (1) How did rural community members learn about revitalization? (2) What facilitated learning for revitalization? (3) What created barriers to learning for revitalization?

Significance of Study

This study had several potential theoretical and practical contributions. From a theoretical perspective, the study aimed to bridge the existing knowledge bases of rural community economic development and adult learning theory. The existing rural revitalization literature base informed by public policy, sociology, and economics theoretical frameworks provided important prescriptions of *what* rural community members might do to effect revitalization. The adult learning knowledge base informed *how* community members might fill those prescriptions. In a similar manner, the community economic development knowledge base informed adult learning theory in the rural community context. From a practical standpoint, this study provided new insights for facilitating learning for rural community economic development. An implication for policymakers is to reconsider the proportion of government assistance for rural community and small business development.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

"The process of small town development is not formulaic"
(Morgan & Lambe, 2009, p. 11).

In the last two decades scholars in public policy, sociology, and economics studied exemplars of U.S. rural community revitalization (Bowns & Stevenson, 2010; Ezell et al., 2012; Lambe et al, 2008; Murray & Dunn, 1995, 1996). However, few studies in the U.S. rural context explored an understanding of the rural revitalization learning component. Several international settings provided rural revitalization studies informed by adult learning theoretical frameworks. The purpose of this research was to understand rural community revitalization from the perspective of adult learning and thereby help bridge the rich literature bases of rural community revitalization and adult learning theory. The questions guiding the research were: (1) How did rural community members learn about revitalization? (2) What facilitated learning for revitalization? (3) What created barriers to learning for revitalization?

This chapter reviews the literature informing the problem area of the study as well as the theoretical framework. Discussion of the literature includes two major sections. The first section reviews empirical studies focused on rural community revitalization and the second section covers the theoretical framework of the study, Wenger's (1998) communities of practice theory. This chapter places the study within the context of adult learning theory as applied to rural community economic development. Figure 2.1 on the next page provides a map of the literature reviewed in the chapter.

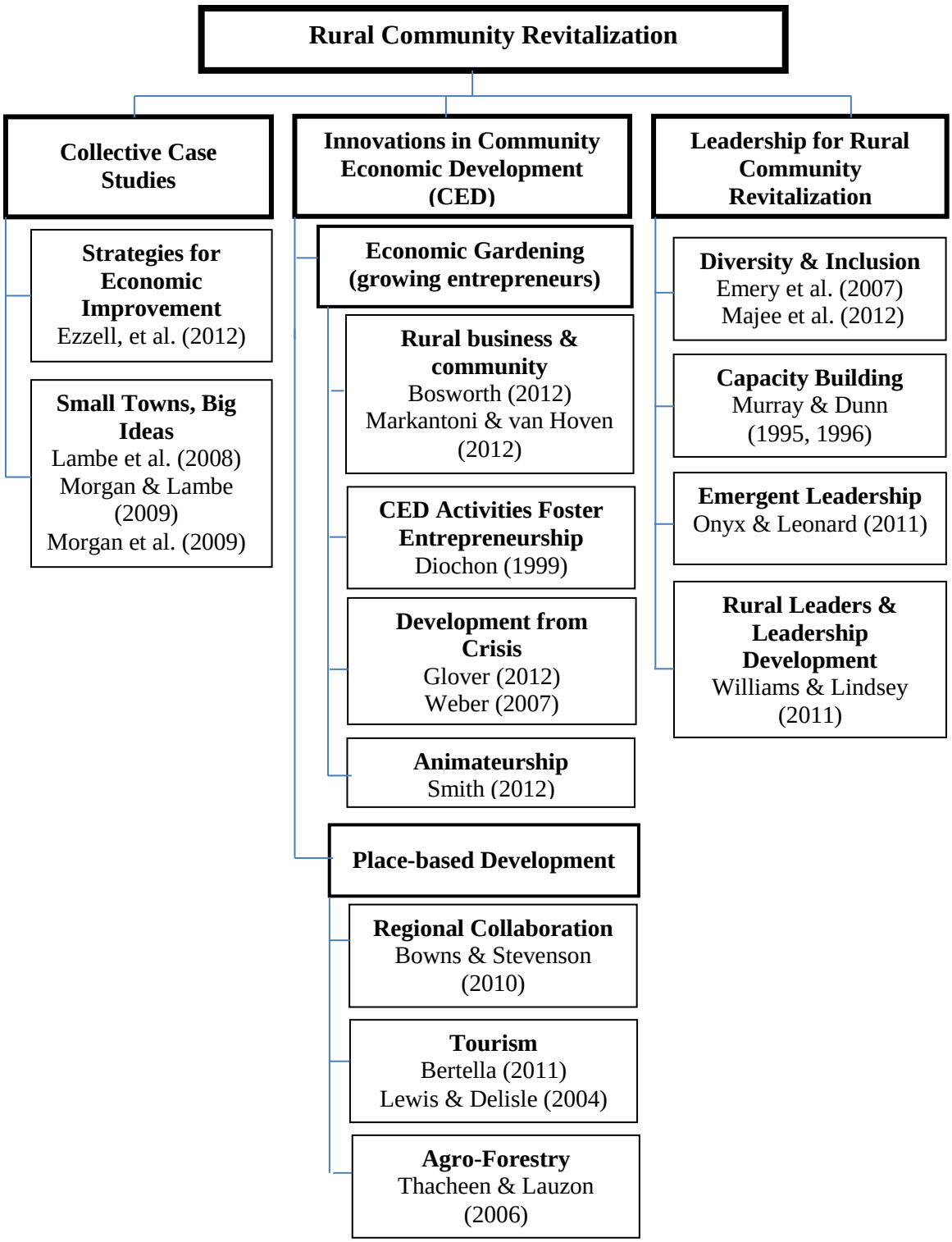

Figure 2.1 Empirical Literature Map

Rural Community Revitalization

Within the last five years scholars conducted two large collective case studies with communities undergoing community economic development (CED), also known as self-development (Flora & Flora, 2013) or revitalization (Bowns & Stevenson, 2010; Murray & Dunn, 1995, 1996). The collective case studies identified revitalization strategies for small communities without available industrial land for large firm development and recruitment. The discussion in this section covers three topics: (1) collective case studies concerning rural community revitalization, (2) studies focused on economic gardening and place-based development as innovations in community economic development, and (3) studies exploring leadership as a key strategy of rural community revitalization. The discussion of each topic includes a summary literature table.

Collective Case Studies

Using a mixed methods case analysis approach, the Ezzell et al. (2012) study focused on ten Appalachian counties considered distressed or formerly distressed. Ezzell et al. examined best practices and roadblocks to economic development. The research team collected and analyzed data with econometric and qualitative methods, including interviews with over 100 community leaders. The Lambe et al. (2008) study documented 45 exemplar communities, half of which were located in North Carolina (due to funding requirements), and the other half from across the United States. The Lambe et al. study used document review and telephone interviews to study most communities, and with 10 communities conducted face-to-face, in-depth interviews. Table 2.1 shows additional details of these studies.

Table 2.1

Collective Case Studies of Communities using Multiple Approaches for Rural Community Revitalization

Author, date, short title	Method, sample	Theoretical Framework	Key Findings
Ezell et al. (2012) Strategies for economic improvement in Appalachia's distressed counties.	Case studies—10 current and former distressed counties; 100+ interviews with community leaders; document review	None stated; economic analysis using both quantitative and qualitative methods.	Best practices in small business development: incubators, health care access, tourism, broadband, partnerships/social networking, downtown development, alternative energy, youth retention. "Fear of change, aversion to risk, and outmoded racial perceptions are among the cultural barriers noted in this study" (p. v).
Lambe et al. (2008) Small towns, big ideas Also: **Morgan & Lambe (2009); Morgan et al. (2009)**	Collective case studies; 45 small towns; interviews, document review; half towns from NC; real stories/real places/real challenges	Small town community economic development (CED) (conceptual framework)	Towns with best outcomes tend to be proactive, future-oriented, embrace change, assume risk; broadly held local vision; innovative local governance; comprehensive strategy vs. piecemeal approach. Strategies are interconnected.

Researching distressed and formerly distressed Appalachian communities, the research team of Ezzell et al. (2012) included University of Tennessee economic and community development practitioners and scholars. Ezzell et al.'s report did not include a theoretical or conceptual framework. The researchers identified innovative programs undertaken by local leaders in the areas of health care access, broadband deployment, and partnerships with higher education for social and educational services and research. Ezell et al. asserted health care access a social and economic issue since the community received valuable health care services, and those services provided "jobs and much-

needed economic activity" (p. viii). The authors reported three Appalachian counties as exemplars in creating and maintaining health and dental care to its citizens through projects such as a county clinic with innovative pricing, maintaining a hospital in an isolated remote area, and promoting the development of new health care firms.

Similar to findings in other rural revitalization literature (Drabenstott & Henderson, 2006; Stauber, 2001), the Ezell et al. (2012) study identified broadband deployment as a common weakness in rural areas located a considerable distance from larger metropolitan areas. Ezell et al. identified two exemplar Kentucky counties participating in early implementation of a statewide initiative called ConnectKentucky, designed to expand broadband across the state. Because of ConnectKentucky's success, Connected Nation was created as a national public/private partnership model "currently active in 22 states and Puerto Rico" (p. ix).

Higher education partnerships offered affordable assistance in a variety of areas to Appalachian counties (Ezzell et al., 2012) including food access, energy research, health care access, nonprofit support, workforce development and youth retention. The authors found Appalachian counties receiving assistance from land grant institutions in the areas of downtown development, small business development, and leadership development, explored further in a later section. Ezzell et al. recommended communities look for new opportunities to form academic institution partnerships.

The authors identified a need for dialogue between communities and recommended the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) "create opportunities for shared learning and the exchange of ideas" (p. v). The study did not explore how ARC and individual communities might develop necessary learning for dialogue and

collaboration. The study suggested facilitation of shared learning was important for rural communities undergoing revitalization because "these counties have much to teach each other, the entire Appalachian region, and beyond" (p. 185). The authors included in their report contact names, phone numbers and in some cases email addresses to help other communities make vital connections with the identified exemplar communities.

Whereas the Ezell et al. (2012) study was regional, Lambe et al. (2008) was national in scope. Conducting a collective case study of 45 small towns with populations between 175 and 15,000 people, Lambe et al. identified towns for the study by asking several economic development practitioners to nominate small towns as exemplars in creating economic improvements. The year-long study was designed to understand how these communities revitalized their towns. Morgan and Lambe (2009) reporting findings in the Lambe et al. study concluded:

> Small towns become motivated to take matters into their own hands and decide to take control of their destiny. They look inward to find assets and strengths to build upon in charting a new course. In the quest for an approach that works, they innovate and try new economic development strategies and often by design and sometimes by accident they find one. In this sense, the apparent limitations of being small lead to innovation out of sheer necessity. (p. 5)

Morgan and Lambe (2009) presented data from a 2006 survey of North Carolina towns which showed smaller towns were more likely to have a goal of attracting retail and service businesses and be concerned about controlling growth than larger towns. They found small, rural towns often concerned about retaining the character, natural

resources and overall quality of life within their communities. The authors stressed small town development does not have a single prescription. Towns must be willing to accept risks and learn through trial and error. They suggested in early stages of small town revitalization a greater need exists for vision and leadership than for financial assets.

Lambe et al. (2008) reported seven themes as lessons for other communities: (1) successful small towns practice community economic development (CED) including leadership development, youth entrepreneurship, and non-profit projects; they realize CED is a long-term effort and training a new generation of entrepreneurs ensures sustainability; (2) the most successful small towns tend to have leaders with entrepreneurial characteristics such as being proactive, future-oriented, embracing change, and assuming risk; (3) successful CED requires a local vision inclusive of all residents, especially newcomers; (4) successful communities define assets and opportunities in broad terms, such as acknowledging retirees as assets who can mentor rural entrepreneurs; (5) CED is enhanced through innovative local and regional governance, and partnerships with other organizations (universities, chambers, incubators, etc.); (6) measurement and celebration of short-term successes are important aspects of successful CED; and (7) effective CED requires comprehensive planning rather than a piecemeal approach—"there is no silver bullet" (p. 9).

Both the Ezell et al. (2012) and Lambe et al. (2008) studies identified potential barriers to rural revitalization. Cultural barriers such as "fear of change, aversion to risk, and outmoded racial perceptions" (Ezell et al., 2012, p. v) can work against revitalization. Lambe et al. found communities advancing toward revitalization were inclusive, because they realized they needed help from all residents. A small community has fewer people

resources, and to not engage with any category of citizens greatly diminishes the resources further. Lambe et al. noted how "case after case has demonstrated that people are the one absolutely necessary ingredient to successful development" (p. 5). Closely related to this people resource issue is regional collaboration. Small communities can be historically and culturally predisposed to compete with their neighboring cities and counties. A number of studies reported communities successful in revitalization overcame this and opened their perspectives so they could benefit from shared people and money resources. Morgan et al. (2009) recommended regional grants requiring collaboration to provide more efficient use of limited state and/or federal funds, and a larger pooling of people with different ideas for how to leverage the money for the highest return.

The studies reviewed in this section have provided insights of best practices in small community revitalization. These studies lack a discussion of *how* these communities learned to develop the vision, leadership, and plans leading to revitalization. The next section discusses two specific innovative CED strategies undertaken by communities working on revitalization and recommended in the collective case studies: economic gardening and place-based development.

Innovations in Community Economic Development

The term economic gardening originated in 1989 in Littleton, Colorado, and is a strategy whereby a community "grows its own" entrepreneurs to create jobs (Morgan et al., 2009). Morgan et al. (2009) used a baseball metaphor to describe how economic gardening "creates jobs one at a time through a series of base hits rather than a home-run recruitment of [a] large factory" (p. 7). As any baseball fan will tell you, base hits win

ball games more often than home-runs. Economic gardening tactics shared in the Ezell et al. (2012) and Lambe et al. (2009) studies included small business development, developing business incubators, vocational training facilities, and rural entrepreneurship programs. Before discussing research studies including small business support programs the next few paragraphs define important terms.

The United States Small Business Administration (2013) defines a small business as "one that is independently owned and operated, is organized for profit, and is not dominant in its field" (p.1). In the small business literature, authors refer to small firms by a variety of terms such as *small enterprises* (Fuller & Moran, 2001), *entrepreneurial small firms* or ESF (Hill, McGowan, & Drummond, 1999), or *microentrepreneurs* (Sanders, 2002). In the entrepreneurship literature the term entrepreneur denotes an individual beginning or operating a business exhibiting behavioral characteristics of innovation, proactiveness, aggressive competitiveness, a growth orientation, and a willingness to take calculated risks (McCline & Bhat, 2012). Researching within a rural context, Henderson and Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City (2002) contrasted two types of entrepreneurs: the *lifestyle entrepreneur* who creates a firm for desired lifestyle purposes, and *high-growth entrepreneur* who creates a firm designed for substantial growth with intentions to hire employees. In this study, the terms rural small business owner and rural entrepreneur will be used interchangeably and at times further described with lifestyle, high-growth, part-time or full-time modifiers.

In their 2001 report, the Appalachian Regional Commission, Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, Hitachi Foundation, and Levi Strauss Foundation described entrepreneurship "as a critical element in the establishment of self-sustaining

communities that create jobs, build local wealth, and contribute broadly to economic and community development" (p. 2). Several scholars echoed that sentiment, considering strong small businesses as vital to the economic health of rural communities (Hannon, 2006; Kilkenny, Nalbarte, & Besser, 1999; Muske, Woods, Swinney, & Khoo, 2007; Muske & Woods, 2004; Siemens, 2010, 2012; Weber, 2007).

Several studies focused on impact of various small business support programs on economic health of rural economies. The studies summarized in Table 2.2 on the following page are very diverse. All case studies conducted in a variety of rural contexts—England, Canada, the Netherlands, Scotland, and mid-western United States, they explore rural businesses and their communities in slightly different ways, mostly through a small business development or entrepreneurship framework. One of the studies references adult learning theory, and one mentions situational learning.

Researching his parent's rural England newspaper business, Bosworth's (2012) study addressed two purposes: (1) to develop an alternative definition of rural businesses, and (2) to highlight characteristics of rural businesses perceived to create community value. Bosworth proposed four rural business segments: (1) those located in a rural market and serving the same rural population, but not with a strictly "rural" product—such as a retail shop; (2) those who serve a rural population and sell a "rural" product, but not located in the rural area—such as farm consultants; (3) those located in a rural market, selling a "rural" product, but not restricting the service area to the one rural population—such as a farm or a nursery; and (4) those located in the rural area, serving the same rural population, and selling a "rural" product—such as a retail store selling exclusively local-crafted goods. He proposed a rural product definition as a product

Table 2.2

Empirical Studies of Economic Gardening in Rural Community Revitalization

Author, date, short title	Method, sample	Theoretical Framework	Key Findings
Bosworth (2012) Characterising rural businesses; rural England	Auto-ethnographic case study of family business	Not specified – economics	Rural-dependent businesses are more intertwined with community; support must be tailored to local context.
Diochon (1999) Fostering entrepreneur-ship…economic development… communities: rural Canada	Case study; 6 CBOs; interviews; observation; document review	Community Enterprise Development; Contingency Theory	"Far greater insight can be achieved by studying a community's development process holistically" (p. 34). "By learning how to do things situationally, participants will come to view the learning as meaningful as its relevance is perceptible" (p. 34)
Glover (2012) Rural resilience through… learning and innovation	Case study interv & obs. family farms in rural England.	Social learning systems (citing Wenger, 1998)	Farming context; future research needed on how small firms learn from challenging times and develop resilience.
Markantoni & van Hoven (2012) Bringing 'invisible' side activities to light: rural female entrepr in Veenkolonien, the Netherlands.	Case study; 17 in-depth interviews, researcher diary	Not specified—small business development	Remote, declining rural area provided women opportunities to start home-based businesses; valued success in self-fulfillment, empowerment & social goals. Small home-based businesses are often the "glue" that keeps households in these rural areas; these small businesses "can be a valuable source of entrepreneurial spirit within the rural community" (p. 515).
Smith (2012) Developing and animating enterprising individuals and communities; rural Scotland	Case study; 4 in-depth interviews; undisclosed # telephone interviews	Community-based entrepreneur-ship; Community Animateur-ship	"Demonstrates how committed communities supported by visionary entrepreneurial community leaders can grow rural communities and local economies" (p. 77).
Weber (2007) Saving St. James: A case study of farmwomen entrepreneurs. Nebraska	Ethnographic Case Study—5 semi-struc. interviews, obs. & document rev;	Entrepreneur-ship and feminism	Entrepreneurship is new socio-economic frontier for rural communities & key dev. strategy; participants created a social & economic enterprise motivated by culture & rural decline; building of the business enterprise expanded both personal and community capacity.

where “rural resources, whether skill-based, land-based or environmental, are required to make the final product with minimal processing or value-adding activity occurring outside the local rural area” (p. 503). He asserted more rural-dependent businesses were more intertwined with the community. Therefore, he argued it was important for a rural community to understand the types of businesses within its area, and tailor support approaches to the businesses’ needs in order to foster economic growth. He noted lifestyle entrepreneurs provided important social and economic benefits.

Another research study focusing on the importance of life-style entrepreneurs, Markantoni and van Hoven (2012) studied *side activities* undertaken by non-farm women to improve their families’ quality of life. Markantoni and van Hoven defined side activity “as a small-scale, home-based economic activity which provides a supplementary income at the household level” (p. 508). Side activities are similar to Siemens’ (2012) concept of *pluriactivity* to denote when a person works multiple jobs or businesses in order to create sufficient income. Markantoni and van Hoven found side activities important to ensure households remained in the community. However, the authors emphasized these economic activities were nearly invisible due to low income generation. They found women had different standards of success than the conventional “male standards” (p. 509) of economic growth and profits. They further asserted life-style entrepreneurs, both men and women, have success criteria which include self-fulfillment, flexibility, empowerment, self-esteem, and confidence. The authors claimed these home-based businesses “can be a valuable source of entrepreneurial spirit within the rural community” (p. 515) and may be the “glue” that retains households.

Both the Diochon (1999) and Smith (2012) studies focused on community-based organizations. The Diochon study concerned the rural Canadian community of Isle Madame facing a loss of 500 jobs equating to approximately 20% unemployment due to the ground fishing industry collapse. Community members desired job creation and preservation of their treasured clean environment. The research tested an exploratory hypothesis of "in the short to medium term, a community's strategic effectiveness within the current environmental conditions will require an entrepreneurial pattern of congruence within its development process" (p. 23). Researchers selected the Isle Madame community as one effectively handling an economic crisis, after consulting with economic development policymakers, practitioners and university scholars. The case study included six community-based organizations undertaking various CED processes. Data collection included formal interviews of "all nonsupport staff and two Board members of every organization" (p. 24), and nonparticipant observation of board meetings. The research confirmed entrepreneurship was fostered through CED activities as community members were forced to embrace ambiguity and uncertainty. Although not mentioning adult learning theory within the paper and not listing adult learning theorists in the references, the authors mentioned learning by doing, willingness to learn and change, and learning from each other while working on a project.

Researching a community-based enterprise (CBE) in rural Scotland, Smith (2012) conducted a case study over a five-year period and conducted in-person, structured and informal interviews with two rural development officers. He triangulated the initial interview findings with telephone interviews, two in-depth interviews with various stakeholders of the CBE, and material from the CBE's website and other documents.

Smith considered the two rural development officers entrepreneurs and community leaders since they engaged with small business owner/managers and others in the community, inspiring community members to do their best. He described the development officers as *animateurs* because they "breathed life" into their projects. Smith further asserted animateurship to include the work of informal educators and community workers. He described animateurs as facilitators, moderators, or motivators supporting others in learning situations using an entrepreneurial mindset. Smith (2012) further clarified the concept of animateur:

> The active animateur stimulates, motivates and inspire [sic] others to bring about change – working with others as opposed to doing things for them and as informal educators orchestrate situations and people, building environments and relationships in which people can grow. (p. 75)

Smith hypothesized the animateur model was more efficient and cost effective than doing projects *for* communities. He claimed the animateur model produced slow and steady organic growth from the bottom up, and thereby more sustainable growth since local businesses and other citizens owned the process. Smith recommended further ethnographic research to study small business owner/managers in different rural contexts.

The only study in this section conducted in the U.S., the Weber (2007) case study consisted of five rural Nebraska farmwomen who bought their church's schoolhouse building after the Catholic diocese in 2000 closed and destroyed the church without notice to the community. Weber described the participants' grief from losing their church and their sense of community. The five women took control of their destiny by buying the schoolhouse and developing a new microenterprise, the St. James

Marketplace, a combination of non-profit and for-profit ventures. St. James Marketplace provided a retail outlet for families' home-based income activities (described as "side activities" in the Markantoni and van Hoven, 2012, study). Weber found the five farmwomen's primary motivation as sustaining the rural community. Similar to the Smith (2012) and Diochon (1999) studies, Weber's research showed the importance of non-profit and socially-motivated for-profit organizations to connect and energize community members.

Focusing on a community facing crisis similar to the Diochon (1999) study, the Glover (2012) study constitutes the only study in this section informed by adult learning theory. Glover explored the role of innovation and learning in developing resilience in ten small rural England farm businesses facing considerable adversity in the previous decade from droughts, Mad Cow Disease, Foot and Mouth Disease and Bluetongue (p. 356). As one participant said, "in farming you're always learning, you'll always have small set-backs so you learn from that experience and you move on" (p. 365). Glover concluded social learning helped farmers collectively learn from community experiences. She recommended further research focused on small business resilience learning.

The studies reviewed above provided insight regarding rural community members' actions to encourage development of new small businesses and growth of existing businesses, which provided social and economic community benefits resulting in rural revitalization. Only the Weber (2007) study occurred in the U.S., and only the Glover study in England was informed by adult learning theory. The next group of studies focused on the innovative CED strategy of place-based development.

Place-based development includes "strategies that capitalize on the distinctive and special characteristics of a particular place" (Morgan & Lambe, 2009, p. 7). Tourism and downtown development strategies are two popular place-based development strategies (Ezzell et al., 2012; Lambe et al., 2008; Morgan & Lambe, 2009). Tourism development includes tactics such as visitor centers, adventure tourism, and historic/cultural tourism (Lambe et al., 2008; Morgan & Lambe, 2009). The research teams of Bowns and Stevenson (2010), Lewis and Delisle (2004), and Bertella (2011) studied tourism as a community revitalization strategy, and Bowns and Stevenson's study included downtown development. Thacheen and Lauzon (2006) researched learning for agro-forestry, a farming strategy in Thailand. Table 2.3 summarizes place-based development studies.

Bowns and Stevenson (2010) researched small towns in a five-county region of Pennsylvania sharing the natural beauty and resources of the Middle Susquehanna River Valley (MSRV), part of Appalachia. The MSRV realities included per capita income less than half the level of total rural Pennsylvania, and declining or static populations skewed to older age groups. Most of the region's towns were more than 200 years old and recorded on the National Register of Historic Places. The Bowns and Stevenson study constituted a partnership between Penn State, USDA, several Pennsylvania state government organizations and several MSRV organizations. Conducted over five academic semesters, the study included landscape architecture students participating in the local design and planning sessions. Although accustomed to individual strategies and competition with their neighboring towns, community members within these cities and counties realized the need for regional collaboration to ensure viability of their small communities. The researchers reported regional collaboration led to new strategies

Table 2.3

Empirical Studies of Place-based Development in Rural Community Revitalization

Author, date, short title	Method, sample	Theoretical Framework	Key Findings
Bertella (2011) Communities of practice in tourism: Working and learning together. An illustrative case study from northern Norway	Single case study; local tourism firms cooperating with each other; 18 interviews with 12 respondents; document review	Wenger's Theory of Communities of Practice; learning, meaning, and identity	Group had strong sense of reciprocal trust, "sense of responsibility towards the community, and a strong sense of identity in terms of being northern Norwegian" (pp. 393-394); communities of practice useful in context of cooperative groups of tourism actors—social aspects of working and learning, identity. Examples of lifestyle and community entrepreneurship.
Bowns & Stevenson (2010) Toward small town revitalization in the Middle Susquehanna River Valley (MSRV); rural PA	Collective case study of five counties and the cities within them sharing MSRV socio-cultural context; document review	Catalytic Community Development (balancing relationship of citizens, non-profit; NGOs)	Networking efforts of local, regional, rural and urban sectors are crucial for economic stability and sustainable development; development initiatives take many years—no quick fixes; community-wide participation advances revitalization efforts.
Lewis & Delisle (2004) Tourism as economic self-development in rural Nebraska: A case study.	Case study with qualitative interviews; 6 tourism influentials	Rural Self-development	Tourism happened and developed almost by accident. Success bred success. Faction of citizens who want community to remain small, isolated, agricultural town. Leaders look within and decide to take action. No other choice but to use local resources, revenues, and people.
Thacheen & Lauzon (2006) Walking a new path of life: Learning tours, 'agro-forestry' and the transformation of…Bann Na Isarn, Thailand	Case study with participant observation, document review and in-depth interviews with 10 individuals	Situated Learning Theory	"Informal learning is a rich complex process that must be understood as being embedded within a specific context" (p. 407). "The initial learning of one individual laid the foundations for changing, perhaps even transforming, the community of Bann Na Isarn" (p. 428). The members of the small Thai village created a web of learning.

focusing on the rich assets of the region for tourism development and downtown development. The regional focus provided a more consistent historic-cultural experience

to visitors. The researchers emphasized the importance of widespread community participation for sustainability, and the need for further study on under-researched small towns and rural areas. The study did not explore learning as groups worked together.

Using a theoretical framework of rural self-development, Lewis and Delisle (2004) focused on the tourism development process. Conducting a single case study in Valentine, Nebraska, a town of 2,800 residents in a county of 6,000 residents, the authors relied on interviews with six participants identified as influential in tourism development and natives of the town. In contrast to the Bowns and Stevenson (2010) study, the town did not collaborate with nearby towns. In addition, Lewis and Delisle described local residents as "fiercely independent" (p. 162), not open to outsiders coming in and starting a business, and not wanting governmental intervention. The authors concluded tourism happened because of small successes leading to bigger successes. The town benefitted from people wanting to enjoy the nearby river, hunt, or fish. Visitors needed certain services such as restaurants and hotels, and local business owners responded. The authors argued the future of tourism was threatened by a community group not wanting tourism, a general lack of cooperation and collaboration, and lack of planning.

Also studying tourism as a place-based development strategy, Bertella (2011) conducted a single case study in rural northern Norway using Wenger's (1998) theory of communities of practice as a theoretical framework. Conducting 18 interviews with 12 respondents and reviewing documents, Bertella found the cooperating tourism firms exhibited a strong sense of reciprocal trust, responsibility to the community, and a strong identity as northern Norwegians. Barriers to cooperation included lack of time to nurture relationships and personal conflicts. She identified elements of boundary crossing

between communities of practice. Noting the usual application of Wenger's theory to routine work, Bertella observed innovative product development work which she deemed equally applicable to communities of practice theory. The next study included a closely-related social learning theoretical framework.

Informed by Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory, Thacheen and Lauzon (2006) conducted a case study concerning agro-forestry in Thailand. Agro-forestry is a form of subsistence agriculture whereby a farmer learns to manage all his or her resources including farm land, rice fields, and forest land (Thacheen & Lauzon, 2006). By participating in learning tours farmers became informal apprentices of a highly skilled agro-forestry farmer. The learning tour process enabled villagers to get back to the Thai values of "caring and sharing" (p. 424). Similar to Diochon (1999) and Glover (2012), villagers became interested in learning after depleting their financial resources and not qualifying for credit. After one farmer became competent in agro-forestry, the farmer shared his/her knowledge with other farmers. The village eventually formed an organization, "the Agro-forestry Group of Bann Na Isarn" (p. 426) which initiated community development projects including savings groups, food banks, and shared learning. The authors highlighted three conclusions: (1) the learning of one individual led to the learning of others, which led to the transformation of the village; (2) sustainability resulted from transformative learning and local meaning making; and (3) the underlying learning process of "learning by doing" was rich and engaged the learning tours' participants "in critical reflection, enculturation, adopting and adapting changing discourses and ideology" (p. 429). Thacheen and Lauzon argued through situated

learning the villagers created a web of learning, restored hope to the villagers, and revitalized the community.

The Glover (2012), Bertella (2011), and Thacheen and Lauzon (2006) studies provided what most studies reviewed in this chapter lacked. The studies clarified *how* community members identified what to do, and how they brought about change. The importance of leadership was explicit in several studies. The discussion now turns to research studies focusing on leadership development as a rural revitalization strategy.

Leadership Development

The literature reviewed in this section includes studies on community capacity building through formal leadership development programs and through programs designed to develop conditions for emergent leadership. Sandmann and Vandenberg (1995) noted previous definitions of leadership based on an individual focus did not work for organizations or communities. The traditional leadership philosophy involved a top-down approach where people in positions of power provided guidance and direction to the less-powerful followers. Sandmann and Vandenberg described a new bottom-up approach as group-focused rather than individual-focused, and holistic in that it engages the group "in heart, mind, spirit, and energy" (p. 3). The authors recommended leadership development characterized by facilitation rather than formal teaching, with a learner focus, a group-centered approach, and dealing with real-life issues of the learners' context. Further, leadership development should be based on the needs of the community, by the community, and for the community, with a strong focus on process rather than content (Sandmann & Vandenberg, 1995).

Agreeing with focus on process, Petrie (2011) recommended a redefinition of leadership "from a person or role, to leadership as a *process*" (p. 22l), agreeing with Heifetz's definition of leadership as "the process of mobilizing people to face difficult challenges" (p. 23). Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky (2009) refined the definition of leadership "as a practice, an activity that some people do some of the time" (p. 24) with three main responsibilities: (1) give direction, (2) provide protection, and (3) maintain order; and two core tasks: first diagnose, and then act (Heifetz et al., 2009). Petrie noted a key distinction of defining leadership as a process concerns leadership not tied to an authority figure or an "official" position—any individual or group can provide leadership. He identified open information flows as a condition encouraging leadership. Petrie's white paper focused on leadership in organizations, a common leadership context. The literature review uncovered few studies concerning rural community leadership. Table 2.4 on the next page summarized literature reviewed concerning leadership and leadership development in rural communities.

Focusing on a formal rural Missouri community leadership program called Step Up to Leadership (SUL) which targeted low-income residents, the research team of Majee, Long, and Smith (2012) conducted a case study to understand the leadership program influence on both participants and their communities. To ensure participation the program provided food, transportation, and a small miscellaneous stipend to help cover costs such as child care for those meeting the income qualification. The two main learning goals of the program were (1) to provide content about specific community issues and (2) provide an environment where participants could enhance their awareness and understanding of relationships. One participant disclosed in an interview she initially

Table 2.4

Empirical Studies of Leadership Development for Rural Community Revitalization

Author, date, title	Method, sample	Theoretical Framework	Key Findings
Emery et al. (2007). Leadership as community capacity building.	Pilot study; six towns in two counties in Iowa; interviews w/13trainees in training two decades prior	Community Capitals	"Dialogue, conversation, and working together create the conditions for emerging leaders to socially construct what effective leadership and proactive community capacity mean" (p. 69)
Majee, Long & Smith (2012) Engaging the underserved in community leadership development	Interpretive case study; surveys, interviews, document review; 30 graduates of program; 10 practitioners	Transform-ational leadership theory	Leadership development programs nurture confidence, patience, encouragement, empowerment, community involvement; "program graduates have become better contributing members of society" (p. 93).
Murray & Dunn (1995) Capacity building for rural development in the United States. Also: **Murray & Dunn (1996)**	Evaluation of Colorado Rural Revitalization Project involving 47 rural communities	Not disclosed; economic analysis	"As individual leadership skills increased, so also did the willingness to work collaboratively" (Murray & Dunn, 1996, p. 108). Focus on problem solving by local community members. Learning by doing.
Onyx & Leonard (2011) Complex systems leadership in emergent comm. projects Australia, Sweden and South America	5 case studies in communities with less than 2000 people; observation, 5 to 15 interviews per community, document rev.	Complexity theory	Leader or leadership team strongly embedded in networks of community, but not in formal authority; findings supported use of complexity theory in explaining emergent leadership in self-development. Equates leaders to social entrepreneurs (p. 507).
Ricketts, K. G. (2009) Studying leadership within successful rural communities in a southeastern state: A qual analysis	49 open-ended interviews in two rural communities	Psychological sense of community; servant leadership; social capital	Leaders strongly felt "sense of community" in surrounding county; involved in community; relied strongly on relationships; established communication; provided direction
Williams & Lindsey (2011) Rural leaders and leadership development in Pennsylvania	Case studies; 19 in-depth interviews w/rural leaders across state; focus group with 6 emergent leaders	Not specified; discussion of various leadership approaches	"Overwhelmingly, each respondent suggested that experience was the best teacher" (p. 9). Suggestions for developing rural leaders included entrepreneurial education, networking, intergenerational learning and mentoring.

applied for the program because she needed the stipend money. That same participant completed the entire program and became an active community volunteer, coordinating a food pantry. Participants found significant value in interacting with others, sharing information, and gaining new perspectives. Although not citing adult learning theory, findings appear to support situated and social learning theories.

In another study focused on importance of leadership program inclusiveness, the research team of Emery et al. (2007) studied leadership development long-term impact by interviewing participants completing a program 20 years earlier. Using a community capitals framework, they found evidence of community benefits from specific projects completed by participants. The authors defined leadership as "a collective activity that occurs when there is a need for action or change beyond oneself" (citing Hickman, Emery et al., 2007, p. 69). The researchers argued "leadership for community capacity building is more than skills, relationships, and influence; it is also finding and sharing a deeper, more inclusive vision that can mobilize the whole community" (Emery et al., 2007, p. 68). They stressed the importance of developing shared, inclusive leadership for growing community capacity. Although mentioning learning in the paper, adult learning theory did not inform the research.

Murray and Dunn (1995, 1996) described revitalization efforts in rural Colorado where two universities and a state agency collaborated with each other and 47 rural communities selected as part of the study. The researchers explored capacity building as a long-term investment and an essential part of sustainable community development. The goal of capacity building is to empower members of the local community, enabling them to manage their own development, and reduce the need for state intervention. Citing

Luther and Wall, the authors provided five major benefits of capacity building: (1) community leaders who exhibit strategic thinking, (2) an entrepreneurial spirit which can lead to creative problem solving; (3) more confidence and positive attitudes; (4) organized community planning; and (5) a future-oriented approach with a focus on quality of life issues. Murray and Dunn (1995) emphasized the holistic nature of community development to include "development of the whole community, and not merely its business sector" (citing 1992 report of President's Council on Rural America, p. 96). They further emphasized "rural development is neither low cost nor short term in its demands" (p. 96).

Reporting on a formal leadership development program for rural leaders in Pennsylvania, the research team of Williams and Lindsey (2011) conducted collective case studies of rural leaders. The authors confirmed the lack of literature relating to rural leadership. The authors defined leaders "as agents of change and as persons whose acts affect other people more than other people's acts affect them" (p. 6). They highlighted four characteristics of transformational leaders: (1) admired and trusted role models, (2) a source of inspiration and motivation, (3) cheerleaders of innovation and creativity, and (4) attentive to individual needs. Rural leaders in the study preferred experiential learning. The rural leaders perceived a need to reach out to young rural leaders, and to provide more entrepreneurial education in K-12 classrooms, workshops and seminars in rural communities. Leadership program participants recommended the creation of regional leadership programs to encourage regional collaboration. The participants' viewpoints concurred with Murray and Dunn (1995) conclusions regarding long-term investments in rural leadership capacity building being crucial to rural revitalization.

Studying two rural communities in a southeastern state, Ricketts (2009) explored what part leadership played in the communities. She included three variables in the theoretical framework: (1) psychological sense of community which referred to the social aspects of the community, (2) community (servant) leadership defined as a leader that "begins with the feeling or desire to serve first, followed by the conscious choice to lead (citing Greenleaf, p. 231), and (3) social capital referring to relationships and interactions and social trust. Regarding the psychological sense of the community, Ricketts found leaders described community members as willing to band together to help those in need, and they defined their community as encompassing the county, which enabled access to more resources (people, natural resources, infrastructure, etc.). Ricketts found leaders as fitting the definition of servant leaders, expressing the importance of community involvement, encouraging involvement from everyone, and being a good role model. Trust was found to be an important part of social capital including trust in surrounding rural communities, with the chamber of commerce, development commission, churches, local government officials, and local civic groups. Trust in one of the communities included trust across racial lines. Ricketts recommended additional focus on leadership development training to help rural communities face and solve challenges.

Taking a slightly different approach, Onyx and Leonard (2011) explored emergent leadership through participation in community projects. Conducting the research in five different communities in Australia, Sweden, and South America, each with populations of less than 2,000 people, complexity theory informed the research. Complexity theory conceptualizes leadership as emergent and arising from interactions

and events (citing Lichtenstein et al., Onyx & Leonard, 2011) where leaders do not direct or control innovation, but create conditions to nurture innovation and entrepreneurship (citing Surie & Hazy, Onyx & Leonard, 2011). Onyx and Leonard found seven elements common across all five cases of successful development. (1) They found leaders took active roles in establishing projects, were embedded in informal and formal community networks, but not in positions of formal authority, and were highly trusted by fellow community members. (2) The leaders involved a wide circle of shared decision making; (3) they reached outside of their community when they identified a gap in knowledge or resources; (4) they were visionary and could communicate their vision and motivate others toward the vision. (5) In all cases, leaders demonstrated good project management skills; (6) they realized the importance of succession planning within the community; and (7) leaders exhibited energy, commitment and perseverance enabling them to overcome obstacles. The authors emphasized emergent leadership involved repeated, iterative interactions, making persistence a critical issue when facing potential roadblocks.

In summary, the literature shows leadership important to successful rural revitalization. Researchers studying formal leadership training emphasized the importance of diversity and inclusion, especially reaching out to youth for leadership and entrepreneurship. Emergent leadership occurred as community members worked together toward a common vision. These studies focused on leadership did not use an adult learning theoretical framework, although similar to other studies reviewed in this section they referred to various types of learning that are often taken for granted. Before moving to the theoretical framework, I will discuss experiential, informal, and incidental learning.

Dewey (1938) wrote of experience as "the means and goal of education" (p. 89) and clarified that experience was social and not something that happens exclusively inside an individual's body and mind. He clarified "It ought not to be necessary to say that experience does not occur in a vacuum. There are sources outside an individual which give rise to experience. It is constantly fed from these springs" (pp. 39-40). Dewey's theory of experience and reflective thought consisted of an iterative process of action, reflection on that action, and then refinement of plans for future action, followed by action and a continuation of the process (Miettinen, 2000). Dewey would define learning as making meaning through reflection of experience and connecting experiences (Dewey, 1938; Rodgers, 2002). Arguing that Dewey's definition of reflection was much more than simple thinking, Rodgers (2002) presented four criteria for Dewey's reflective thought: (1) reflection is the meaning-making thread that connects experiences and allows for continuity of learning; (2) reflection is rigorous, disciplined thinking; (3) reflection is richer when occurring in interaction with others, such as with communities of interest or place; and (4) reflection requires attitudes such as whole-heartedness, open-mindedness, directness, and responsibility, that value the development of self and others.

Dewey argued an experience without attention to the experience is merely habit and does not lead to learning (Dewey, 1938). According to Dewey, a learning experience required four activities: (1) interaction, even if that interaction was within one's mind; (2) continuity which was the bridging connection between the current experience and previous experience(s); (3) perceived and weaved meaning between the threads of experience; and (4) reflection which is the process of creating meaning, or learning, from experiences (Rodger, 2002). Dewey defined a mis-educative experience as one that

limited the meaning making, such as routine actions that “possess us rather than our having dominion over them” (Rodger, 2002, p. 847), and an educative experience as one “characterized by forward movement rather than stagnation” (Rodger, 2002, p. 847). Our experiences are not totally within our control, but we do have control of the meaning we make of our experiences (Rodger, 2002). Experiential learning is a foundation of adult learning curriculum, and part of informal learning (Miettinen, 2000).

Marsick and Watkins (2001) defined informal learning as “usually intentional but not highly structured” (p. 25) and learning which is learner-centered and learner-controlled. Marsick and Watkins provided examples of informal learning as “self-directed learning, networking, coaching, mentoring, and performance planning” (pp. 25-26). They described other forms of informal learning as reflection, action, and collaboration. Informal learning occurs outside a formal learning setting, and is usually intentional, whereas incidental learning lacks intention (Marsick & Watkins, 2001).

Marsick and Watkins (2001) defined incidental learning as a byproduct of other activities that may not have a learning objective such as accomplishing a task, having conversations with colleagues, sensing aspects of the environment and experimenting through trial and error. Although incidental learning can take place in formal learning environments, Marsick and Watkins clarified “When people learn incidentally, their learning may be taken for granted, tacit, or unconscious" (p. 26) and provided as examples "the hidden agenda of an organization's culture or a teacher's class, learning from mistakes, or the unsystematic process of trial and error" (p. 26). They concluded from their decade of research that informal and incidental learning were “the most

pervasive forms of adult learning and that we can indeed enhance this kind of learning with educational intervention" (p. 31) and there was much more to be learned.

After reviewing rural revitalization studies in the last 20 years informed by adult learning theory, I narrowed focus first to social learning theories because of the social nature of community revitalization, and then to Wenger's (1998) communities of practice theory which framed several rural revitalization studies in international contexts. By studying naturally occurring communities of practice, those created to accomplish rural U.S. revitalization projects, I aim to add to the understanding of community of practice theory and how rural community members learn informally and incidentally in task-oriented groups. The next section discusses community of practice theory and the influences on which the theory was created.

Theoretical Framework

After reviewing both empirical and theoretical literature, it appeared communities of practice theory (Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002) provided an appropriate theoretical framework for this research exploring learning of community members as they worked and learned together for community revitalization. The discussion in this section covers two topics. The first section reviews the theorists influencing Wenger's (1998) development of the theory. The second section discusses Wenger's communities of practice theory and its key concepts of identity, boundary processes, and levels of participation (Wenger et al, 2002). The discussion begins with a review of the scholarly work influencing Wenger's theory development.

Theoretical Influences on Communities of Practice Theory

Wenger (1998) identified two major categories of theories influencing his development of communities of practice: theories of identity and theories of practice. Acknowledging a tremendous body of work in identity theory, Wenger explained he focused on identity theories of social theorists, such as Anselm Strauss (1959) and Anthony Giddens (1991) whose work placed people in contexts with mutual meaning construction between individuals and groups. Regarding theories of practice, Wenger identified his mentor, Jean Lave (1988), and Pierre Bourdieu (1990, 1977) This section discusses theorists identified by Wenger and also reviews work of Dewey (1938), Lewin (1951), and Schön (1983) whose work influenced ideas concerning experiential learning through action and reflective thought. Table 2.5 on the next page summarizes these theorists in the order discussed in this section.

In addition to his theoretical contributions regarding experience and reflective thought, Dewey's classical pragmatism influenced many theories of practice. Dewey (1938) argued "all genuine education comes about through experience" and clarified that not all experiences were educative (p. 25). He called experience accompanied by inattention to the experience "habit" and explained learning required the learner to reflect upon how elements of the experience were connected. Dewey conceived situations and interactions inseparable from each other, supporting the interdependence of subjectivity and objectivity. He wrote "Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into" (p. 38). This communicates an active, interactive process. Dewey's learnings and teachings influenced many scholars.

Table 2.5

Theoretical Influences on Communities of Practice Theory

Theorist	**Theory**	**Main Concepts**
Dewey (1938)	Theory of Experience, Theory of Reflective Thought	Learning is not possible without reflection of how elements of experience are connected; recursive cycle of acting, reflecting, revising action; all learning is social
Lewin (1951)	Field Theory Action Research	Holistic view of individual and context as interdependent; group dynamics; action research—a spiral of steps similar to Dewey's theory of reflective thought, planning, acting, evaluating
Schön (1983)	Learning Systems Reflective Practice Inquiry	Feedback loop of experience, learning, and practice; single-loop learning—adjusting practice due to feedback; double-loop learning—creating new and better practice
Strauss (1959)	Identity	Identity important for social structure; identity not a straight-line process but an iteration of experiences, learnings and adjustments.
Giddens (1991)	Reflexivity, Self-identity	Self-identity is reflexive, not pertaining to the moment, but a continuing narrative creating, maintaining and revising
Bourdieu (1990, 1977)	Theory of Power and Practice	Habitus—lasting sense of perception, thought and action (subjective) Capital—extended to social capital, cultural capital, financial capital, and symbolic capital Field—complex social relations (objective) Union of habitus with field (rejecting objective-subjective dichotomy)
Lave (1988); Lave and Wenger (1991)	Situated Learning	Learning in practice; communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991); apprenticeship as situated learning

Heavily influenced by Dewey, Lewin's (1951) work conceived action research as a spiral of steps similar to Dewey's theory of reflective thought with iterative cycles of

planning, acting, and evaluating. Action research constitutes a practice-based inquiry popular in community-based applications such as communities of practice. Lewin's work in field theory and group dynamics further contributed to holistic views of individuals, groups, and the social context in which they practice. Lewin defined a field as everything within a life space, such as family, work, or school and argued all aspects within the field were mutually interdependent. Interdependence of fate and tasks constitute two key ideas of Lewin's group dynamics work. Lewin argued the more dependent group members are on each other, the more powerful the group, and negative interdependence, or competition often destroys a team.

Another theorist influenced by Dewey's theories of experience and reflective thought, Schön (1983) contributed concepts of reflective practice to organizational practitioners and organizational learning systems. In partnership with Chris Argyris (Argyris & Schön, 1978), he introduced concepts of single-loop and double-loop learning. The former entails adjusting practice based on expected and actual outcomes and continuing with the same assumptions, values, and policies of the practice. Double-loop learning occurs when the underlying assumptions, values, and policies leading to the single-loop learning results are questioned and modifications are made. Wenger's concept of vibrant communities of practice consists of members who challenge each other and the group's actions making double-loop learning more likely. Wenger et al. (2002) conceived more mature communities of practice introducing elements of organizational structure and more focus on reflective practice.

Identity theorists explore the formation of individuals in complex relationships comprised of culture, associations, and membership in various categories such as gender,

class, ethnicity, and age. Strauss' (1959) theoretical essay discussed identity as a relationship between an individual and the individual's observations. Through evaluation based on the individual's cultural context, the individual "names" what s/he perceives. Naming infuses identity to objects and people and evolves as experiences alter identity throughout adulthood. Identities represent hypotheses individuals rely on when interacting with others and become problematic during times of rapid social change. Writing three decades after Strauss, Giddens (1991) contrasted traditional, modern, and post-modern effects on identity. In traditional societies, individuals inherit their identity narratives and social roles and learning was passed down by elders. Modernity's rapid social change resulted in individuals questioning identity narratives furnished to them. In the post-modern world Giddens argues identity is a story in the making and individuals rely on expert systems, some of them virtual, with increased risks.

Bourdieu's (1990, 1977) concepts of habitus, capital, and field expanded knowledge regarding theories of practice. For Bourdieu, habitus resolved the paradoxical relationship between subjectivity and objectivity. Arguing individuals develop habitus in response to encountered objective social structures, or field, although similar to socialization Bourdieu's habitus involves embodiment with deeply held unconscious beliefs and values. Thus, he asserted interdependence between individuals and the complex social relations in which they were embedded. He extended the discussion of capital to include social and cultural capital, important to development and maintenance of communities of practice.

As Wenger's mentor, Jean Lave (1988) influenced considerably the development of Wenger's (1998) communities of practice. In the preface of Wenger's 1998 book he

shares the story of asking Lave when *she* first introduced the term community of practice. He reports she replied "I thought you were the one who came up with it" (p. xiii). It appears Wenger introduced the term in his 1990 dissertation, and Lave and Wenger (1991) explored how newcomers joined a community of practice and learned through situated learning. Lave and Wenger conceptualized situated learning theory as a holistic concept in which the learner, the activity, and the environment act upon each other and co-generate meaning. They conceived the term legitimate peripheral participation wherein legitimate refers to engagement of the learner and peripheral refers to the learner being close enough to the activity to gain understanding. They argued a learner's understanding deepened as his or her involvement in the activity grew more intense.

In developing their theory of situated learning Lave and Wenger (1991) studied ethnographic case studies of five apprenticeships. Many forms of apprenticeship exist in the United States, "especially wherever high levels of knowledge and skill are in demand (e.g., medicine, law, the academy, professional sports, and the arts)" (p. 63). Lave and Wenger (1991) argued "learning and a sense of identity are inseparable: They are aspects of the same phenomenon" (p. 115). The case study of nondrinking alcoholics in Alcoholics Anonymous (citing Cain) represents common features between Lave and Wenger's case studies and illustrates the identity concept of communities of practice theory.

The journey from a drinking non-alcoholic to a non-drinking alcoholic involves participation in a community of practice with which the apprentice does not initially share an identity (citing Cain, Lave & Wenger, 1991). A concerned individual, often a non-drinking alcoholic, invites the apprentice (self-identifying as a drinking non-

alcoholic) to an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting. The apprentice may have agreed to attend the meeting to "check it out" but may not acknowledge being an alcoholic. Sitting in the meeting, apprentices hear stories from non-drinking alcoholics about the difficulties non-drinkers experienced as drinkers and how they transitioned their identity from a drinking non-alcoholic to an acknowledged alcoholic with a growing commitment to not drink alcohol. As his/her first contribution, the apprentice may pick up a white chip at the end of the meeting signifying a commitment to be alcohol-free for the next 24 hours. Learning takes place through interaction with old-timer non-drinking alcoholics and apprentice non-drinking alcoholics. AA constitutes a community of practice, practicing healing of alcoholics through legitimate peripheral participation in storytelling, resulting in transformation of identities and significant learning.

From a situated learning perspective, inexperience supported by the mentor allows introduction of new ideas from a newcomer, potentially introducing changes in practice. Situated learning embraces the "rich significance of learning in human experience" (p. 121), always in a social context, and interconnected with all the complexities of a social world. Wenger (2000) used umbrella terms of social theory of learning and social learning systems (Wenger, 2009) which included situated learning and communities of practice theory. Communities of practice provide flexible social learning structures facilitating situational learning as newcomers learn from old-timers, and sometimes newcomers act as boundary agents introducing knowledge from another community of practice. The Hamilton (2011) study provides an illustration.

Although not pertaining to rural revitalization, the Hamilton (2011) study concerned family business leadership resilience framed with situated learning and

communities of practice theories. Hamilton studied two generations from five family businesses in northwest England. She found innovation, change, and continuity fostered by the learning-in-practice context of an intergenerational family business. Hamilton provided examples of second generation individuals seeking further education and experience outside the family business and then bringing the new expertise back to the family business resulting in transformational change. Her participants described how the family business knowledge base expanded and innovation occurred from "overlapping communities, including other work-based and formal education communities" (p. 18). Hamilton concluded "increasing legitimate peripheral participation is not just about acquiring knowledge but about introducing new knowledge, not just about reproducing practice but transforming it" (p. 18). Hamilton's study made an important contribution to the practice of leaving a community of practice. As the new generation joined the community of practice and the founding generation left the community of practice, there was sufficient continuity to keep the business going, and enough discontinuity to introduce change and innovation. The next section discusses more details of Wenger's (1998) communities of practice theory.

Communities of Practice Theory

Although Wenger (1998) proclaimed "communities of practice are everywhere" (p. 6), he clarified not every community and practice constitutes communities of practice. A pre-historic tribe meeting around a fire near its cave, a group of doctors making rounds, and a medieval witch-hunt constitute communities of practice (Wenger, 2000). In communities of practice group members share interest in a topic and decide to deepen their knowledge and expertise about the topic by interacting on an ongoing basis.

Wenger explained by participating in communities of practice we sometimes learn, and other times we fail to learn. The practice of communities often includes ignorance, either due to lack of time and energy to further explore, or as a conscious decision to not explore. He indicated positive learning takes place when *mutual engagement*, *joint enterprise*, and *shared repertoire* are robust within the community of practice. Mutual engagement refers to the level of interactions between members—doing things together, having meaningful discussions, and creating artifacts lead to shared meaning on issues. Joint enterprise pertains to the depth of social capital in the group including trust and members' confidence in speaking up even on difficult issues. Shared repertoire refers to self-awareness of the group—what resources, concepts and jargon does the group use to negotiate meaning and facilitate learning. A personal story may help illuminate these concepts.

As a member of a bowling league I share a passion for bowling with the group, and by bowling together on a regular basis, we get better at our practice of bowling (or at least some of us do). The league constitutes the community of practice and each team is a sub-community. We have mutual engagement—we bowl every Friday night from September through May, we have discussions at the beginning of the season about any new proposed rules, and we create artifacts of by-laws, decisions made, and allocation of prize monies. We have joint enterprise—the league has existed for a decade or more although my family only joined three years ago; we socialize while we practice the art and science of bowling; through long-term relationships we trust each other and we speak up when we question something. We have shared repertoire—we share U.S. Bowling Congress rules, and we master bowling concepts and jargon. For example, when I miss a

spare, sometimes I hear "Good try. That was a difficult one." Other times I hear "Next time you may want to line up two boards further left." We bowlers know the jargon of "lining up" refers to the placement of our feet, and "two boards further left" refers to the narrow hardwood boards comprising the floor.

Learning through ongoing experience focuses on a topic and is often tacit. Members create and sustain communities of practice by influencing others' perceptions of shared identity with the group, by inviting different levels of participation, and encouraging boundary crossing. The following discussion focuses on three key concepts of communities of practice theory used in this study to help explain learning in rural revitalization: identity, levels of participation, and boundary crossing.

As best illustrated in the Alcoholics Anonymous case study, identity constitutes a critical element in communities of practice theory. Wenger (2000) provided three reasons for the importance of identity: (1) our identities decide what matters, with whom we identify and trust, and with whom we share our competence and experience; (2) if we are able to suspend our identities we will be able to deal in an effective manner with boundaries and learn even more; and (3) by identifying with multiple communities we are able to create bridges for others. He outlined three crucial qualities for maintaining a healthy social identity. *Connectedness* depends on how closely we identify with the histories, experience, affections and mutual commitments of fellow members of the social group. *Expansiveness* depends on our identity with multiple social groups, even if we don't participate actively in all of them. *Effectiveness* depends on action and participation in our communities of practice.

Changing his identity from Wenger to Wenger-Trayner after marrying Beverly Trayner, in a recent interview Wenger-Trayner (Omidvar & Kislov, 2013) pinpointed identity as underappreciated by most practitioners and acknowledged the concept of identity presents difficulty. To Wenger-Trayner identity implies accountability to interact. Community members negotiate their participation in one or more communities of practice and their level of engagement, which relates to the members' accountability to the group. Level of engagement affects learning which affects opportunities for boundary crossing. Identity is ongoing work since identities change over time as participation, learning, and boundary process changes occur.

Wenger (2000) discussed boundaries between communities of practice as key learning opportunities. He described boundary processes as ways to build bridges between different communities and noted special actors in communities of practice providing brokers between communities. *Boundary spanners* take care of one specific boundary such as the relationship between community members and Penn State in the Bowns and Stevenson's (2010) study. *Roamers* travel between various communities creating connections and sharing knowledge, similar to Smith's (2012) description of the rural development officers in rural Scotland, and the representatives of the state agencies and universities working with the 47 communities across the state of Colorado in the Murray and Dunn (1995) study. *Outposts* explore new communities and bring back information to their home community, bringing to mind community members attending conferences or workshops. *Pairs* involve personal relationships between people in different communities that effectuate a brokering relationship, exhibited in the Bertella (2011) study as cooperating tourism firms collaborated across the northern Norway

region. Boundary processes are particularly important in small communities where a core active group of citizens serve on a number of different communities of practice.

Wenger et al., (2002) introduced levels of participation as a strategy to cultivate strong communities of practice and ensure a community's sustainability. Levels of participation refer to *core*, *active*, and *peripheral* members which Wenger et al. depict as concentric circles. Core members represent a small group of people at the center who discuss and possibly debate issues in public. They often initiate projects, identify topics for community involvement, and actively develop the community of practice. Core members provide leadership at different levels, including internal leadership to question activities of the group, connect people within the group, and continue develop the practice of the group. Core members often provide organizational leadership, providing support, creating a challenging environment, and actively inviting different levels of participation. Leadership at the boundaries encourages new ideas and new members which ensures a vibrant community of practice. In addition to core members providing leadership at the boundaries, active members may supply this leadership.

Active members attend meetings regularly and participate in topic debates occasionally but not as intensely as the core group. Peripheral members rarely participate, choosing to watch the interactions of core and active members. Clarifying the importance of peripheral participation, Wenger et al. (2002) argued peripheral members are important for "bench" strength. Watching intensely and perceiving a need, peripheral members may volunteer to help. Having learned from their peripheral participation, peripheral members may re-shape their identity to include "belonging" in the group as they gain knowledge and confidence. Outsiders comprise the group beyond

peripheral members. Core or active members may invite outsiders with a necessary expertise or a needed service on an ad hoc basis.

Conclusions

Communities of practice theory and its key concepts of identity, boundary processes, and levels of participation appear appropriate as a theoretical framework to explore understanding of learning in rural community revitalization. Community members interested in various aspects of revitalization, such as large heritage tourism projects or downtown development association form groups to share interests and objectives, and through scheduled meetings deepen the group's knowledge, sharing learnings throughout the community and inviting more participation. Communities of practice theory includes community members' sharing identity with various revitalization projects, and choosing to participate at different levels. Core group leadership influences identity of the group and its members, invites participation at different levels, and encourages boundary processes. Although not found in U.S. studies, international literature includes research informed by communities of practice. This study contributed to the application of communities of practice theory by exploring learning as community members formed rural revitalization communities of practice.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature base of empirical studies concerning rural revitalization, including specific strategies implemented by communities which implemented revitalization in their towns. Beginning with a review of collective case studies of exemplar communities, the chapter summarized case studies of communities focused on growing their own small businesses, developing their downtowns or tourism,

and developing leadership or allowing leadership to emerge. The literature review confirmed the lack of rural context studies. A few international studies provide examples of rural revitalization informed by communities of practice, but few rural U.S. context studies focused on learning. The chapter reviewed the theoretical influences on communities of practice theory including Dewey's experiential learning and reflective thought; Lewin's action research, field theory, and group dynamics; Schon's feedback loops, reflective practice and organization learning systems; identity theories of Strauss and Giddens; and practice theories of Lave and Bourdieu. A discussion of communities of practice theory included the key concepts of identity, boundary processes, and levels of participation. The gap in the literature to which this study contributed was an understanding of learning in rural community revitalization in the United States informed by communities of practice theory.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

> *The conceptions of situation and of interaction are inseparable from each other. An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his [sic] environment….Even when a person builds a castle in the air he is interacting with the objects which he constructs in fancy. (Dewey, 1938, pp. 43-44)*

With the gap in the literature identified, this chapter details the study design to explore learning for rural revitalization framed in Wenger's (1998) communities of practice theory—an intricate concept (learning), embedded in a complex situation (rural revitalization) with many complicated interactions (communities of practice). The purpose of this research was to understand how community members learned to revitalize their town, and what facilitated or created barriers to learning for revitalization. Three research questions guided the study: (1) How did rural community members learn about revitalization? (2) What facilitated learning for revitalization? (3) What created barriers to learning for revitalization? Using Yin's (2009) case study classifications, this study is a unique or revelatory case with a focus on one of very few small towns undergoing self-development that has been studied and documented. The insights from this case are aimed to help other small communities plan and initiate revitalization options. The case meets practical considerations of being accessible and having people open to talking and willing to review draft materials (Stake, 1995).

This chapter begins with a discussion of the case study design, followed by three major sections: (1) a research design section including specific descriptions of data

generation, participant selection, and data analysis methods; (2) a summary discussion of how quality was ensured throughout each phase of the study; and (3) a description of actions taken to ensure data represented the participants in a confidential, trustworthy, and credible manner.

Research Design

This study used a case study design with multiple data generation methods to examine the complex phenomenon of community revitalization within a rural community. Case study research concerns a specific, bounded system with a socio-cultural context (Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995). The socio-cultural context of the rural community encompassed its history, current situation, physical layout, institutions, people, relationships within the community, and interactions with other communities.

In addition to being a unique case on one small town, this study falls under Stake's (1995) description of an instrumental case study, defined as a case studied to understand something represented by the case. By studying the particularistic qualities of this case we can better understand the phenomenon this case represents, that of learning for rural revitalization. Stake (1995) asserted a number of rationales for single-case designs. He argued "the first criterion should be to maximize what we can learn" (p. 4). This study focused on one small, rural community in Georgia. Bounded by the community, defined as the physical structures, institutions, and organizations within the city limits, the study explored learning for rural community revitalization by seeking viewpoints from residents and business owners who lived or worked within the community, as well as from significant players located outside the community involved in the community's revitalization activities. The collective community revitalization

activities of the town comprised the unit of analysis of this study. Dominant issues included the groups formed to undertake revitalization activities, the boundary crossing between groups, and issues of identity as groups formed and changed (Wenger, 1998).

As suggested by Stake (1995), this approach enabled examination of the community context and exploration of issues and concepts in an in-depth manner to understand complexities of the community. Within the study, I used purposive sampling (Simons, 2009) to select data sources to review based on their likelihood to inform the research questions and provide rich information. To understand the research phenomenon, the study employed several ethnographic methods.

"Ethnographic literally means to describe a people or cultural group" (Glesne, 2011, p. 17). Ethnographic methods represent rigorous qualitative inquiry consistent with classical pragmatism and social constructionism with focus on social context, the inseparability of individuals from their cultural groups (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glesne, 2011), and meaning developed jointly by the members of a culture (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Ethnographic methods appeared appropriate for this study seeking to understand a complex phenomenon in a complex natural setting. While I described the theoretical framework of the study in Chapter Two, Figure 3.1 below summarizes the broader conceptual framework for the study. Wenger's (1998) communities of practice theory and its key elements of levels of participation, boundary processes, and identity underpin the study. The remaining sections of this chapter describe the data generation, analysis, and representation elements depicted in the conceptual framework.

Since a concern for ensuring quality permeates all elements of the study, the next section provides my researcher subjectivity statement. A researcher subjectivity

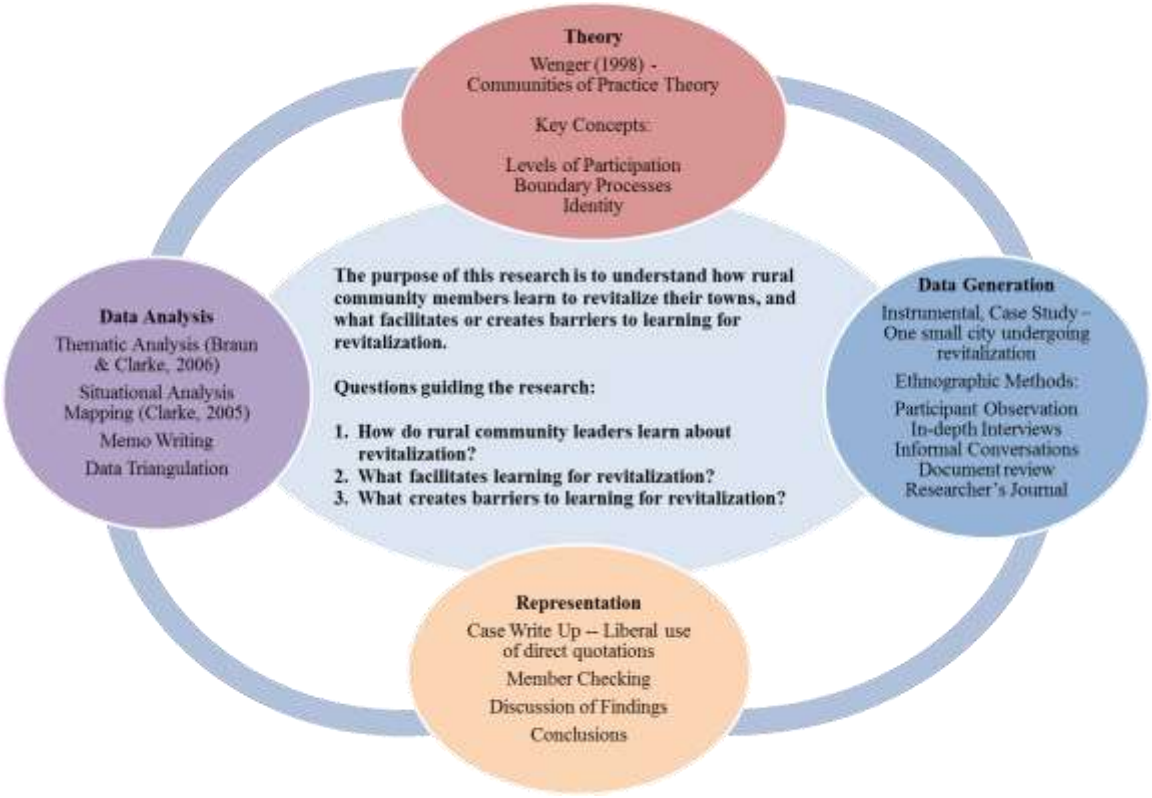

Figure 3.1 Conceptual Framework
Note. Adapted from deMarrais and Preissle, 2000

statement makes explicit the perspectives the researcher brings to the research and enables readers to consider the researcher's perspectives as they review the research. I wrote the following researcher subjectivity statement before commencing data generation, and referred to the statement often to reflect upon it, question the need for revisions, and reflexively evaluate my management of bias in the study.

Researcher Subjectivity Statement

Some have said "you can take the girl out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the girl." Country roots attracted me to rural community revitalization. Two years after my birth in Tampa, Florida, my family moved to an unincorporated rural area in central Florida. My early school years involved an 18-mile bus ride to my

elementary and junior high school, and a 28-mile bus ride to the high school in Dade City, which we not-so-affectionately called "Dead City." Although leaving home soon after high school for urban college and career choices, rural issues affecting my parents and siblings continued to be part of my life.

An entrepreneurial spirit runs through my veins. Repeatedly failing in his attempts to own a profitable small business, my father persevered but rarely asked for help, certainly not from his daughter. As a former small business owner and business consultant at the Georgia Small Business Development Center (SBDC), I comprehend the difficulties and complexities confronted by owners of small firms, and the additional challenges encountered by firms in a rural environment. Admiring entrepreneurial leadership, I continue to explore appropriate environments for nurturing current and nascent entrepreneurs, and methods of "planting seeds" for entrepreneurship in elementary, middle, and high schools.

My adult life experiences created a heightened awareness of and empathy for the "other" groups in diversity issues such as age, gender, race, sexual orientation, nationality, and religion. My exploration of this case embraced a commitment to seek viewpoints from a diverse group of participants, to understand viewpoints of diversity within the community, and to consider how those viewpoints affected learning for revitalization. As the study progressed, continually checking emerging insights with participants enabled me to consider perspectives other than my own. This subjectivity statement became part of every phase of the study, particularly during implementation of research methods discussed in the next section.

Research Methods

Seeking deep understanding of the research phenomenon, this study employed ethnographic field methods of participant observation, review of documents, and interviewing. By observing interactions between members of the community, both as a participant observer and non-participant observer, I engaged in informal conversations with people in the community and conducted formal, in-depth interviews guided by an interview outline. As suggested by Simons (2009) and Merriam and Simpson (1995), a research journal constituted an additional data generation method which helped ensure a quality study. The following sections provide more details about data generation, participant selection, and data analysis.

Data Generation

This study began unofficially in August 2012 with observations at a design charrette, an intense planning and design program led by a team from a nearby university's landscape and historic preservation departments. Class projects resulted in two interviews in November 2012 and two additional interviews in July 2013, along with document review and participant observations for a pilot case study. Data generation for the final phase of the study occurred from August 2013 through August 2014. In the following sections the discussion covers each method of data generation beginning with participant observation. Initially receiving IRB approval in November 2012 as an interview study, the study modification for case study with ethnographic methods was approved in June 2013 (Appendix A). Appendices B through E include oral and written consent protocols, the interview guide, and a consent form for review of non-public documents.

Participant observation. Participant observing of community activities included the Saturday Farmer's Market, Friday night music events at a local business, a concert series at the historic church, eating meals in each of the three restaurants, civic organization meetings, shopping at retail stores, and performing in a living history event. Through community engagement people became familiar with me, expressed appreciation in my volunteering time to help their community, knew of my interest in small community revitalization, and agreed to participate in the study.

Observations yielded a greater understanding of the case and led to further enhancement of case study design by focusing on research questions and understanding the context of the case (Stake, 1995). Following Stakes' (1995) advice, I described the physical situation thoroughly including details such as streets, buildings, décor, relative position of buildings, business locations, activities and people observed, conversations, and landscaping in and around buildings. Participant observation contributed to a comprehensive sense of the research setting, helped develop rich, thick descriptions of incidents and events observed (Geertz, 1973; Simons, 2009), and captured experiences of participants not as articulate as others, thereby helping to overcome the privileging of interviewing in the study (Simons, 2009). Appendix F contains a log of field visits with date, day of week, and day part (morning, afternoon, evening) visited, purpose of visit, and the number of hours spent in the field.

Observations can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured (Simons, 2009). Positioning myself as someone seeking to learn from the community, I listened intently without taking notes. Immediately after leaving the research setting I recorded jot notes (citing Bernard, DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002), which are key words, short phrases, or

sentences recorded as an aid to memory. I often did this on my smartphone and then emailed the notes to myself, expanding the jot notes into field notes as soon as possible to maximize capturing more detail from memory (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Developing detailed, well-organized field notes with rich descriptions of observations allowed me to document the culture of Fresh Springs (a pseudonym for the case).

Observations covered more than a dozen civic and project committee meetings including City Council, Downtown Development Authority (DDA), and executive committee meetings for a living history event. At these meetings community members discussed issues and made plans for various projects. Assuming a more "objective" observer role in those meetings, I discretely drafted jot notes and developed field notes after returning to my computer. After reviewing field notes from each observation session, I highlighted certain extracts as high priority for coding. Observations assisted decisions regarding invitations for in-depth interviewing and selection of documents to review.

Documents. Since documents provide a rich source of data for both historical purposes and current context (Glesne, 2011; Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995), I amassed a large data corpus of document data. Documents consisted of a weekly newspaper subscription (which covers the entire county); minutes of Downtown Development Authority (DDA) meetings; minutes of a retreat of community leaders; documents summarizing the design charrette during the summer of 2012; various websites pertaining to civic organizations and individual businesses; Facebook pages; membership lists (city, county, and state business listings; chamber of commerce members); newsletters; brochures; and photographs. These documents helped generate questions for both formal

interviews and informal conversations, and they furnished data triangulation opportunities with data collected through other methods. Electronic documents determined to be part of the data set were saved and loaded directly into the research database. Hardcopy documents, such as local newspaper articles and brochures were scanned, saved as an electronic file, and then loaded to the research database. Photographs became part of the data corpus to provide data triangulation for descriptions in field notes.

The following example illustrates photographs used for data triangulation. A participant directed me to documents which supported her assertion that despite discussions about revitalization, local government leaders in Fresh Springs produced little change. Following the participant's suggestion, I inspected and photographed two sets of charrette drawings posted on the walls at city hall, dated 1977 and 2012. The pictures documenting little change in the streetscape were included in the database for later analysis. This example demonstrated how an interview led to further document review. On one occasion document review led to identifying a participant for an in-depth interview, the topic of the next section.

In-depth interviews. Researchers use qualitative interviews to gain in-depth information from participants having experience or knowledge of the particular phenomenon under study (deMarrais, 2004). I conducted interviews with open-ended questions to encourage conversation. The interview guide (Appendix E) contained topics of inquiry to provide insight to the research questions, while allowing exploration of issues introduced by the participant. As directed by deMarrais (2004), I liberally used probes to clarify the participants' meaning and to avoid assumptions of terms.

The analysis of in-depth interviews began simultaneously with data generation. During the interview I practiced reflection in practice, remaining responsive to the participant (Roulston, 2010). By recording notes immediately after the interview I documented initial perceptions. A long drive home allowed for listening to the audio tape from the interview and making mental notes. I personally transcribed the first six interviews to evaluate the flow of the interview guide and the quality of the data generated, noting the need for additional probes and interview guide revisions. A professional service provider transcribed the remainder of the interviews. When transcripts became available, I listened carefully to the audio while reviewing the transcript, being reminded of how the participant reacted to my questions, and inserting parenthetical notes regarding big pauses, laughter, and other non-verbal communication to aid the analysis. After ensuring the accuracy of the transcript, I uploaded the document to the research database. Notes recorded in the research journal became an additional source of data.

Research journal. The research journal contained recorded reflections, initial reactions and insights, actions, and issues for further inquiry or action. Notes described what particularly stood out during a data generation activity, and what warranted further exploration. Documenting actions, decisions, problems encountered, and resolutions, the research journal identified hunches and results of exploring those hunches. Using the research journal to record notes and memos after each phase of data generation and analysis, I described my reflections on the activity and thoughts concerning next steps in the process. The research journal became a data source for analysis, and assisted in each

phase of the research including the selection of participants, the topic discussed in the next section.

Participant Selection

The participant selection process began by summarizing community members' involvement in various civic organizations and revitalization projects. Document review and conversations with key informants supplied this data. While focusing on community members most active in revitalization projects and recognizing the need to explore viewpoints of those less active, observations and informal conversations started in the downtown area. After observing at several social gathering locations, attending special events such as an after-hours Chamber event and a retirement party at the bank, participating in events at the historic church and Co-op, and having informal discussions with most downtown merchants, I began scheduling formal interviews in April 2014.

Interviews completed in 2012 and 2013 included four small business owners, three of whom served on the Downtown Development Authority (DDA). Desiring to explore diverse viewpoints through purposeful sampling, invitations to interview concentrated on two additional DDA members, one current downtown (retail) merchant, one former downtown business owner (non-retail), three residents of the city, and two residents of the county area. When I asked participants for recommendations of community members with knowledge of revitalization in Fresh Springs, they often named those already interviewed. Based on participant recommendations and realizing a deficiency of viewpoints from black community members, I invited three additional participants: a business owner formerly city clerk of Fresh Springs; a black business owner previously located just outside the city limits; and a black business owner active in

the county. Table 3.1 below summarizes participants of formal and informal interviews in the study.

Table 3.1

Summary of Demographic and Activity Profile of Formal and Informal Participants

	Formal	Informal
All Participants	16	32
Females	10	17
Males	6	15
Age 18-39	1	3
Age 40-59	7	21
Age 60+	8	8
White	13	28
Black	3	4
Lives in city limits or within one-half mile	10	10
Lives in county	5	17
Lives in nearby county	1	5
Owns business downtown or within one-half mile	6	9
Owns business in county or nearby county	6	--
Previously owned business in city area	2	--
City Council member; affiliated/previously was	3	1
DDA member/previous member	5	0
Participants active in Village Chronicles, plus volunteers	12	7
Participants active in 3+ revitalization COPs	10	3
Participants active in 2 or less revitalization COPs	6	29
Born in county	3	4
30+ Years lived in or affiliated with city	5	4
10 to 29 Years lived in or affiliated with city	6	13
9 or less years lived in or affiliated with city	5	15

Note. COPs refers to communities of practice, which include seven revitalization COPs—City Park Development, Organizing DDA, Farmers' Market, Village Chronicles, Heritage Tourism, Special Events at Historic Church, Jail Renovation; plus Piedmont Chamber of Commerce, Historic Preservation Commission, Historic Society, and Christmas in Piedmont

Table 3.2 summarizes data generated in the study by all methods used and includes the dates during which data was generated with each method. Discerning saturation, defined by Corbin and Strauss (2008) as "the point in the research when all the

concepts are well defined and explained" (p. 145), priority pivoted to data analysis as discussed in the next section.

Table 3.2

Summary of Data Generation Methods

Method of Data Generation (August 2012 – August 2014)	**Number Visits, Interviews**	**Number of Hours**	**Total # Files**
Observations/Field Notes (July 2013 – August 2014)	54 visits	168	35 files; 165 pages (double spaced)
Informal interview participants (July 2013 – August 2014)	32	--	Part of field notes
Formal interview participants (April 2014 – July 2014)	16	20	16 transcripts, 294 pages (single spaced)
Documents—8 main websites; numerous Internet searches; emails; newspaper articles; newsletters; advertisements; brochures (August 2012 – August 2014)	--	~75	124 documents

Data Analysis

Two analytical tools supported this study—thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and situational analysis (Clarke, 2003, 2005). Situational analysis mapping produced visual tools to help focus data generation and complimented the thematic analysis approach to coding and theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The study benefited from use of Atlas.ti7 as the research database to manage the large data set. After deciding which data items to include in the analysis, I uploaded them to the database. Atlas.ti7 allowed creation of data families (referred to as document families in Atlas.ti7) for each type of data generated in the study. Reading through each data item, I

highlighted data extracts and created codes. Atlas.ti7 afforded the flexibility to code the same data extract multiple ways and allowed reports on codes and code families across one or more data types. Although Atlas.ti7 included flexibility in coding, analyzing, and documenting analysis decisions, thematic analysis provided direction for the analysis process.

Thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) described thematic analysis as "a poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method" (p. 77), and presented thematic analysis as a flexible, stand-alone data analysis method. Since many analytic methods require creating and refining themes as part of the analysis process, Braun and Clarke recommended thematic analysis as an appropriate method for new qualitative researchers. Thematic analysis involves an iterative process between inductive and deductive analysis. Inductive analysis occurred as I collected data and reviewed it for meaning, and assigned a code to reflect its meaning. Deductive analysis occurred as I collected additional data and compared it to the already coded data, and against concepts identified in literature. Thematic analysis complimented the use of Atlas.ti7 software and allowed me to code in data "chunks" to retain context.

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step guide, the first phase of thematic analysis involved becoming familiar with the data. This involved activities discussed in the data generation section of this chapter—recording jot notes and expanding them into field notes, listening to audio recordings as I drove home, and reviewing transcripts for accuracy. Familiarity with document data occurred as I scanned for applicable content.

Next, phase two of thematic analysis entailed generating initial codes. Coding requires interacting with data, making comparisons, looking for concepts, thereby

deriving meaning from the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). While reading through each data item and encountering a meaningful chunk of data, I assigned one or more codes as a summary of the data's key point. After creating the first code, Atlas.ti7 allowed selection of one or more previously developed codes, or generation of one or more new codes. After coding one-quarter of the data items, I reviewed the codes created and the quotes connected with those codes, making adjustments as necessary to ensure consistency. This iterative process continued through review and coding of the entire data set. Appendix G includes selected data extracts in the research database and shows coding for each.

In the third phase I developed themes through sorting codes, combining them into themes, and comparing data extracts within and across themes. Similar to Simons' (2009) recommendation of "dancing with the data" (p. 140), Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended visual tools to assist in this phase. Lists of codes and quotes attached to those codes generated through Atlas.ti7 assisted in the creation of situational maps, visual analysis tools discussed in the next section. Situational maps helped identify connections, resulting in combinations of related codes. The Atlas.ti7 system kept track of code combinations.

Phase four involved a review and refinement of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) two-level review, I first combined themes and looked for connections at the coded data extract level, checking for coherent patterns. Atlas.ti7 facilitated the review through reports containing quotes associated with codes in a code family, or a combination of code families. After confirming consistent themes across data extracts, the second level of review entailed evaluating themes for coherence

across the entire data set. This second level review proceeded by examining the entire data set in Atlas.ti7, imposing a review of data not coded in the earlier stages. When themes passed both levels of this review, the analysis moved to the fifth phase.

Phase five involved defining and naming themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) by summarizing and paraphrasing the content of data extracts representing each theme. I checked each theme summary against how well it fit and helped explain the overall story of the research. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) recommendation, I articulated the scope and content of each theme in a few sentences. Reviewing the initial codes and themes, I focused on further refining definitions and theme names "to be concise, punchy, and immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme [was] about" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). Table 3.3 on the next page depicts theme development through the fifth phase of analysis.

Refinement of initial themes from the pilot study transpired through several steps. The theme of "Collective Civic Participation" in the pilot study became "Learning through Revitalization Projects." The pilot study theme of "Leadership Ignited by Business Imagination" evolved to "Leadership Facilitated Learning." And, the final theme of the pilot study, "Shadows of Discontent," advanced to "Unresolved Tensions Created Barriers to Learning for Revitalization." After further refinement, the three themes presented in Chapter Five are: (1) Learning Occurred in Communities of Practice, (2) Leadership Facilitated Learning for Revitalization, and (3) Lapses of Leadership Created Barriers to Learning.

The production of the dissertation constitutes the sixth phase of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A cohesive story of the data illustrates quality and rigor of the

Table 3.3 Refined Codes and Themes

Codes	Question Topic	Themes Named	Definition of Theme/Sub-theme
Group discussion, sharing ideas, trial and error Learning from others' experiences, ideas Learning from experts Examples of other events Solving problems Working and learning together to accomplish goal Individual experiences; entrepreneurial, networking, encouragement Small successes	Learning for Revitalization	Learning Occurred in Communities of Practice (COPs)	Community members learned to revitalize their community by forming groups to solve problems or seize opportunities. COPs were informal and tacit. COPs were often initiated by one or a few entrepreneurial individuals who invited others to join the group with pertinent knowledge and skills. Leadership was shared, but participants often identified one or two individuals as the author(s) of plans guiding others.
Common interest in community Creating teamwork, focus on "we" Newcomers, entrepreneurial risk taking Small successes in community Visionary leadership, leadership capacity development	Facilitating Learning	Leadership Facilitated Learning	Leadership facilitated learning for revitalization through visioning, building teams, taking risks, and building upon common interests in the community. Key differences in revitalization efforts of the last three to five years include improved focus, entrepreneurial leadership and engagement of citizens.
Lack of communication, open dialogue, building trust Lack of inclusiveness Lack of standards, regulations, enforcement Lack of vision, overall plan Leadership inaction, questionable actions Reluctance to take action	Barriers to Learning	Lapses of Leadership Created Barriers to Learning	Leadership inactions or questionable actions are perceived by community members as barriers to learning. Community members can undertake projects without official leaders, but they depend on official leaders to enforce regulations and take other actions to build an inclusive, engaged community with well-communicated goals.

analysis. By providing adequate data extracts to demonstrate context and themes, as well as connections between themes, I present a comprehensive story of Fresh Springs in following chapters. The next section discusses situational analysis maps which generated visuals recommended in phase three of thematic analysis, and ultimately contributed to the final story.

Situational analysis mapping. Informed by Strauss, Clarke (2005) developed a situational analysis method to push grounded theory around the postmodern turn, since the analysis method embraces subjectivity and silences in the data. Clarke (2005) referred to situational analysis as a tool to produce "thick analyses" similar to Geertz's "thick descriptions" (p. xxiii) in ethnographic analysis. Situational analysis has deep roots in pragmatist philosophy and symbolic interactionist sociology (Clarke, 2003; 2005). Clarke presented three types of situational analysis maps: 1) situational maps, 2) social worlds/arenas maps, and 3) positional maps (Clarke, 2005). Containing the most important human and non-human actors in the situation and the relations among those actors, situational maps answer the questions: "Who and what are in this situation? Who and what matters in this situation? What elements 'make a difference' in this situation?" (p. 87). Situational maps can be *messy*, *relational*, or *ordered*.

Clarke's (2005) messy map involves the researcher writing down in no particular order and in varying angles on the paper the answers to the questions listed above. A relational map takes the messy map one step further as the researcher asks how each element relates to other elements on the map, and to whom or what each element "matters" in the situation (Clarke, 2005). The researcher draws circles around terms and draws lines between the circles to denote connections. The ordered map represents a

categorical listing of the terms on the messy or relational map similar to creating codes, categories, and themes, and allows the researcher to see relationships of how the messiness fits together.

After completing the first few interviews in the pilot study I created initial situational maps. As data generation proceeded, revisiting the maps resulted in new terms which seemed important, and deletion of terms deemed less important. Keeping situational maps updated and posted in the work area helped generate and revise themes. Toward the end of data analysis I prepared a messy situational map based on the entire data set, and present it as Figure 3.2 on the next page.

Similar to reading through transcripts, studying the messy map, and reflecting upon revisions or combinations of elements, facilitated development of categories (Clarke, 2005). I created an ordered situational map, shown in Figure 3.3, using Clarke's categories of human actors, nonhuman actors, collective human actors, silent actors, issues, and competing discourses, and then added categories specific to the theoretical framework of the study: downtown gathering places, communities of practice (COPs) as learning organizations, and learning in COPs.

The second type of situational analysis map, the social worlds/arenas map, shows relationships between individuals and civic or social groups (Clarke, 2005). Working to understand how community members worked, socialized, and learned together, I drafted several social worlds/arenas maps throughout the study. The collective human actors and COPs shown on the ordered situational map (Figure 3.3) became key elements of a social worlds/arenas map. The social worlds/arenas map depicted in Figure 3.4 shows three levels of communities of practice: (1) local government, (2) completed or mostly

Figure 3.2 Messy Situational Map—Entire Data Set

Actors – Human – Individuals
Downtown merchants
Area business owners
Rural entrepreneurs, hobbyists
Community members—live in city or nearby
Lawyers

Actors – Human – Collective
Members of Downtown Development Authority (DDA)
Members of City Council
Members of Historic Preservation
Members of Historic Piedmont
The Bugle – local newspaper
Social groups
Active Core—focus on economics
Peripheral Group—infrequently around
Outside Groups—economic advisors

Silent Actors
Absent landowner
Black residents (do whites and blacks share identity of community?)
Youth, younger citizens

Actors – Non-human
Historic structures
Cemetery
Restored historic structures
Dilapidated structures
Downtown buildings used for storage

Downtown Gathering Places
Artists & Farmers Co-op
Jane's Cafe
Good Eats
The historic church for events

COPs as Learning Organizations
City Park Development
Organizing DDA
Farmer's Market
Village Chronicles
Heritage Tourism
Events at Church—Concert Series, Heritage Christmas
Jail Renovation

Learning in COPs
Share knowledge
Learn abilities of different individuals
Work together
Talk through issues, build upon ideas
Networking
Learn by doing
Encouragement, Mentorship
Cooperation, Collaboration

Issues
Leadership
Enforcement
Revitalization of Downtown, City
Love of community
Inconsistencies
New people, new ideas; old-timers receptive
Calming of disagreements since election
Recent loss of businesses
Business owners may move out
It's all volunteers

Competing Discourses
We want Fresh Springs to grow; we want Fresh Springs to stay as it is
We want downtown to be vibrant; we are happy being a bedroom community with a few antiquers
Local "official" leaders won't address the difficult issues; the issues are "unsolvable"

Figure 3.3 Ordered Situational Map—Entire Data Set

completed revitalization projects, and (3) active ongoing revitalization projects. Lines illustrate interconnectedness of active revitalization projects and local government organizations, and the multiple roles of core leaders of active revitalization projects. Although active projects focus on heritage tourism as a non-profit economic development objective for the community, the map shows Farmers' Market and Village Chronicles extending beyond heritage tourism, since those two projects have for-profit objectives for involved businesses.

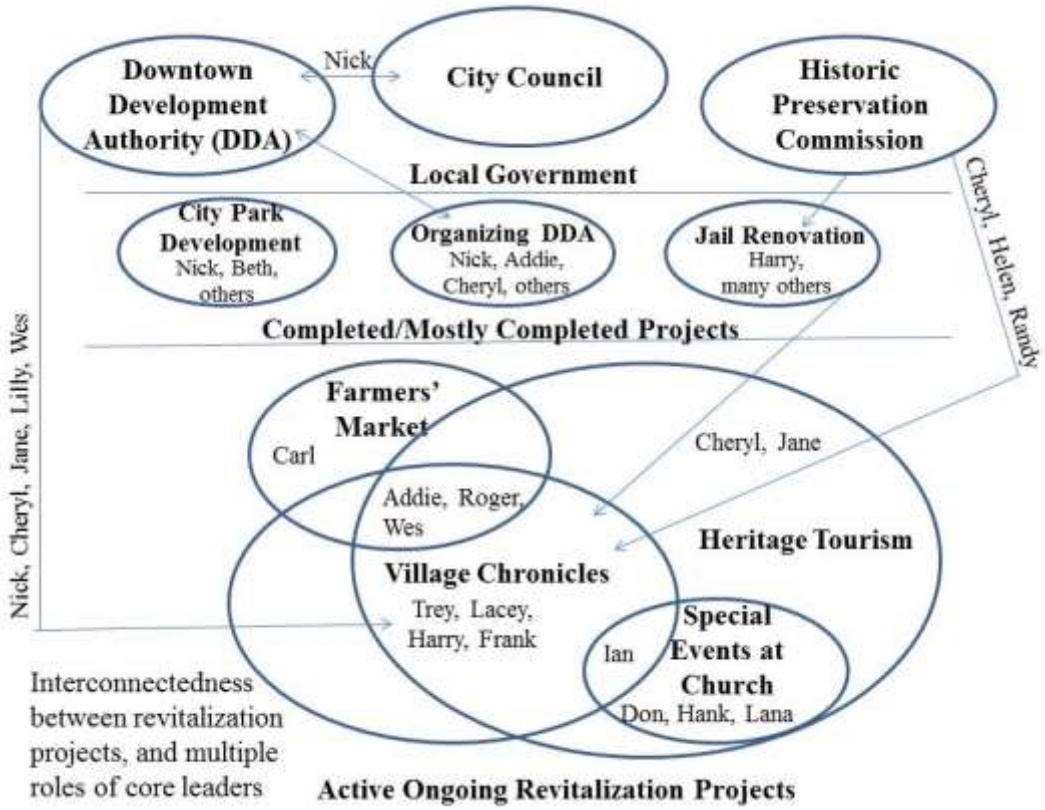

Figure 3.4 Social Worlds/Arenas Map of Fresh Springs

The third type of map, the positional map, provides an illustration of discourse positions on topics of focus, concern, or disagreement (Clarke, 2005). In positional maps

there are no “negative cases” or a contrast between “normal” and “deviant” (Clarke, 2005, p. 126). The positional map is constructed on an X-Y graph. One discourse is plotted on the Y-axis and a different but somewhat related discourse is plotted on the X-axis. The (0,0) point indicates a position of “less so” for both discourses. The top of the X-axis and the far right of the Y-axis represent “more so” for the discourse plotted on the axis. The positional map provides a visual representation of a continuum of positions on two related discourses in the study.

The positional map in Figure 3.5 displays two prominent discourses among participants. On the horizontal, or X-axis, the discourse of “My goal for Fresh Springs is revitalization and growth” appears along the continuum of “less so” at the (0,0) point, and “more so” at the far right point on the X-axis. On the vertical, or Y-axis, the discourse of “Local officials should be more proactive” appears on a continuum of “less so” at the (0,0) point and “more so” at the top point on the Y-axis. For purposes of mapping the two discourses, I searched data extracts for representations of various viewpoints to plot on the map. For ease of reading, the map contains nine relative viewpoints, although there are potentially as many viewpoints as there are citizens in Fresh Springs. For example, in the square closest to the (0,0) point, labeled “Preservation,” the quotations “We don’t want problems with growth” and “It hurts to think of beautiful land divided into 5-acre tracts” represent a viewpoint of less desire for revitalization and growth and less desire for proactive local officials. The intersection of the two discourses at the “less so” point could be construed as a vote for the status quo. In contrast, the quote “I’d like to see more people involved in working to try to beautify the downtown area and bring business in” implies the participant would like revitalization and growth, but expects

proactive community members to make growth happen, not local officials. The map helps identify relatedness between discourses.

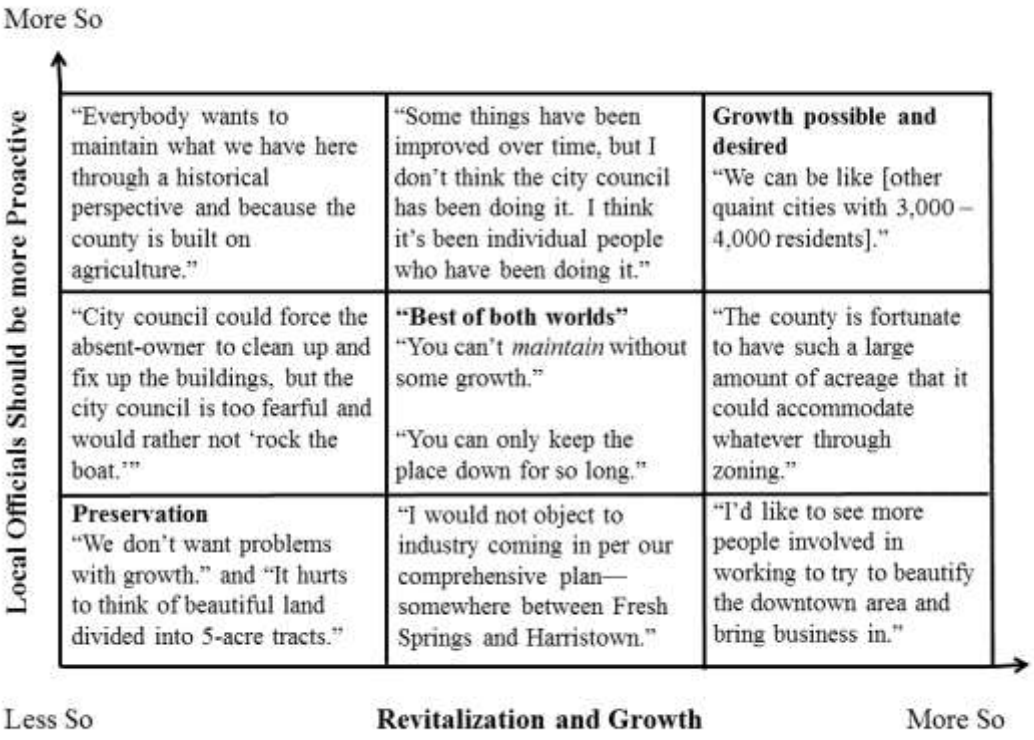

Figure 3.5 Positional Map of Viewpoints Regarding "Revitalization and Growth" Mapped with Viewpoints of "Local Officials Should be More Proactive" Using Entire Data Set

Finding thematic and situational analysis complementary, I used both in an iterative fashion to become familiar with the data and create meaning from it. Throughout the design, data generation, data analysis, and writing process I remained mindful of ensuring a quality study. The next section elaborates on steps followed to ensure quality.

Ensuring Quality in the Study

Throughout this chapter I referred to practices in the research process to ensure quality in the study. Qualitative researchers prefer the term quality to validity (Freeman, deMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007; deMarrais, 2004). Several actions ensured quality, trustworthiness, and credibility: providing an audit trail of research activities and decisions made in the research journal; engaging in the field over a period of time; triangulating data; conducting member check interviews to confirm interpretations with participants; and re-visiting and reflecting on the researcher's subjectivities statement, provided in the first section of this chapter. This section discusses each of these topics in more detail and includes a delimitations statement.

Audit Trail of Research Activities

The research database along with my research journal ensured an audit trail of the study (Yin, 2009). The research prospectus outlined my initial plans, and I documented how the study proceeded in research journal notes. The research database kept track of coding, merging of coding, creation of code categories, and allowed storage of comments at each coding step. Paper back up of significant coding milestones supplied assurance in case the triple electronic backup—cloud, hard drive, and flash drive storage—proved inadequate. Password protected electronic files contained copies of confidential data items.

Engagement in the Field

The section of this chapter describing participant selection, and in particular Table 3.2, summarized field observations, documents reviewed, and participants interviewed in Fresh Springs over the two-year span of this study. My engagement in the field afforded

the necessary prolonged time for persistent observation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to achieve depth of analysis and "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973). Observations conducted at different events, during different times of day, on different days of the week, and in different seasons along with interview and document data, resulted in a large data corpus. Depth of analysis and detailed descriptions help readers see themselves in the situation and decide whether they could apply learnings from the study to their circumstances (Stake, 1995).

Data Triangulation

Triangulating data constitutes a strategy often undertaken to provide internal validity (Simons, 2009). Stake (1995) compared triangulation to celestial navigation, describing how the celestial navigator obtains more precise readings on a position by taking measurements from additional stars. Similarly, as a researcher looks at additional observations or different data items, the researcher makes richer interpretations. Stake (1995) outlined four triangulation protocols incorporated in this study. To ensure *data source triangulation* I recorded data from different observations, from multiple interviews with the same participant, and from a number of participants who could provide different perspectives. *Investigator* and *theory triangulation* are connected. By reviewing interpretations with my major professor, methodologist, and a student peer group, investigator triangulation was achieved, which gave me the opportunity to consider alternative interpretations and supplied a sounding board for my chain of reasoning. At the same time, those mentors and peers had different theoretical perspectives to bring into the discussion, which helped me achieve *theory triangulation*.

Attainment of *methodological triangulation* came about by generating data from multiple methods.

Member Check Interviews

Member check interviews helped to ensure internal validity by engaging with participants for a review of interview data, and in this study consisted of three techniques. First, offering each participant an opportunity to review her/his transcript, six participants chose to review the transcript and two offered comments. Second, member checking occurred by isolating specific narratives expected to appear in the findings chapters and providing the stories to participants easily identified in the narratives. The review afforded participants an opportunity to provide comments, propose corrections, and request further masking of identity in the stories. Third, member checks occurred more often through multiple follow-up informal conversations. Member check interviews, review of specific stories, and informal conversations resulted in more dialogue about interview data and the study in general.

Delimitations

Seeking in-depth understanding about learning for revitalization, this case study concerns a particular case in a particular context. The study's purpose does not include, and is not appropriate for, predicting outcomes for this particular case or other cases that may have similar characteristics. The research was not intended or appropriate for broad-based generalizations (Stake, 1995). The purpose of the study was to provide rich detail of this particular case so readers could make their own interpretations regarding the applicability of the case to similar situations they might be facing in their own communities.

Several decisions led to the findings reported, and different decisions would likely lead to different findings. Focusing on community members most active in revitalization project groups excluded several local government officials. Although several attempts to speak with additional city council members and historic preservation members proved unsuccessful, further follow-up may have resulted in new insights. Stories and interviews regarding local government officials in local newspaper articles, documents detailing conversations and decisions of local officials, and stories from other participants about local officials served as local government participant proxies. More time in the field, a different focus of that time, additional analysis, and a different theoretical framework would create new insights. My decisions focused on including participants with first-hand experiences of revitalization activities and the learning occurring during revitalization activities. When the analysis achieved strong themes and a cohesive story of the research, attention turned to representation of the data which is discussed in this final section of the chapter.

Data Representation

> *"Dewey sees art as the bridge between the experience of individuals and the community. In other words, art forces us to think about how human beings are related to each other in their respective worlds."*
> *(Janesick, 1994, p. 210)*

Remaining mindful of primary and secondary audiences for the case study and responsibilities to study participants who constituted a subset of the primary audience, I carefully organized the story of Fresh Springs. Concerned community members of rural towns throughout the U.S. seeking to revitalize their communities constituted the primary audience. Adult educators and researcher-scholars, economic development professionals, and private consultants seeking to assist rural communities in revitalization efforts

comprised the secondary audience. Creating in-depth descriptions of the town, the people, and community activities allowed me to share understanding of how community members of Fresh Springs learned for revitalization.

Reviewing initial interpretations with participants in the community as the research progressed, the final write up focuses on the relationships and connections of significant themes interpreted from the data. Believing participants' words enrich the story (Stake, 1995) and add to the understanding of the community, I introduce major points in the findings with participant narratives retrieved from interview transcripts and other sources of data. Details from multiple data sources clarify and confirm the quality of each story.

Committed to maintaining participants' confidentiality within this small town context, at times I do not attribute direct quotes to specific participants even by pseudonym. I created a second set of generic pseudonyms (Participant A, Participant B, etc.) to associate direct quotes on sensitive topics. Nearing the end of the analysis, I re-addressed the issue of confidentiality with participants to ensure their expectations of confidentiality were being met. After providing specific stories taken from data sources and asking participants to identify any part they did not want associated to their pseudonym, one participant requested a revision of a few terms she had used in the interview and the terms were changed.

As Stake (1995) pointed out, participants may display little interest in checking the researcher's interpretations. I attempted to minimize the work of my participants while taking deliberate actions to ensure my interpretations matched what participants intended to communicate. As an additional step to review interpretations and identify

topics sensitive to participants, I created a summary of findings in a business report format and shared the summary with participants easily identified through their own stories and stories told by other participants. Most reviewers gave me a summary comment of "it looks fine" and one discussed the summary with me. The participant voiced concern about the "negatives" in the story, and acknowledged a need for more dialogue concerning what "my fresh eyes" saw. The participant did not request any specific changes, but the conversation heightened my awareness of representation as I reviewed the findings chapters. Although the study was coming to an end, my participation in revitalization efforts continued, along with prospects for more conversations.

Chapter Summary

This chapter summarized the rationale of a case study to understand how rural community members learn for revitalization. All design issues focused on the research questions: (1) How did rural community members learn about revitalization? (2) What facilitated learning for revitalization? (3) What created barriers to learning for revitalization? The chapter detailed the study design with case study methodology and ethnographic methods. Discussions covered data generation, participant selection, and data analysis. The chapter detailed the processes undertaken to ensure a rigorous and quality study, and one which responsibly represented the participants. The next chapter presents the case study context for the community of Fresh Springs.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT OF FRESH SPRINGS[1]

> *I love to quote this which I heard from a neighbor: The thing about Fresh Springs is it's real. It's not built to look old like in a storybook or at Disney World. It's the real thing and that's what makes it so unique. (Helen, personal communication, June 23, 2014)*

Field Notes—Saturday, October 26, 2013

The alarm rang promptly at 6 a.m. Jumping out of bed and quickly dressing, I drove to Fresh Springs for the living history event, Village Chronicles. For three shows on Saturday and two on Sunday, nine characters from eighteenth and nineteenth century Piedmont County would reveal their stories. While assuming a participant observer role, the research design did not include my acting debut. After agreeing to understudy for one show followed by resignation of the main actor, I assumed the part of Ginny, a native buried near the historic church benefitting from a portion of ticket sales. Led by Roger, executive producer of the Village Chronicles and owner of Divine Gardens, a botanical-garden designed nursery, the executive committee carefully planned, organized, and managed every detail, including the encouragement and mentoring of actors.

Arriving before 9 a.m. at Roger's home serving as our staging area, the costume director, Kay, and her assistant, Jane, conveyed warm greetings, furnished my costume,

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[1] Throughout this chapter and the two chapters that follow I use pseudonyms extensively in order to protect the confidentiality of individuals, companies, and other organizations who participated in the research. This includes proper nouns connected with the city, the county in which it is located, individuals, business names, organization names, and the name of any event or project that could be traced back to the city. At times I do not identify individual participants who provided certain statements even with a pseudonym, because within a small community the individual participant's identity is likely knowable with only minor hints.

and pointed to a dressing room. Carefully stepping into Ginny's gardening dress with heavy petticoat, adding a white apron, and donning a flower-adorned wide-brimmed hat, I consulted with Kay and Jane, who made a few adjustments then declared me ready. Following front parlor relaxation time visiting with other actors, Christine, a fellow newcomer to acting, suggested we walk to the nursery to confirm prop positioning before the first show scheduled at 10:30 a.m. Volunteers directed traffic, a solo violinist performed classical music, and nearly 100 people mingled in the gardens. Reaching Christine's area and exchanging best wishes, I continued walking toward the gift shop passing impeccably pruned plants and flowering shrubs. Arriving at a picture-postcard performance area (Figure 4.1) with perfectly placed sun-blocking trees, a small green bench, side table, and antique silver pitcher filled with hot tea, my smile broadened. Hearing the "get ready" chime, I inhaled deeply, placed my phone out of sight with the ringer off, and whispered, "Make Ginny proud!"

Figure 4.1 Ginny's Garden, the Village Chronicles

Introduction

Beginning this chapter with descriptions of the Village Chronicles illustrated my participation with the community and encapsulated the importance of history to the community. Wolcott (2008) suggested the term "experiencing" for participant observation, and argued personal experience enriched fieldwork. Over a two-year period I experienced Fresh Springs through many activities. While observing community events, reading community artifacts, and conversing with or formally interviewing community members, my explorations focused on three research questions: (1) How did rural community members learn about revitalization? (2) What facilitated learning for revitalization? (3) What created barriers to learning for revitalization? This chapter describes the Fresh Springs community context beginning with the town's historical background covering early revitalization efforts and the recent re-birth of revitalization. The second section discusses community structure and current demographics, and the final section explores downtown Fresh Springs. Recently celebrating its bicentennial (New Georgia Encyclopedia, electronic document, 2003)[2], history dominates Fresh Springs' culture.

Historical Background

Fresh Springs' history commenced before the Revolutionary War, when Creek and Cherokee Native-American tribes met and traded in the area. After the war North Carolina and Virginia settlers arrived (The GAGenWeb project, electronic document, 2006)[3]. Descending from those early families, Wes, a Fresh Springs business owner, recounted his family roots during an informal conversation: "My family has lived in the

[2] This citation is treated as a non-recoverable reference and does not appear in the reference list. Providing the full reference would result in divulging the case.
[3] This citation is treated as a non-recoverable reference similar to Footnote 2.

area since the 1830s. My forefathers were part of the people who fought in the Revolutionary War and given headright[4] land. I've lived here my entire life." Many Fresh Springs and Piedmont County families trace multigenerational lineage. Elders bequeathed stories of Fresh Springs' glory days. This section discusses three eras of Fresh Springs' history: (1) early history through the 1960s, (2) 1970s to 2008, identified by participants as origins of revitalization, and (3) 2009 to present representing the re-birth of revitalization. The discussion begins with the nineteenth century era often identified with Fresh Springs.

Early History: 1800s to 1960s

Soon after officials carved Piedmont County from a neighboring county in the late eighteenth century, Fresh Springs became the county seat and an incorporated city. The city grew to 220 persons by 1810, with slaves comprising half the population (The GAGenWeb project, electronic document, 2006). As a famous trade center with educated and refined citizens, the town included large landowners, merchants, tradespeople, lawyers, doctors, politicians, and educators (New Georgia Encyclopedia, electronic document, 2003). When the Louisiana Purchase and the War of 1812 cleared the way for expansion to lands further west (Westward expansion, 2014), Fresh Springs' and Piedmont County's population and economy declined. Supplying munitions to the Confederacy provided interim economic relief, followed by further decline as the city confronted post-Civil War economic and cultural changes (The GAGenWeb project, electronic document, 2006).

[4] In U.S. history states granted headright land to encourage settlement and sometimes to provide buffers between settled land and Native American Indian territory. Settlers were offered land, usually 50 acres per person. Different states implemented headright (or head-right) in different ways in different states. Some states discontinued headright due to corruption and fraud (Hilliard, 1982).

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Fresh Springs experienced economic growth induced by several events (The GAGenWeb project, electronic document, 2006). In the early 1870s the county newspaper, *The Bugle*, established its Fresh Springs headquarters. Aiming to quash discussions of moving the county seat to nearby Harristown, several businessmen built a new jail in Fresh Springs. Additional late 1880s infrastructure improvements, including the present courthouse and a railroad spur between Fresh Springs and Harristown, ensured Fresh Springs remained the county seat. During the economic boom extending to the Great Depression of the 1930s, brick buildings replaced wood structures, residential construction increased, and local business prospered.

By 1900 Fresh Springs' population topped 600 persons (Cities, Towns, Villages, and Boroughs, 1900), then fell below 550 by 1910 (Supplement for Georgia, 1910). The Great Migration of over six million Black southerners seeking higher wages and relief from Jim Crow laws (Mathieu, 2009) constituted one possible factor for the population decline, yet did not explain neighboring Harristown's population growth of over 300 people during the same census period (Supplement for Georgia, 1910). Between 1920 and 1930 census measurements, Piedmont County population fell from around 20,000 residents to less than 13,000 (Forstall, 1995). For several decades beginning in 1920, the census did not report population for cities with less than 2,500 residents. County residents passed on stories of bank foreclosures as farmers reeled from double assaults of the Great Depression and the boll weevil.

Despite well-documented rural declines, several natives of the area described Fresh Springs from the 1950s to the early 1970s as a bustling town with thriving shops,

including several gas stations, a hardware store, a grocer, restaurants, and a bank. They recalled people of different ages and races walking, visiting, and shopping downtown, consistent with Castle's (1993) description of general rural U.S. economic health during the time period. By the 1970s more change arrived including "big box" stores and historic preservation-minded newcomers.

Revitalization Pioneer Era: 1970s to 2008

Two participants connected a mid-1970s economic downturn with "the Walmarts" moving in. Reminiscing the good times before large retailers, Wes recounted: "I remember the town when every building had thriving businesses; there were several gas stations; there was a bank across from the courthouse in the three-story building. That was before the Walmarts moved in." Nick, a downtown business owner, local government official, and a resident for more than 30 years, provided a similar description referring to small towns in general. He explained, "Downtowns had a little bit of life before the Walmarts sucked the life out of small towns." Explaining the change more generically, Addie, a downtown business owner and county native, remembered a 1970s fashion trend to shop in "the big city" rather than local stores.

Rural towns near metro areas often grew as bedroom communities (Lambe et al., 2008; Morgan & Lambe, 2009). Several participants asserted Fresh Springs' location within a 30-minute drive to Robinsville's national retail chains contributed to the decline of its business district. Nick offered his viewpoint:

> After the little grocery store and the hardware store closed, Fresh Springs became a bedroom community town. Those people who lived here generally worked in Robinsville or someplace else….Most of the tax

> dollars were being spent up there which made it very difficult for small businesses to sustain here.

Susan, a county business owner, indicated lack of access part of the problem, explaining: "Robinsville gets a lot of our business because our businesses don't stay open long enough. We don't have anything, not even a gas station that stays open 24/7. I never buy gas in Piedmont [County]."

Mid-1970s downtown Fresh Springs consisted of a few antique stores keeping irregular hours, a small grocer, a hardware store, and a weekend barbeque restaurant. Because of its location on a major road, visitors driving through the area occasionally stopped and explored the city. Cheryl, her boyfriend, and another couple visited the town while driving through the countryside in January 1976. Cheryl explained how she came to live in the city:

> One snowy, yucky weekend….we drove here and I noticed this deserted antebellum, Greek revival house sitting on top of a hill. We drove around the courthouse and up the next street. There sat this picture-postcard beautiful house with the snow and the red berries, a gorgeous home that had been lived in constantly and taken care of since 1795, and next door sits this derelict property. The shutters were hanging and it hadn't been painted in probably 20 years. We wrote down the number from the "For Sale" sign and went back to our friends' house. Terry called and I could hear him saying things like 5,000 square feet, 8 fireplaces, fenced and cross-fenced, 12 acres…and I was thinking "Oh my, it probably has a sales price of $100,000 or $150,000 or $250,000?" Discovering the

> asking price was only $54,900, we met the realtor at the house. I'm an interior designer, so I could see this finished house in my brain. The house had been closed up for eight years with plastic funeral arrangements, bags of clothes and junk, boarded up rooms and doors, and falling plaster. We decided to make an offer which was accepted, and six months later on the 4th of July in 1976 had a bi-centennial wedding. Our invitations included a line drawing of the house created by a friend and instructed guests to "Come and bring a covered dish, dress old-fashioned, and spend the day in the country to celebrate our wedding."

After a decade of renovations, the home became a weekend get-away until the mid-1990s when Cheryl's family sold their Atlanta home and established Fresh Springs' residence.

Nick purchased a Fresh Springs deteriorating home about the same time. Born in a nearby rural county, Nick shared Cheryl's interest in old homes and a willingness to invest sweat equity. Nick shared his story:

> After my college roommates all got married, I moved out here where my brother lived and rented a house at the end of First Street. My brother and I were going to the football game one day and I'd passed this house many times. I always liked the Dutch colonial homes. I noticed there was no roof on it, and a man was standing out in the front yard. We stopped and it was Toby, a guy whose family had lived in Fresh Springs for many generations and the house was his family home place. Lightening had struck the house and the family decided to sell it. I made a bid, the family accepted it, and within thirty days I had a roof on it and have been

> working on it ever since. On old houses you never finish, you just keep working on them. I bought in the late 1970s, so I've been here thirty-six years, something like that. About 14 years later Christine and I got married and I convinced her this was a pretty special place to live and much safer than where she was living in Robinsville.

Working a corporate job for most of his life, Nick recently retired and became active in the community, including county and regional economic development.

Moving to Fresh Springs nearly a decade after Cheryl and Nick, Roger's motivation focused on his business, with the historic home on the property a peripheral benefit. Born in Atlanta, Roger attended college in Robinsville. Discovering a shared gardening interest, Roger and his late partner founded Divine Gardens in the late 1970s. Roger detailed the growth and relocation of the business to Fresh Springs:

> My late partner and I started our business in Robinsville in 1977, and as it grew we began looking for property. In the summer of 1979 we found property in Harristown, three miles down the road from here. We purchased the property and started building our nursery. Both of us had full-time jobs at that time in Robinsville. We would work our full-time jobs, and then work in the evenings and on weekends building the nursery. Before long our business had grown to the point we left our full-time jobs and committed full-time to the business. By early 1980s we grew out of the Harristown location and started looking for a larger piece of property where we could further expand. By the middle of 1984 we found this 30-acre piece of land with an old home abandoned for 30 years. With water,

> beautiful land, and being affordable, it was a simple decision to make. After we reached a certain point of building the nursery, we renovated the house and made it a livable, viable addition to the town.

Stories from Cheryl, Nick, and Roger provide examples of newcomers moving into the area with preservation and revitalization interests. As local business owners retired, sold their businesses, or passed away, town activities decreased. Addie recalled other changes occurring as new people moved to the area: "Abby and Zack Middleton got very involved in the fall festivals, and building a Chamber. So, where you had local generations going out, you had people moving in starting up these efforts."

Participants living in the area 20 or more years frequently referred to old-timers and newcomers, and discussed how they came to understand those terms within the context of Piedmont County. The terms "old-timers" or "insiders" refer to those born in the county. As a newcomer moving to Piedmont County in the 1970s, Harry explained from his perspective:

> My wife still tells the story of when we'd been in the Historic Society twelve or fifteen years and one of our old-timers said, "Well, all of these newcomers…" Well, we had been here fifteen years; we weren't that new of a newcomer. But I see where he was coming from. He'd been here his whole life.

Moving to the area in the 1980s and owning a business downtown for over 20 years, Kay used the term "outsiders" as a synonym for "newcomers." She said, "When we came in, we were outsiders and there weren't that many outsiders at that time." Owning a

business just outside Fresh Springs' city limits, Lana suggested newcomers could become trusted members of the community, but they remained newcomers:

> Doug and I have been here for twenty years and we're still newcomers, but that's Piedmont County generally. We have integrated ourselves into the community enough so that we're trusted and we're not questioned on everything we say and do as long as we don't step outside. We have an understanding of boundary and parameters and respect for the older ones.

In the 1970s history-minded newcomers partnered with old-timers to preserve the town's historic assets. Harry explained the group's double-duty work:

> Back in 1976 there were community leaders interested in historic preservation, several of whom are alive and active today, who realized Fresh Springs should be placed on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district. At the same time these people were meeting in the living rooms of people figuring out how to do this they realized "Well, we really ought to have a historic society for the county, too" and so basically the same group of people were doing two things at the same time.

A requirement for historic place registration included establishing an historic preservation commission (HPC) reporting to city council. Several participants identified Laura, another 1970s newcomer, as an early "county historian," part of the group completing the historic district registration, and active in zoning. Saluting the early pioneers of historic preservation, Nick credited Fresh Springs' ability to "sell" history through carriage rides, history tours, and living history events to the proactiveness of Laura and her colleagues:

> It's a small town a lot like other small towns, but what does it have that other small towns don't have? It is a true nineteenth century village still intact. There is no Dollar General downtown, there is no Walmart, no McDonald's, there are no new homes sitting over here, mine is the new kid on the street built in 1920. The horse and buggy carriage going down the street has something to sell. Now, why is that possible? Because Laura Smith and a group of people in the 1970s started the Historic Preservation Commission. The efforts of Historic Preservation to maintain this, at least freeze it in time so to speak, is really the catalyst that gives us something to sell.

Participants living or working in Fresh Springs for 30 or more years recalled ongoing revitalization efforts. Roger explained, "I don't think there was ever a time when somebody wasn't trying to do something to make the town, the county, or either one of the towns in the county a better place. There has always been that effort." The historic society newsletters confirmed the presence of revitalization efforts throughout the last three decades, mentioning committees and projects such as an annual end-of-year holiday fund-raising event. The historic society website displays a timeline reporting 400 people attended a parade with speakers, music, and other events in 1983. The timeline lacks documentation of consistent projects building upon earlier successes. Harry clarified projects sometimes "floundered" when leadership of various projects and events changed:

> We have a Christmas event and…in terms of public-oriented events, one or two a year. I know other small town festivals have ebbed and flowed

> over the years, too. I think timing of it depends on the person in charge and if that key person retires then it flounders for a few years.

As the twentieth century came to an end, few stores remained in Fresh Springs and several participants characterized the town as "dead." The dawning of the twenty-first century brought terror to U.S. soil, the beginning of a prolonged war in the middle-east, a far-reaching recession, and for Roger, focus on economic survival rather than revitalization. Roger described a long, painful recovery:

> The growth of this business had been robust until September 11, 2001. After that date people seemed to quit spending as much, and stayed closer to home. Our local economy suffered and we have never really recovered. My focus was to keep this business afloat.

The U. S. Census Bureau (United States Department of Commerce, 2013a) confirmed robust growth in Piedmont County and a slight population decline in Fresh Springs from 2000 to 2010. Fresh Springs' city brochure reflected a positive viewpoint: "[Fresh Springs] has evolved into a quiet, dignified, and elegant old town. Its lack of growth in later years has allowed it to remain relatively true to its 18th-19th century origins." Kay reinforced the brochure's sentiment:

> One thing about Fresh Springs is that nobody has ever gone to the trouble to do a whole lot of changing of it, or never has accomplished a whole lot of physical change; and that's part of its charm, I think…the buildings are still more or less…original and old and haven't been bulldozed and new stuff put up.

While some participants want Fresh Springs to remain a nineteenth century village with little change, others envision the city growing similar to other historic towns with a few thousand residents. This topic will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Several events occurring in the 2005 to 2009 time frame spurred a re-birth of revitalization. Frank, a county resident for the past ten years and active in economic development, explained how the failure of the county school system's septic system provided an opportunity for infrastructure upgrades in the county:

> The school system was in a situation where its septic system could fail any day and so they had to have the sewer system. The superintendent of the school system recognized that he needed to get out of the sewer business and let the sewer system take care of it.

However, the failing Harristown sewer system required replacement. Expanding the Harristown sewer system to serve the county schools furnished additional customers required to service the debt for the new system, and brought the sewer lines close to Fresh Springs. Frank related the Harristown sewer failure as good fortune for Fresh Springs:

> Luckily, Harristown had to replace their sewer system and they had to have new customers to pay for it. Extending the sewer all the way to Fresh Springs was a way to solve the problem for Harristown but it also solved a major problem for Fresh Springs. They would have never been able to put a sewer downtown Fresh Springs the way it was set up.

New infrastructure and a continued influx of newcomers created a new focus on revitalization.

Rebirth of Revitalization: 2009 to Present

Similar to stories from Cheryl, Nick, and Roger, as housing turnovers occurred historic-minded newcomers continued to find deserted, dilapidated houses rich in character. After renovating their homes, these newcomers engaged with other community members to improve the overall community and in particular the downtown business district. Beth, a self-proclaimed Yankee newcomer, detailed her family's move to Fresh Springs in 2009:

> I came to live in Fresh Springs by way of Ohio. Our love story is about a Yankee and a Southern Boy. My husband's family lives in a nearby county. After selling our house in Robinsville, and living in one of my in-laws' rental properties in the next county for 18 months, I spotted this house that had been empty for twelve years and was in terrible shape. I walked in and saw plaster falling, birds and animals living in here, and I loved it. I called my husband around his lunch break time, and said, "Take your lunch now, you need to come to Fresh Springs. I found this house." My husband and his brother pulled up and just the expressions on their face—they did not have to say anything. I said, "All I want you to do is see if this is structurally sound, make sure there are no termites. I want to make an offer." And he was like, "You're kidding?" And I was like, "No, I think we could do it. It has so much potential." This November will be five years. We bought the house in May, closed around Memorial Day weekend, and started with renovations on June l. We both took some time off and worked on this house every day until the day before

> Thanksgiving when we moved in. It was my year to host Thanksgiving for my family coming from Ohio. They got here on a Wednesday. Wednesday night they put in the countertops, the sink, hooked up the stove, we put the turkey in, my sisters and I stayed up all night and we had Thanksgiving the next day.

In addition to a career with significant travel and various elementary-school-aged-children activities, Beth volunteers on several project committees as well as the Downtown Development Authority (DDA). Beth and other believers in "Main Street" influenced recent revitalization in Fresh Springs.

Despite population declines documented by the U.S. Census, most participants agreed more intense and consistent revitalization activities occurred during the last three to five years. Facebook pages and local county newspaper articles documented six new business starts in the downtown area since 2010. A business formerly located on the outskirts of the city moved downtown, and Cheryl and Nick established regular weekend hours after Cheryl's travel commitments changed and Nick retired. Kay described the changes observed in Fresh Springs over the past 28 years and how revitalization efforts of earlier years compare to recent years:

> I've seen change come and go throughout all of those twenty-eight years. The town would go through peaks and valleys. Sometimes, for a couple of years there would be a lot going on, then it would die, then it would come back and new people would come in and for whatever reason, they'd move on. And so it's come and gone but right now it seems like there is a goal to keep it motivated and improved.

A blogger living in a nearby county confirmed this "revival" in Fresh Springs. Her blog posting outlined observations while driving through the area:

> The downtown district of Fresh Springs…has been slowly but surely experiencing a revival. With a growing number of residents, local businesses, a farmers' market, and monthly special events, Fresh Springs is a fun place to spend the day and get away from the hustle and bustle of town for a bit.

Harry, a county resident with frequent business dealings in Fresh Springs, provided additional confirmation of revitalization in the downtown area:

> I've seen in the last four or five years the most concerted and most productive attempt to revitalize downtown Fresh Springs. Most of the shops that can be are occupied and there is a new vitality in Fresh Springs and an energy that I've not really noticed before.

However, other participants shared the viewpoint that little has changed in Fresh Springs. Brad noted, "A lot of the business district is vacant and it just always has been." Speaking with a woman at a downtown event about changes she had seen since moving to the area seven years ago, she claimed "There have been very few changes and many changes are needed. We may need to wait until some people die before changes will occur." Probing for meaning of "some people," she clarified referring to Reed Jones, the absent landlord, discussed later in the chapter. This woman had volunteered during for the 2013 Village Chronicles and from those interactions she appeared to share an interest in revitalizing the community and exhibited a positive attitude. I understood her comments as acknowledging revitalization efforts and also recognizing more changes in

the downtown area were needed. The discussion now moves to the community structure of Fresh Springs including the larger county context surrounding the city.

Community Structure

Block (2009) described community structure as the social fabric of a town. This section consists of four sections describing major institutions within the community that affect, or could affect revitalization. As a small town, the county and regional context influences the city in several areas. The major institutional categories discussed include: (1) local government, (2) non-profit institutions, (3) population and workforce demographics; and (4) an overview of the private sector in the Fresh Springs area. County government constitutes a major employer and largest commercial landowner in Fresh Springs, whereas city government consists of volunteer positions and little infrastructure.

Local Government

A discussion of local government in Fresh Springs encompasses offices and services of city, county, and regional government, including public schools, public health, social services, and public safety. Although large in area, Piedmont County suffers from lack of infrastructure. With one traffic light and one independent (not a chain) grocery store, citizens of the county and its four small cities rely on regional assets for services.

Using a city council form of government, Fresh Springs' volunteer mayor and five council members oversee day-to-day operations of the city. The first election in 20 years last fall for mayor and two council seats elicited several local newspaper articles, including the report that incumbents "handily" retained their positions. All members of the current council are men. The female city attorney recently announced her

resignation. A woman performs as part-time city clerk constituting the only city employee. A man serves as manager of city water and fire services, a subcontractor position shared with Harristown. Lana, a county business owner and resident and former city clerk in Fresh Springs, described responsibilities of city council during her tenure:

> When I was city clerk we were more concerned with the day-to-day running of a volunteer city council: the question of which roads get paved this year, historic preservation concerns, some signage issues, keeping the water on for people and decisions about when you cut somebody off, how long you let them ride because they needed it; the day-to-day operations to keep our city financially in good shape, which it is.

Cheryl complimented past and current councils declaring, "They have always been supportive of historic preservation, which is a part of economic development in a city like this because that is what we have. All that we have is our history and to build on that." Helen credited the current mayor and his wife, Derek and Laura Smith, as early pioneers of historic preservation in Fresh Springs, noting "Our mayor, he's certainly behind historic preservation. He and his wife fixed up a beautiful house that was falling in, so he is certainly behind all of it." Although several participants lauded members of city council for historic preservation efforts, few complimented their revitalization efforts. Except for Nick who owns a business downtown, I only saw members of city council in the downtown area on one occasion of the more than 50 visits I made to Fresh Springs.

Several community members including city council members organized the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) four years ago. The DDA, reporting to city council, consists of a president and six other members. Serving as president, Nick also

sits on city council. The other six members reside, operate a business, or own property within the city limits. Nick summarized the duties of the DDA and explained how lack of funds limited DDA's impact:

> Basically, a Downtown Development Authority is really just a real estate company. Most cities that have the money, that's what it is. They buy property, revitalize it, and put it back into use. They get tenants to move in so they can increase taxes, and collect sales tax dollars. That's really all a Downtown Development Authority is supposed to do, but when you've got such a small town and DDA that really doesn't have the money to do that, we become the cheerleaders for the downtown.

Reporting to Fresh Springs' City Council, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) develops and recommends enforcements of historic preservation regulations. Five residents of Fresh Springs serve on the HPC, including several with tourism, historic preservation, and zoning expertise. HPC's responsibilities include reviewing applications for building renovations or enhancements to ensure adherence to historic preservation guidelines, and developing informational brochures to guide residents' plans and applications. Participants clarified HPC does not regulate color of paint, only structural issues such as types of windows and doors.

As the county seat for Piedmont, a substantial presence of county government exists in Fresh Springs. Although on hand to celebrate the opening of new businesses, county government officials do not participate directly in community revitalization projects. The chairman's office led the branding efforts announced in summer 2013, by engaging a consulting firm to conduct research and develop recommendations for

branding messages, logos, and tag lines. As of October 2014 the county had not released any branding guidelines. Discussions with participants and review of documents provided little evidence of economic development project coordination between city, county, and regional planning groups. Rather than coordinating efforts for revitalization, Addie suggested several county government actions contributed to downtown Fresh Springs' economic decline:

> Another thing that's cutting the [downtown traffic] is when they moved the health department and the children/family services, because a lot of people used to come down here. The moving and spreading out makes a difference. There was a time when they used Reed's buildings over there for county offices, but they leaked so badly, and instead of staying there and forcing him to fix them to acceptable levels, they moved those offices out. So, we've got all these services that have sort of split out.

Although residents access two-thirds of county government departments in Fresh Springs, many county government workers live elsewhere. One county employee explained, "There aren't many places to live in Fresh Springs." The remaining one-third of county departments located in Harristown include emergency medical services, public works and recycling, the recreation department, the senior citizens center, and the sheriff's office. The sheriff's department in Harristown serves the entire county. All four public schools are situated in the unincorporated area between Fresh Springs and Harristown.

Most participants expressed pride and satisfaction with the public school system. However, a June 2013 article in the county newspaper reported declining enrollments.

Referring to “a steady decline in the number of students in the system over the last five years” the school system contemplated accepting students from outside the county in order to maintain state funding. The local newspaper during the summer of 2014 reported substantial teacher turnover (40%) in the county schools due to retirements and movements to other systems. Two early childhood learning/day care centers represented the only private schools in Piedmont County. Parents desiring to enroll children in private schools traveled 15 to 30 miles for a dozen or more choices.

Health care in Fresh Springs includes the county health department and a for-profit medical clinic. Located within the city limits but outside the downtown area, both facilities were staffed by nurses or nurse practitioners. A medical doctor’s office in Harristown serves the county, and the closest hospital requires a 30-minute drive to a nearby county. The county health department frequently advertises in the county newspaper and on billboards, with content about “free or low cost” birth control services and an emphasis that anyone can access its services. Speaking with a nurse at the health department, she confirmed the facility did not refuse services to anyone. Living outside Fresh Springs as did others in the office, the nurse expressed limited knowledge of revitalization efforts: “I saw the announcement for the Village Chronicles event but was not able to attend and don’t really know much about it except for what I saw in the newspaper.”

A few social service government organizations serve the entire county. The senior center located between Fresh Springs and Harristown provides meals to seniors both at the center and through home delivery, schedules various group recreation activities, and transports seniors to medical appointments. A regional office of the

Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS), a state agency, located near the County Health Department, serves families in several surrounding counties. The Piedmont County Extension Office located in Harristown and affiliated with a nearby university, provides various lifelong learning opportunities such as workshops for gardening and livestock care, health and wellness, parenting, and personal finance classes. Providing services such as soil and water testing, and leading 4-H clubs with youth from 5th grade through high school, representatives from the Extension Office participated at special events such as Heritage Day at the Co-op and Saturday Farmers' Market.

As part of a regional planning commission (RPC), Piedmont County and Fresh Springs receive assistance from the RPC for planning services, workforce development, and services for the aging (Wills, 2009). Representing Fresh Springs on the regional planning commission, Nick networks with representatives from other counties regarding small town economic stimulation. Little evidence surfaced regarding coordination or collaboration of activities across regional planning counties.

The city and county appear resistant to raising taxes. Summarizing services and taxation in the county, Participant A, a long-time resident of Piedmont said, "Taxes are sort of low, but perceived as high since we have nearly no services. I know it sounds crazy, but I wouldn't mind higher taxes, we don't pay a lot." Referring to Fresh Springs city taxes, Participant F stated, "Business licenses and garbage fees could go up; there is so much more we could do to bring in money."

Non-profit Institutions

Non-profits in Fresh Springs include religious organizations, certain health care and social service institutions, and a number of civic organizations. Although three churches own property in Fresh Springs, only one conducts regular services. With four members of the congregation remaining, the historic church in Fresh Springs receives funds from various fundraising events for its continued revitalization and maintenance. Members of the community discussed placing the church under the umbrella of a nonprofit historic preservation organization so the church could be maintained and provide an event location for concert venues and weddings. The four members of the congregation remain in control of the church.

The dwindling congregation of the Methodist church no longer meets in Fresh Springs and rents their facility to the Baptist church. Although the Baptist church was the largest church in the community, Participant K suggested few ties existed between the Baptist church and the community and indicated inactivity of the church and its members provided a blessing regarding a business application for serving beer and wine by the drink. Participant K explained:

> The Baptist church is a very active church, but there are very few members that actually live in Fresh Springs which may answer why nobody showed up at the city council hearing to speak against the beer and wine application. Normally, when it's a small town, a small community, and you start talking about somebody sitting on the street and underneath a tent, being able to have a beer, that's hell fire and damnation to the

> Baptists, but I don't know if there were that many of them in there that cared about it.

In an informal conversation, Participant E told me she stopped attending the Baptist church when the preacher at that time told her friend, a gay man, that he "should find a church where there are people of your kind." She told me "I found the preacher's words and actions not very Christian-like and I never attended church there again." Participant E's words reflect the acceptance of gay and lesbian community members observed at various community events, discussed further in the current demographics section.

With another 40 churches in the area, mostly located in unincorporated areas of the county, a woman sending letters to all area churches seeking donations for needy families shared another story of disappointment: "I did not hear from even one of them." Representatives from several churches in the county write regular columns in the county newspaper. The columns consist of stories of parishioners in the hospital, home from the hospital, visits between members of the church, or special events such as weddings. One columnist writes about community issues such as bullying at the high school, and promotes community theater and other community events. It appears these congregations have their own identities which may be stronger than any city or county identity.

The community theater group located in nearby Harristown, an official nonprofit corporation in the state, maintains a website and produces several shows each year. Beginning as a nonprofit in 1995, the organization's website indicates it relies on volunteers for all activities of the group. The group's musicals, plays, and other arts-related events offers cultural entertainment while raising funds for renovating the historical Harristown School.

Whether employed, unemployed, owning a business, with or without parenting (or grandparenting) responsibilities, or managing busy retirements, many city and county residents volunteer on various community committees and projects. Reviewing city and county websites, Facebook pages, and other Internet websites identified several active groups in the community and county. Organizations included civic organizations such as Historic Piedmont County, Piedmont County Chamber of Commerce, and Rotary Club.

Historic Piedmont County promotes the heritage of Piedmont County. The organization publishes books and brochures, maintains pictures and other documents concerning historical aspects of the county, and leads historic preservation projects such as the old county jail renovations in Fresh Springs. The historic society focuses on history and communicating that history as described in its mission: "The mission is to maintain, enhance, and interpret for the educational benefit and cultural enrichment of the American people the distinctive and unique part of the heritage of Georgia that is [Piedmont] County." The historic society activities contribute to heritage tourism, with primary focus on preservation, not economic revitalization.

With an economic development focus, the Piedmont Chamber of Commerce helps promote business within the entire county. Employed as president of the Chamber, the only paid position in the organization, Frank works with city and county governments and serves on the Village Chronicles executive committee. Serving as the volunteer tourism representative of the Chamber for a number of years, Cheryl and other heritage tourism leaders in Fresh Springs discussed the creation of a tourism committee to maintain schedules of activities and promotional insertion deadlines for regional publications.

Rotary Club members provide a multitude of social services to the community. Several Fresh Springs and Piedmont County residents participate in Rotary, although few mentioned Rotary in conversations. Lana detailed the importance of Rotary Club:

> The Rotary Club is vital for our community. It's a service organization that participates in the school system, works with the food bank, awards scholarships, sponsors a high school student service organization, donates baskets of food at Thanksgiving and Christmas, delivers Meals on Wheels for the Senior Center, and sponsors county recreation activities. We were the ones at Village Chronicles that handled parking and some other help. Business leaders, business owners, education and local government leaders often serve on Rotary.

A Black business owner active in a different service organization, Brad explained the group mentored youth in the county, working closely with the county commission chairman and the school system. The Black businessmen counseled young men without father figures in the home. Similar to Rotary, the group awarded scholarships to youth. Brad reported, "We give out about four thousand dollars a year in five hundred dollar scholarships….We have fundraisers throughout the year in order to award these scholarships." Brad described the group's work as encouraging and planting seeds for possible occupations:

> We plant a seed when they're in junior high school…Have you thought about being a policeman? A fireman? Have you ever thought about being a teacher like the teacher you admire? We don't really put emphasis on athletics because that's a long shot. A lot of times guys say, "I want to be

> a professional football player." So we say "Well, that's good, but what if you can't be a professional football player, what would you like to be then? What would be your next best goal if that didn't work out?" So we try to be realistic with them, so they'll have a backup plan. These kids go off to school on these football scholarships and stay in school two years; next thing you know they're working in an industrial plant.

The literature review confirmed the importance of social services in community revitalization, in particular services that nurture youth as future leaders. Participants offered little evidence of coordinated revitalization efforts with social service agencies and clubs beyond the assistance Rotary members provided to Village Chronicles.

In addition to formal service organizations, Fresh Springs' citizens and business owners lend support to fellow citizens and organizations in need. For example, as Fresh Springs' City Council searched for funds to replace the destroyed fire truck, community members organized fundraisers. When neighbors needed help due to illness or other calamities, the community responded by raising funds. Heading to a fundraiser for an injured county resident, Addie explained "Because that is what we do in the country."

Current Demographics

While the population of Piedmont County and other cities within the county grew from 2000 to 2013, Fresh Springs' population declined by 7% (City-data.com, 2013; United States Department of Commerce, 2013a). Table 4.1 summarizes select demographics for Fresh Springs, Harristown (the largest city in the county), and Piedmont County. Relative to the county, Fresh Springs' residents are slightly older, more educated, and more affluent. Compared to Harristown, Fresh Springs' residents are

more likely to be White, more educated, with nearly three times the median household income.

U.S. Census data (United States Department of Commerce, 2010) indicates most employed residents (aged 16 and older) in Fresh Springs worked in three industries: (1) professional, scientific, management, and administrative services (20.4%); (2) educational, health care, and social assistance services (19.4%); and (3) retail services (18.3%). Table 4.2 shows percentage of working civilian population (aged 16 and older) in Fresh Springs, Harristown, and Piedmont County by industries. With a larger supply of affordable housing, several manufacturing employers, and in proximity to all county schools residents in Harristown are more likely to work in education, health care and social assistance services (37.4%); arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services (25.8%); and manufacturing (16.4%). Residents and county officials

Table 4.1

Select Demographics for Fresh Springs, Harristown, and Piedmont County

	Fresh Springs	Harristown	Piedmont County
Total Population 2013	~ 220	~ 815	~ 14,500
Pop Change since 2000	**(7.1%)**	+ 0.5%	17. 9%
Median Age	**44.8 years**	43.4 years	40 years
% Pop White	75%	62%	77%
% Pop Black	24%	**32%**	17%
% Pop Other	1%	6%	6%
% Pop under age 20	**22%**	28%	27%
% Pop 25+ Comp HS+	**81%**	67%	72%
% Pop 25+ BA/BS+	**34%**	15%	16%
Median HH Income	**$56,100**	$18,623	$44,100
% Pop in Poverty	3%	31%	19. 1%
Unemployment (Aug 2012)	n. a.	n.a.	7%

Note. Assembled from City-data.com (2013) and United States Department of Commerce (2013a); data based on 2010 census unless noted otherwise.

express pride concerning the agricultural heritage of the county. Reviewing industry reports for the county and observing the agriculture-related businesses confirmed agriculture as a significant sector in terms of total revenue, especially timber and livestock production of swine and chickens. Although a major industry within the county, Table 4.2 confirms few agricultural workers in the county, consistent with the national statistics shared in Chapter One.

Noting the contrast between significant numbers of Black shoppers at the convenience store and barely any Black shoppers in downtown Fresh Springs, I asked Carolyn, a Black female city native, why few Blacks frequented downtown. She offered

Table 4.2

Percent of Civilian Population in Fresh Springs, Harristown, and Piedmont County by Employment in Select Industries

	Fresh Springs	Harristown	Piedmont County
Civilian employed population 16+	93	318	6,241
% of total population within community	40.4%	39.0%	41.6%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative services	**20.4%**	4.7%	8.7%
Educational, health care and social assistance services	**19.4%**	**37.4%**	**29.3%**
Retail trade	**18.3%**	5.7%	**11.0%**
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	6.5%	--	6.1%
Manufacturing	--	**16.4%**	**10.8%**
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	--	**25.8%**	6.9%

Note. Compiled from United States Department of Commerce (2010)

"most of them are retired, they don't walk much, and everywhere they go they have to ride." A new used clothing retail store aims to attract more White and Black locals downtown. Upscale Resale, a retail and social service non-profit business owned by five sisters moved downtown in July 2014. Similar to Addie's story, born in the county, the sisters moved away, and returned after having successful careers. The Black female social entrepreneurs sell "gently used" clothing to raise funds for a non-profit clothes closet/food pantry. One of the sisters, Kara, mentioned, "I always wanted to move back home and give back to my community." While observing activities downtown residents and business owners offered words of encouragement for the sisters, and some voiced concerns regarding the type of people the clothes closet/food pantry might attract to the downtown area, describing probable customers as "Baby Mammas" and "Baby Daddies." Not in an environment appropriate for probing, I interpreted those word choices to imply they feared unemployed, low-income, single-parent families.

When directly asked about racial issues, a long-time resident of the county, Participant A, confirmed and summarized these tensions as difficult, saying "all towns in the South have racial issues. It is difficult to discuss." When asked about the apparent segregation in the city and county, Participant M, shared efforts to seek out diversity:

> I don't know if it harkens back to the history of the county; I don't think there is any force to try to keep it apart. We struggled trying to get some Black members to join [our organization] to no avail. It has not been for lack of effort. It just hasn't happened.

A White woman and county business owner for over 30 years, Participant O, contributed a growing trend of diversity in Fresh Springs as enhancing revitalization efforts. The

participant referred to her perception of a growing gay and lesbian community and contrasted perceived discrimination of Blacks with gay and lesbian individuals:

> We have had a lot of diversity move into Fresh Springs…a larger gay community not afraid to express anything...they're just great people. I've heard a lot of racism but I've never heard anything about gays. I mean, they still use the "N" word. I always say it was like 1860 when I moved here and now it's about 1950. I've never seen anybody mistreated because of their skin color but I've heard a lot of verbal abuse.

In an informal conversation, Participant B provided a similar comment about the presence of racism, saying "little is said in public, but in private there are still racist remarks." At an event at Divine Gardens, for a short time I sat at a table with three family members who had lived in Fresh Springs all their lives. One of the old-timers told me a neighbor had moved to New York and "he married a mulatto girl." I was unable to comment and excused myself.

A 40-something Black business owner, county native and civic activist, described growing up in a segregated county that remains segregated in certain areas. However, she expressed optimism in the county which she proudly identified as "her" community:

> [Growing up…] Culturally it was different because the Black race did one thing and the White race did another. Even to this day we have a community park with a privately-owned pool there; no Blacks are allowed and it's been like that all my life. It's getting a lot better from when I was a child. We realized that we need each other in order to have these businesses and to go to school because now, like everywhere, you have a

> mixed generation….I would say we have a great community and we have a lot of love in our community. Yes, there is some hate, because you always have some. It's quiet and we don't have a lot of crime….I love [Piedmont County]…I always say it's a great community.

Few participants mentioned race or sexual orientation unaided. From observations it appeared Fresh Springs and Piedmont County were racially segregated communities. Blacks did not socialize with Whites other than to a limited degree at the Artist & Farmer Co-op. Community events such as music at the historic church and special events at Divine Gardens provided evidence of community members' respect and value for gay and lesbian couples. Because no one openly discussed sexual orientation issues it appeared to be an "undiscussable" issue and tolerated as long as there was no special attention brought to it. Participant H noted a racist remark from a fellow community member and expressed amazement saying, "I can't believe he said that, I mean, he's gay." This demonstrates being part of one group experiencing discrimination does not immunize a person from having bias against another group.

I did not ask participants their sexual orientation, and among those I knew to be gay or lesbian I did not detect sexual orientation as a differentiating factor regarding revitalization. As I watched marriage announcements in the local paper, noting where new couples were planning to live, and listened downtown for news of new people, such as a New Jersey couple who recently bought a dilapidated home on First Street and will be moving soon, I did not detect a significant trend of gay and lesbian individuals or couples moving into the area. While there are gays and lesbians involved in revitalization of Fresh Springs, there are many heterosexual individuals and couples

engaged in revitalization, including those with economic development expertise and those with historic preservation degrees. As homes continued to change hands, new people continued to move into the area, and brought their expectations, ideas, and levels of engagement to the community. Providing an introduction to the final section of this chapter, the discussion turns to Fresh Springs' private sector.

Private Sector

Reviewing several business directories including the city, Chamber, and Georgia manufacturers, along with direct observations, I documented 45 small businesses in the Fresh Springs area, congruent with literature showing higher small business incidence in rural areas typically offering fewer employment opportunities (Acs & Malecki, 2003). Fresh Springs' private sector firms include law offices, a variety of service firms, an early childhood academy, a for-profit medical clinic, the downtown retailers, and Divine Gardens which nearly all participants identified as a key asset of the city.

Located on Fresh Springs' northeast side just outside the city limits, Divine Gardens provided a continuous business presence for 30 years, attracting visitors to the business and exposing visitors to Fresh Springs' downtown merchants. Maintaining regular business hours during growing season, Divine Gardens promotes through an up-to-date website, Facebook page, and regional publications. Earning a reputation as a "must see" destination listed on county and city places to visit, the nursery achieved official Georgia Agritourism destination status with a sign on Main Street directing customers to the nursery. As downtown shop visitors prepared to leave, merchants often said something like "If you haven't already visited the nursery, you really should."

A large paved park-like setting provides parking for nursery visitors. With retail operations including a large greenhouse and gift shop, group tours and other special-event visitors enjoy a large picnic area adjacent to the gift shop. Consisting of a front room for customers and a back room for administrative offices, a small table with matching chairs, small refrigerator with water and soft drinks, and a bright, clean antique-adorned bathroom with heat and air conditioning welcomes customers perusing for antiques, books, magazines, and other gifts, or wanting to speak with the owner about plants or landscape work. The nursery is located about one-half mile from downtown.

Merchants downtown share a love of Fresh Springs and exhibit care for fellow merchants and visitors to the town. Observations documented business owners helping each other when a shopkeeper needed to be away or experienced heavy demand. For example, when Amy walked across the street for coffee and saw that Betty needed help, Amy cleared tables and refilled coffee cups. Having a busy Saturday afternoon, Jane called a community friend who donned an apron and pitched in. Several merchants share shop keys with neighbors and arrange store coverage when they must be away for business or other reasons. The last section describes the downtown business district.

Downtown Fresh Springs

Downtown Fresh Springs includes bright and cheerful shops with spacious, well-organized displays and others less so. Visitors might park and enjoy an afternoon shopping in several retail shops and eating at one or more restaurants, or they might find most shops closed due to cold or warm weather. Without heat and air conditioning, some downtown shop owners assume customers have better things to do in cold or hot weather. Participants disclosed shopkeepers often closed shops while attending to other money-

making activities since retail sales often precluded earning a living. The discussion in this section includes three topics: (1) the Fresh Springs highway structure; (2) downtown businesses and their owners; and (3) traffic, parking, aesthetics, and social group issues.

A Drive through Fresh Springs

Running northwest to southeast the U.S. highway running through town becomes Main Street inside Fresh Springs' city limits. A few state roads intersect with Main Street near downtown. Figure 4.2 illustrates Fresh Springs' city limits. Entering city limits from the northwest side of town, the first place of business is a familiar national chain convenience store with gas tanks accommodating four vehicles. With a steady stream of cars entering and leaving the parking lot, Whites and Blacks, young and old, stop to purchase gasoline, enjoy hot chicken biscuits, hot coffee, or a number of other snacks or drinks. The 30-ish Black manager living in a nearby county expressed appreciation of the location: "We are lucky to be on a busy road between the two cities [Fresh Springs and Harristown]. And, we are close to all the schools." I noted a clear distinction between the busy activity at this convenience store and the lack of activity in downtown Fresh Springs.

Continuing to drive southeast from the convenience store toward downtown, visitors see a well-maintained Victorian-era home sitting above road level and nearby on the opposite side of the street an historic home appearing it could fall at any moment. Closer to downtown a grey concrete-block county government building exists a short distance from the recently renovated nineteenth century jail and the city council building, a small unadorned mid-twentieth century building with partial brick façade comprised of a two-car garage area and a room measuring no more than 300 square feet. The city

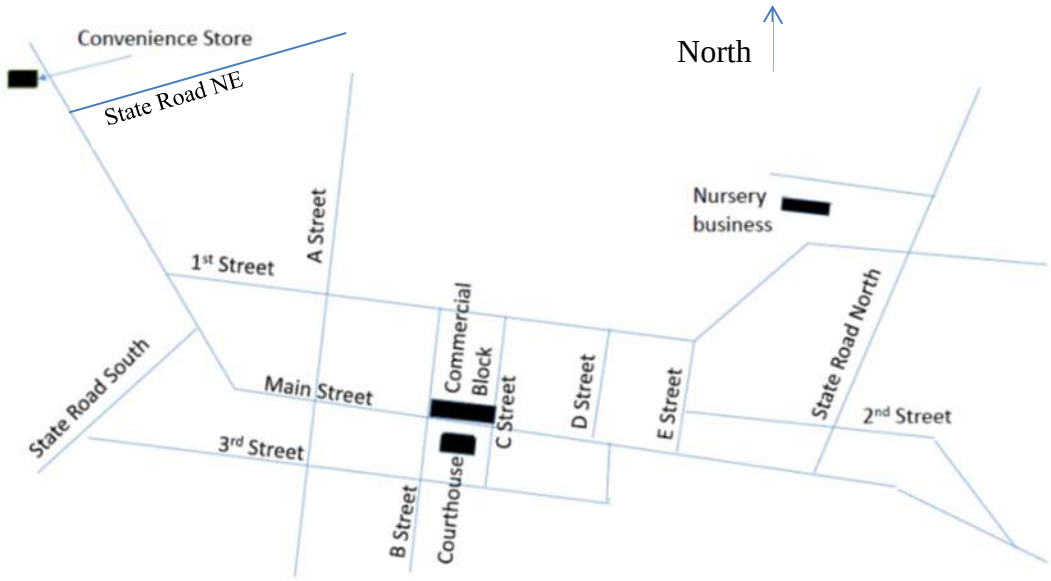

Figure 4.2 The City Limits of Fresh Springs, Georgia
Note. Not drawn to scale; for relative positioning only; distance from convenience store to courthouse, or courthouse to east side of city limits is approximately ½ mile
Adapted from [Fresh Springs] Historic District Walking Tour (2013)

council, Downtown Development Authority (DDA), and Historic Preservation Commission meet in the crowded room furnished with table and eight chairs, about 20 visitor chairs in three rows, and a computer work station for the part-time city clerk. With no windows and no bathroom facilities, one door provides access to the room. Next door, the bank property faces the courthouse discussed as part of the next section.

Courthouse Square

Prominently centered in downtown Fresh Springs on the south side of Main Street, the courthouse faces the commercial block resembling a small strip mall except for the uneven walkway requiring visitors to step up or down without railings. By dividing the courthouse square into nine sections, shown in Figure 4.3, the discussion proceeds by section describing businesses and their owners.

Section 1. Jane and her husband, Jared, own Jane's Café located between two antique stores. Meeting Addie in a nearby town where they both lived at the time, Jane participated in the Artists & Farmers Co-op (the Co-op) as a crafts-maker. Encouraged by community members to start a new business, Jane and Jared perceived an opportunity for a small restaurant, conducted extensive research, developed a plan, and launched the business. Less than a year later, the owners expanded their menu to include dinner, beer, and wine. Providing a clean and bright eclectic décor with old tables, fresh flowers, photography from world travels, and other artwork, the heated and cooled building includes a similar-appointed customer bathroom. Jane remarked, "Since I'm an O.R. nurse the health department has no worries about cleanliness around here." Serving

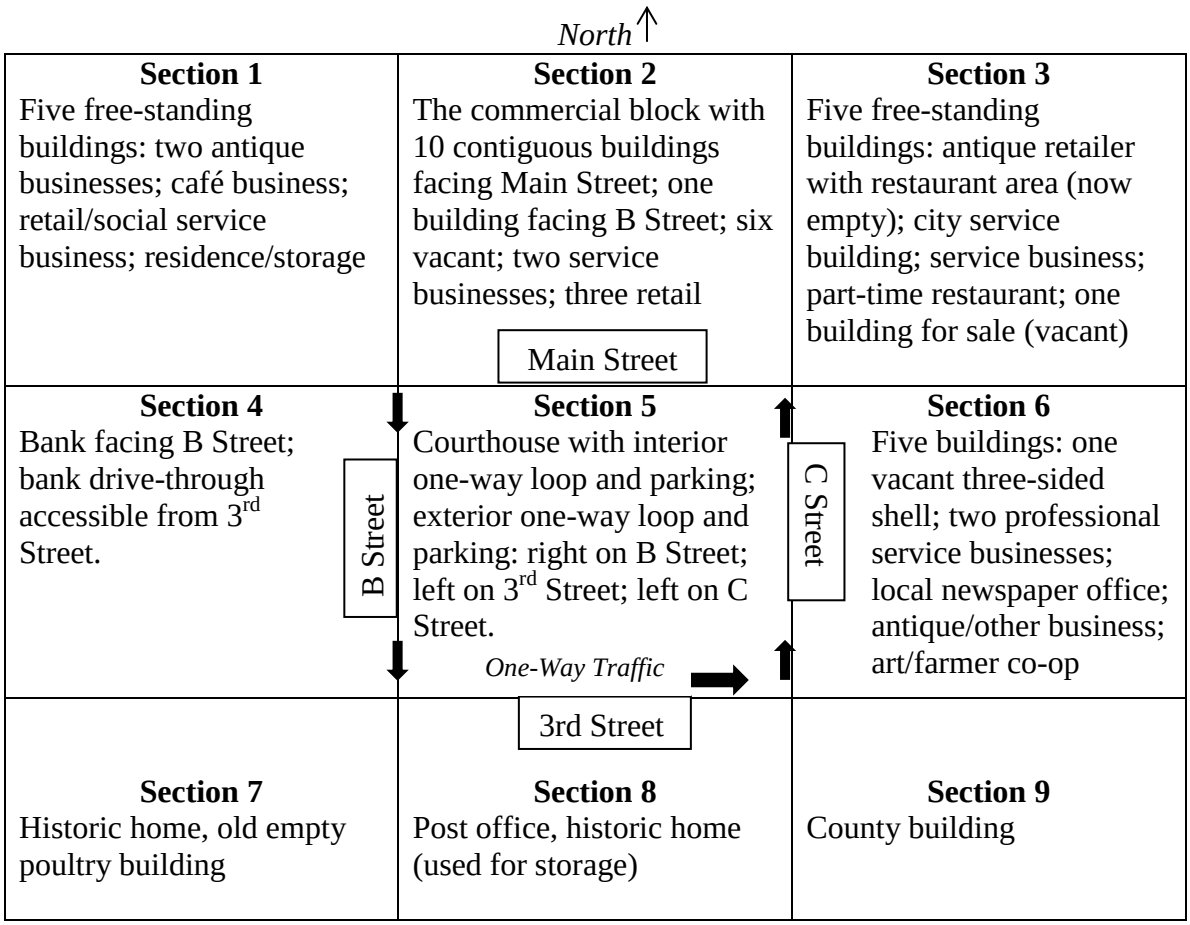

Figure 4.3 Downtown Fresh Springs Courthouse Square

customers with china, cloth napkins, and stainless flatware, Jane's Café enjoys repeat business from local residents and visitors passing through town, including families with children of all ages. Serving on DDA and volunteering for other projects within the city, Jane continues to lead craft workshops at the Co-op. Recently moving within the city limits, Jane works a full-time professional job and Jared manages the café in Jane's absence. Focused more on dinner hours, the café is not open in the early morning.

Owned by Cheryl and sitting on the corner of Main and B streets, Art & Antiques offers regional art and antiques. Purchasing and renovating the building in the late 1980s, Cheryl opens Thursday through Sunday, maintaining the clean, bright, organized shop. The business supports a number of regional artists with innovative items such as melted soda bottle art, hand-crafted bird feeders, and jewelry. Inactive all of 2014, Just Antiques, owned by Kay, prepares for regular weekend hours staffed by Carl, a farmer with the Co-op, while Kay works for Jane and Jared. Located behind Jane's café and Just Antiques, Upscale Resale, owned and managed by Kara and her four sisters, opens on weekends. Located behind Cheryl's building, an historic commercial building houses Kay's residence.

Section 2. The commercial block located across from the courthouse includes 11 separate buildings with shared walls and separate roof structures. Ten buildings face Main Street and one faces B Street. Living in Robinsville and described by participants as a hoarder, Reed Jones owns six commercial block buildings and does not maintain them. Showing me pulled back window curtains in one of Reed's buildings and pointing to blue sky visible through a gaping hole in the ceiling, Cathy reported a raging river flowing underneath the front door after a recent summer rainstorm. The unused and

deteriorating shops present a major tension in town. Properly maintained and available for new shopkeepers the six buildings represent potential economic expansion.

Conditioned Air, a heat and air conditioning sales and service business headquartered in Riverview (two counties away), opened in October 2013. The spacious, clean, and organized shop with large displays of antiques includes consignment space for other antique collectors. Drew categorized the organization of his store, referring first to the front corner where large mechanical equipment sat: "That front corner is how I make a living. The rest of this is my hobby." Pleasantly surprised about new business obtained since opening the branch office, Drew expressed empathy regarding owners of antique shops in town not keeping regular business hours saying, "From my experience the sales volume for antiques is very low." The service business projected a professional image through consistent branding on several billboards in Robinsville and along the U.S. highway leading to Piedmont County, the store frontage, business trucks, and several professionally-produced promotional materials. Conditioned Air's billboards promoting its new Fresh Springs branch office communicate a subtle message of new life in the city.

Located in the commercial block and owned by Cathy, Family Antiques opens for business six days a week and when Cathy is away, friends or family cover the store. In addition to selling antiques and vintage items, Cathy makes custom wreaths, seasonal decorations, and refinished furniture. Her shop is fairly crowded and clean. Her front window showcases Isabel, a dark-haired attractive mannequin, outfitted in season-appropriate clothing. Living in the community for two decades, previously working in the school system, Cathy owned a business in town for most of the last 15 years. Serving on city council for 15 years a newspaper article reported Cathy had planned to remain on

the council, but did not qualify due to visiting out of state family. She unsuccessfully campaigned for city council in the fall 2013 election.

Retired and operating mostly online, Tim owns Old Books & Antiques providing his phone number for customers when his sailboat takes priority over business. The shop reflects lack of attention with dust on the display cabinets and leaves on the floor. Recently deciding to sell his buildings he plans to continue the online business, spending more time with family in Robinsville. Next door, The Vintage Shoppe sits on the corner of Main and C Streets, owned by Jackie. Traveling for her home staging business, Jackie maintains fairly regular weekend hours, promoting her business through Facebook and rearranges the shop frequently keeping merchandise looking fresh and new. Partnering with Milly, another artistic person in town, she is staging the building of her neighbor, Nick. Recently speaking informally with Jackie about changes in town she expressed optimism about downtown relationships: "We keep hearing about an improved economy, but our summer sales were down. I think everyone realizes we need to work together. I am seeing a new sense of cooperation with people talking to each other that didn't previously."

Section 3. Once offering baked goods, breakfast and lunch, The Bakery Shoppe recently closed when the owner, Betty, left the city. Previously a gathering spot for Amy, Cathy, and Tim, Betty's shop attracted local customers across the county and those passing through. Owning the space which adjoins his antique shop, Nick prepares for a new tenant. In order to bring more light into Nick's space, Jackie and Milly plan to raise the awnings as part of their staging work. An avid tennis player, proud grandpa and busy with multiple economic development and community service activities including city

council, DDA, and the Chamber, Nick recently arranged to have Milly cover his shop for him when he is away.

Established in Fresh Springs over 100 years ago, Good Eats serves barbeque on Saturdays. A part-time family venture, articles written by food editors and bloggers praised the restaurant. In an old building with rustic, no-frills décor and no central heat and air, families with small children and adults of all ages frequent the restaurant including a steady stream of "to-go" business for barbeque, beans, coleslaw, and Brunswick stew. Sitting at tables covered with vinyl red plaid tablecloths and stocked with paper towels and paper napkins, customers eat with plastic forks and knives on disposable plates. Waitpersons stay busy and do not engage in friendly chatter. Asking to use the restroom a waitress directed me to exit the building, walk down the left side and enter a small door near the back of the building. There I found the small, rustic, and cold bathroom with uneven floor and stained sink dispensing only cold water. Near Good Eats, a pet service operates by appointment only. Other buildings include the volunteer fire department and an empty building which the owner offered for sale in spring 2014.

Section 4. Fresh Springs' only bank brings steady local traffic through downtown. Active in Chamber and other county-level associations such as Rotary, the bank and its officers do not engage directly to Fresh Springs' revitalization projects. Although noting significant bank drive-through traffic, during observations most vehicles kept driving through.

Section 5. Dating back to the nineteenth century, the historic courthouse displays a Confederacy memorial and a multi-war memorial. According to local newspaper

articles, the county recently completed a two-million-dollar courthouse renovation including new roof, paint, and benches. An inner arc one-way driveway provides wheelchair access and close parking. Using the outer (and lower) arc, vehicles travel in a one-way counterclockwise direction by turning right on B Street, turning left on 3rd Street, and then left on C Street leading back to Main Street.

Section 6. This section contains five commercial buildings and a three-walled shell destroyed by fire several decades ago. The largest building facing Main Street remains unrepaired from a traffic accident a few years ago. Amy explained she and her business partner, the current building owner, continued to repair the building as time and resources allowed. Building a plywood enclosure around the damaged corner and painting it with holiday decorations, caused nearby business owners to fear the construction enclosure had become a permanent part of the building. Although the building has potential for three or four different shops, Amy uses the building for an antique retail business, a woodwork novelties business, storage, and her residence.

With a prime location on the corner of Main and C streets, the three-walled shell with earthen floor once contained a bank and later a service station. Participants offered different opinions regarding the safety of the structure and future plans for it. Purchased by an attorney a few years ago, the structure shares a wall with the attorney's office. Online pictures posted by photographers driving through town showed small trees, weeds, and other underbrush growing inside the structure. Previously using the three-walled shell for its Farmers' Market, the Artist & Farmers Co-op provided the picture in Figure 4.4 which shows the Farmers' Market set up with the courthouse in the background. Addie obtained permission from the previous owner to install the stabilizing

beam across the front. When the building owners sold the three-walled shell, the Farmers' Market was no longer allowed access to the area.

Figure 4.4 Farmers' Market in Fresh Springs
Note. Picture courtesy of Artist & Farmer Co-op

East of Amy's building and facing Main Street, the local newspaper operates its administrative offices for the editor/owner, a native of the county and city council member, and one staff person. Operating in Fresh Springs and Piedmont County for over a century, the newspaper reports local news, provides community service information, and sells advertisements for city, county, and regional institutions and associations. The production offices of the newspaper moved to Harristown some time ago. Observations noted a large paved parking area in front of the building, a loading dock behind the

building containing old appliances, and an abandoned old truck with substantial growth of weeds in and around it.

Occupying the largest commercial building on C Street, the Artist & Farmer Co-op (the Co-op) advertises in local newspaper, Facebook, and email as "a heritage, art, music and history Co-op made up of over 40 artists, several farmers, and musicians representing the Piedmont County area." Located within 30 feet of the damaged building facing Main Street and within 15 feet of the attorney's office, the building contains three well-maintained sections, surrounded by regularly-mowed grass. The front section with heat and air conditioning holds the main shop providing organized retail space for art, recorded music, and farm-related goods such as honey and home-made soaps and lotions, and areas for music equipment sales and custom framing. The décor of stained glass windows, reclaimed woodwork and tin ceiling compliments displays of antique furniture, custom jewelry, and hand-crafted cloth and knitted items. The Co-op holds music events in the middle section furnished with rustic tables, a variety of chairs, and a kitchen area. Sitting between the music event section and warehouse space in the back section, sits a rustic bathroom with a space heater for winter months. Catering to youth through music lessons and a family hair salon, the Co-op hosts special events like the spring Historic Day where high-school 4-H students painted gourds and helped visitors wanting to paint their own. Offering a history essay contest as part of the event, the Co-op awarded two student scholarships.

Sections 7, 8, and 9. Rescuing the historic home several years ago, Lilly and her partner live a few miles outside the city. Previously renting the building to a solar-power service business, they now rent the building as a residence. Regarding the solar-power

firm, Wes told me, "I think the recession got to them. Most of their business was international, and they just didn't need an office here." Next to the historic home, an old poultry building with most of one side open provides a storage area for Joe, the "woodman." Joe reclaims old wood from dilapidated structures and works with many Fresh Springs residents and business owners. Section 8 includes the post office and a vacant, historic home owned by the mayor and his wife. Section 9 consists of a county government building with civic and social service departments.

Traffic, Parking, Aesthetics, and Social Groups

Representing one of the recent downtown area changes, two manual solar-powered caution lights mounted on 10 to 12 feet tall steel poles on either end of the commercial block help pedestrians needing to cross the road. Pressing the button on the pole makes the solar-powered caution lights blink, letting traffic know someone needs to cross the road. Prior to installation of the caution lights traffic usually barreled through the town at 45 mph or faster despite the 30 mph speed limit. With the new caution lights, traffic often (but not always) slows or stops to let people cross. Constituting the first solution crafted by community members as they awaited approval for the solar-powered lights, small cylinders affixed to the caution light poles and two other caution sign poles contain small fabric flags. Pedestrians needing to cross the street take a flag and wave it to draw attention to motorists and encourage them to slow down or stop.

Visiting over 50 times throughout a two-year period including a visit with court trial proceedings, parking appeared plentiful. Despite numerous parking lots, street parking, and parking available near most stand-alone buildings, a few people raised parking concerns at the August 2012 design charrette when the design team suggested

converting the inner arc of the courthouse to green space, appearing more interested in maintaining parking spaces than addressing downtown aesthetics. Downtown aesthetics create tension. Several residents and business owners want a higher standard of aesthetics established downtown. Participants identified untidy areas on either end of town. Since these areas border Main Street they likely make impressions on visitors, whether those visitors stop to browse, or merely drive through the city. Participant F described her frustration concerning the appearance of the town:

> The problem is private property. People don't care sometimes how their store looks and all the junk. You know, we can say it nicely, "Let's try to fix it up," but until the store owners take care of their own property….it's really hard because we're stuck.

Private property and old habits contribute to the issue. The next chapter continues discussion of aesthetics issue and local government leadership responses.

Social Groups

Downtown social groups vary by degree of participation in "official" revitalization activities. Amy, Cathy, and Tim (and previously Betty) comprise a social group on the Fresh Springs' east side less active in "official" revitalization. Tending to not favor committees, they do participate in activities such as the feral cat capture/neuter-spay/release program, though not coordinating their efforts with the program led by Addie, with whom a strained relationship existed. Formerly a gathering place for the community, the closing of The Bakery Shoppe leaves Amy, Cathy, and Tim without a downtown gathering place.

Nick and Cheryl, being the old-timers of downtown Fresh Springs, work together on many revitalization programs. They socialize with all downtown merchants, perhaps more so with those active in civic and revitalization groups. Although Fresh Springs business owners, Drew and his wife live two counties away. Not part of Fresh Springs' downtown social groups, Drew and his wife participate in Chamber business-after-hours events. Jackie participates in Co-op events and appears to maintain a friendly relationship with many merchants.

Addie and Jane regularly worked together at one time, but Jane's business, her DDA activities, and her full-time employment outside the area result in less time for Co-op activities. Jane's Cafe provides a west side Fresh Springs' gathering place, mostly for Friday and Saturday night dinners. The Co-op continues to build collaboration with artists, farmers, and musicians, and draws a local customer base. Although resigning from DDA a year ago, Addie remains focused on community economic development, acknowledging her business benefits from the community's success. The Co-op represents Fresh Springs' central gathering place, especially on Friday (and occasionally Saturday) music nights and Saturday Farmers' Market.

Chapter Summary

This chapter chronicled the rich history of Fresh Springs including the nineteenth century closely connected to the community's historic brand image. The chapter discussed revitalization history dating back to the 1970s with registration of Fresh Spring' historic district, adopting historic preservation ordinances, and events leading to the recent re-birth of revitalization. A depiction of the Fresh Springs community structure included local government, schools, health and social services, with current

population and employment demographics. The last section introduced the layout of the city, introduction to downtown merchants including several community members leading revitalization projects; a review of certain issues discussed by townspeople, business people, and local officials; and an overview of downtown social groups. The next chapter discloses study findings focused on the research questions of how community members learned to revitalize and what facilitated or created barriers to that learning.

CHAPTER FIVE:

FINDINGS—LEARNING FOR REVITALIZATION

> *This park really got it started because I looked out my front door one day and there was a brick truck unloading a bunch of bricks out here. I mean, this was a field; if it didn't get cut in the summer it just grew up. Then I saw Toby out here. He got a lot of things done in this county and he did it with baling wire and duct tape, but he got them done. And, he raised the money to build this. (Nick, personal communication, April 9, 2014)*

According to his January 2012 obituary, Toby lived in Fresh Springs all his life and only moved away due to health needs. Leaving behind a wife of 66 years, two daughters, four grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren, he was a veteran, an aviator, a businessman, a member of the historic Fresh Springs church and an active community member. Mentioning Toby's many historic preservation activities, the obituary reported "he loved Fresh Springs and served on city council for 21 years." The Historic Society's spring 2002 newsletter announced that Toby received the 2001 Mary S. Williams Award, the society's annual award to recognize members contributing to Piedmont County history and historic preservation. The newsletter article included Toby's bio, referring to him as "an 'idea man' and one who follows through with actions." The article highlighted Toby's accomplishments:

> Some of his many ideas that have come to fruition include the monument to Robert Piedmont on the Courthouse lawn, the Piedmont County flag and most recently the city park in Fresh Springs. Indeed, the idea to start the Mary S. Williams Award was his.

From participant interviews and review of documents it appears Toby fostered learning in Fresh Springs informally by sharing ideas and involving others, and experientially by proactively taking action. This chapter provides research findings of how community members similarly learned to revitalize their town.

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to understand how community members learned for rural community revitalization. The questions guiding the research were: (1) How did rural community members learn about revitalization? (2) What facilitated learning for revitalization? (3) What created barriers to learning for revitalization? Chapter Four provided the community context research findings. This chapter summarizes research findings to the research questions presented by three key themes: (1) learning occurred as community members worked on revitalization projects in informal communities of practice, (2) leadership facilitated learning for revitalization, and (3) lapses of leadership created barriers to learning. The focus in each section of the chapter will be on how the learning took place and what it looked like. Many Fresh Springs residents, land owners, and business owners joined forces to implement revitalization projects. The next section describes how community members learned through these projects.

Learning through Revitalization Projects

Participants described learning as they worked with others on numerous revitalization projects. Often, one or two individuals initiated a revitalization project, and then recruited additional people to further develop the idea, create a plan for action, and complete the project. At other times projects began with individuals discussing perceived problems or opportunities, and discussions evolved into revitalization plans and actions.

Creating communities of practice, the groups worked and learned together as they created and implemented plans, and shared common interests and objectives. In most cases learning was informal or incidental. Recall, informal learning includes self-directed learning, reflection, collaboration, networking, coaching, mentoring, and other learner-controlled learning activities; incidental learning is a byproduct of other activities such as completing a task, having conversations, sensing aspects of the environment, or experimenting through trial and error (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Participants in this study also described non-formal learning which refers to learning in a structured manner, but not in a formal classroom or education system (Merriam, Caffrella, & Baumgartner, 2007). This section will be divided into three parts: (1) early projects perceived as stimulating revitalization for which I rely heavily on interview and document data since I did not observe these projects, (2) the Farmers' Market and the Artist & Farmer Co-op which began five years ago and continues as a collective entrepreneurial community development effort, and (3) heritage tourism as a major revitalization category with single-custom-designed programs, quarterly events, and large annual events.

Early Projects Stimulating Revitalization

Participants identified three community development projects as stimulants to Fresh Springs' revitalization in the last five years. In the quotation starting this chapter, when Nick said "this park really got it started…," he referred to his reflection connecting the park development to the re-birth of Fresh Springs' revitalization. He described the increased engagement of his neighbors as a "byproduct" of the completed park development projects, which Marsick and Watkins (2001) deemed incidental learning. Similar to the "moving force" of educative experience discussed by Dewey (1938),

learning from these projects built upon each other. The discussion begins with the city park development, proceeds to the organization of the DDA and ongoing activities of the DDA, and then describes the county jail restoration project which contributed to heritage tourism.

City Park Development. Acknowledging many community members' contributions dating back to Toby as the originator of the idea, Nick described the park as a small community development success story motivating neighbors to engage with revitalization activities. Nick perceived his neighbors "sensing" that their involvement could make a difference which motivated them to engage in various community activities. Nick described incidental learning:

> We were bedroom community people but since the park, and I feel confident that the park kicked this off…Don is on the city council and on the DDA board, Beth is on the DDA board…Christine is on the library board, Matt is on the library board and on the historic preservation commission…there are people who have gotten involved because I think they saw that they could make a difference.

Nick and his wife, Christine, live across from the city park. Initially hoping for tennis courts which proved too cost prohibitive, Nick continued speaking with neighbors about a possible park and raised additional funds. Nick described networking and collaboration which constitutes informal learning. After completing their home renovations, Beth and Ben ventured outside attending to yard work and met Nick in early 2010. Beth's action orientation overcame Nick's concerns about the cost. Beth summarized their discussion:

> We asked "What are your plans with it?" He said "Well, we want to put in a park…we'd like to build a pavilion, but the price is too much." I made some phone calls…the next day I…[had] all the lumber donated at half price and…someone to build it for free…my husband's friends…laid the concrete…and I got four picnic tables…eighty percent off.

By collaborating, sharing ideas, networking with contacts and being proactive, Nick, Beth, and Ben along with those making financial or labor donations created the park, and created a movement toward revitalization which encouraged further learning for revitalization. This is consistent with Dewey's (1938) description of continuity of experiences that encourage learning. Most participants identified the city park as a positive contribution to Fresh Springs' revitalizations. The park development was an educative experience that moved the community forward (Rodger, 2002). The site of music performances and a safe place for children to meet and play, the city park provides a social gathering place or a location for community members to sit and enjoy the day. Although pleased with the city park development, as a business owner Nick wanted to improve downtown. Having conversations with community members sharing a common interest and with different experiences and expertise, through informal learning Nick and others initiated the organization of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA).

Downtown Development Authority (DDA). By 2009, Fresh Springs' residents and business owners discussed the establishment of a DDA. Nick recalled reaching out to city and county residents including Addie who recently moved back home bringing with her decades of downtown development experience. Nick described the creation of this group starting with his reflections:

> I started thinking, "We're doing this up here but not enough is being done downtown, it does not look good. I want a business down there." About that same time, Addie had moved back home after having done community development in Bernardsville. Harold Clarke was a friend of mine and he was on City Council. I spoke with him about pulling together a Merchants Association. He said, "Well, there's not many merchants to associate with, but there is a lot of promise downtown and you're going to have a lot more success if you go at it from a governmental standpoint…a Downtown Development Authority…we started meeting at my house once every month starting in January 2009 and into 2010. We developed a plan…It was Harold and Maude Clarke, Christine and me, Cheryl and Addie. We put the plan together, came up with an initial Board of Directors, and the bylaws. The city agreed to it.

In his story, Nick described forming a group with interest in downtown development, building relationships, and regularly meeting to discuss plans and determine next actions. He described experiential, informal learning (Marsick & Watkins, 2001) in a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). The group intentionally met to create a plan they could present to the city. In various informal discussions with Nick he described to me networking and collaborating with regional groups, non-formal learning from economic development training, and incidental learning from discussions with Addie about her experiences in downtown development, and with other community members having local government experience.

Providing her viewpoint of DDA development consistent with Nick's story, Addie emphasized collaboration with "like-minded folks." Recall, Marsick and Watkins (2001) deemed collaboration a form of informal learning. Addie described the proactive creation of a community of practice and informal learning from discussions as group members shared their previous experiences. She applauded earlier activists in the community who learned revitalization through networking, a form of informal learning, and trial and error, a form of incidental learning (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Addie explained:

> Nick and I started talking…What I learned that worked in Bernardsville was a downtown authority and felt it would be great if we could organize something like that. We started doing organizational meetings…finding like-minded folks. We hand-picked a few people we knew from a couple projects and knew their attitudes were great…people who had retired here and others that were from here…we started incorporating…There were people who had been trying over the years, and I don't want to take away any credit from that…They have hung in here and kept trying things; they were just not sure of what to do. It is unique that I am from here, I went away and had that experience, and then came back. And, I take criticism for it, and I get praise for it, so it is a mixed blessing.

Addie brought two decades of downtown development experiential knowledge to Fresh Springs. This provides an example of why small towns benefit from inventorying the capabilities and interests of residents and business owners, also known as a human capital inventory (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Both Addie's and Nick's stories include the

importance of relationships and dialogue in informal learning. They both discussed self-directed learning which includes activities such as reading, researching through personal contacts or through Internet searches, and other independent learning processes (Merriam et al., 2007).

Nick shared personal reflections regarding his habit of dealing with problems and his self-identified need to relax his control over projects. Nick explained:

> It comes from thirty-five years of working in the computer field. When there's a problem, you take care of the problem. And in computers, you're the fireman, you slide down the pole, you put the fire out and then you explain what happened afterwards. And that's just been my training and even in management after that when I had people working for me, that's what I did and then I explained it afterwards.

Nick's "habit" affected an early DDA project.

One of the first projects coordinated by the DDA was the "Paint the Town" project where volunteers worked to make the town look better, including the properties owned by the absent landowner, Reed Jones. Nick explained how he had spoken directly with Reed and arranged to paint the front of Reed's buildings. Cathy had heard about the painting project and through Tim asked Reed for permission to paint and decorate the fronts of Reed's buildings. Reed did not care who painted them and said "Sure." With no coordination between his and Cathy's separate plans, Nick explained his initial reactions:

> And so she gets down there with the little rubber booties and six different colors, the purples' and the pinks and the yellows and she goes to work.

> And here I am on the other end…trying to make it look historic. I made people mad because I talked about it; but I'm trying to control. In the end she worked hard and it worked, and it looks better than it did to begin with. Beth's friend, Casey, who came down here and videotaped all this stuff…what is highly prevalent in the video? The little blue booties and six different colors, the paintings that she did; he thought it was cute.

Nick described informal learning through his own reflections and by listening to critiques from others that he might want to ease up on his control of projects. Some participants agreed Cathy's work constituted improvement, and others agreed with Nick's initial evaluation that Cathy's work was not appropriately historic. However, Cathy's actions were not in violation of any Historic Preservation ordinances. Providing his evaluation of Cathy's work, Participant J argued for more action through which community members would learn to move through small disagreements and focus on getting things done. Participant J explained:

> It looks great to me, somebody [did] something. I could care less what the décor is. Somebody said, "I want to do something about it." Well, let's do it…It's just small town stuff…you can't hit people over the head with it. They've got to realize that "Hey, we can do these things."

Participant J referred to experiential learning which Dewey emphasized required an iterative process of action, reflection on action, refinement of plans, followed by action (Miettinen, 2000). Participant J referred to incidental learning as small town residents and business owners "realized" what they could do, rather than being told what to do. "Hitting people over the head" is an old metaphor for autocratic leadership. Participant

J's statement is an argument for emergent leadership, whereby a safe environment encourages people to assume a leadership role (Heifetz, et al., 2009).

Another project which the DDA coordinated, the design charrette occurred in summer 2012 with community-wide collaboration. Structured as a non-formal learning event, historic preservation and landscaping groups from a nearby college inquired into residents' and business owners' needs and expectations for the community, and residents and business owners gained insights both from the outside consultants and from fellow community members. Kay described the charrette being valuable for learning the range of viewpoints in the community, and for obtaining perspectives from consultants' "fresh eyes" on community issues and recommendations. She explained her learning from the event:

> It was interesting and I definitely wanted to participate and know what other peoples' fresh eyes saw…They were very thorough; they interviewed people and had some great concepts…It was interesting to see different people's opinions, how heated certain subjects were and controversial, those divisions on certain things and how passionate people were for their approach.

Kay's comments exhibit the difficulty of placing learning in any neat category. In the non-formal learning environment of the design charrette, Kay described learning from the outside consultants as they reported what they "saw" in the community and their suggestions for improvements, and she also described new insights regarding "hot" topics and the passion exhibited by her fellow community members. These insights are what Marsick and Watkins (2001) described as "sensing" aspects of incidental learning.

My observations and discussions with DDA members suggested a complex situation. All members of DDA appear to be sincerely interested in making the community better. DDA members learned from non-formal training when first appointed to the DDA, and they learned informally and incidentally by discussing issues, developing relationships, and collaborating with others such as consultants from the nearby college, college interns, and community members with specific expertise. After completing a few projects, DDA members created a Facebook page and started linking to other groups to share information, constituting informal learning throughout the community. Some DDA members were more engaged in community activities than others. DDA members with whom I spoke disagreed about the dilapidated commercial block buildings, with two saying the issue was unsolvable, and with two indicating more action was needed. DDA relied on City Council to enforce regulations and to appropriate funds. The enforcement issue is discussed further in the last section of this chapter. The last project discussed as a stimulant to Fresh Springs' revitalization is the jail renovation project which built upon heritage tourism, a major economic activity in the community.

Historic Jail Restoration. The Historic Society led the jail restoration project which required several grants, and the labor and expertise of many Historic Society volunteers. Beginning work a few days after relocating prisoners to the new Harristown jail in 2007, volunteers completed building renovations in 2014. Harry described the project as collaboration between city, county, and the historic group. Recall, collaboration is a form of informal learning (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Harry explained:

> The county owned the building but it sat right there in downtown Fresh Springs. The project had a few bumps in the road but we had a good relationship between the county government, the city and the Historic Society to get that renovated.

The relationship between the project partners constituted a source of informal learning, and the "bumps in the road" provided experiential learning.

A 2008 issue of the Historic Society's newsletter reported the Fresh Springs mayor and his wife had "initiated an important first step" by getting the nearby college's "historic preservation class to conduct an architectural and historical evaluation of the building as a class project for this past Fall, [sic] 2007 semester." Subsequent issues of the Historic Society's newsletter provided updates which provided intentional, informal learning by keeping its members informed about the decisions and progress of the jail restoration project.

A 2009 Historic Society newsletter outlined the initial plan as the county would "maintain ownership of the building and responsibility for its basic shell"; Fresh Springs would "renovate and occupy the rear annexes as their [sic] new City Hall"; and the Historic Society would "renovate and use the ground floor of the old jail as a museum and visitors center." The next issue of the newsletter explained the city of Fresh Springs withdrew from the partnership because the city decided it could not use the rear annex of the old jail. After the county decided it could not use the rear annex either, the project team decided to remove the annex. The partnership continued between the county and the Historic Society. From the newsletters I surmised informal learning occurred through collaboration between leaders of the Historic Society and county government, as they

engaged in conversations, made decisions, and amended decisions and actions based on new information, similar to Dewey's model of experiential learning (Miettinen, 2000). Informal learning extended outside the county through collaboration with numerous contractors and grant-awarding agencies. A state agency awarded the project team an historic preservation award for the completed project. The restored jail represents a new element for future city and county heritage tourism to help attract tourists and potential downtown shoppers. The discussion in the next two sections focus on ongoing revitalization projects designed to stimulate more shopping traffic downtown and at the nursery.

Farmers' Market and Artist & Farmer Co-op

Learning the value of farmers' markets in stimulating downtown development from working in a southeastern U.S. city revitalized 20 years ago, Addie initiated the Fresh Springs' Farmers' Market (Farmers' Market) as a tool to attract local residents. She reported, "I kept moving with that Farmers' Market. And, there is no money to be made there. It is a community development tool." Addie described early conversations in which she attempted to share her community development experience in informal learning conversations with Fresh Springs' merchants:

> I went around to all the property owners and said, "If you guys will work with me…I will start a farmers' market, and we will see what happens." We started the Farmers' Market, and all of a sudden, there was this Saturday morning pulse. The local city council started noticing, "Isn't that interesting; what's going on?" It started getting people's attention, and I

> think it convinced some of the business owners who were open one day a week or so to have faith that something could happen here.

Addie's reference to city council and other people noticing the "Saturday morning pulse" describes the "sensing" aspect of incidental learning (Marsick, & Watkins, 2001). Helen confirmed Addie's comments. Helen attributed the Farmers' Market with increased socialization in the community, which increased social capital as residents and business owners built relationships and found common ground on which to work together. Helen described Addie as a catalyst who infected others with her enthusiasm and influenced additional revitalization efforts, similar to Smith's (2012) description of an animateur. Helen explained:

> When Addie moved here and she started having her Saturday morning Farmers' Market she got people to come out and socialize. People don't really socialize here. Small groups do. When she moved here, that started stirring up the pot and things have really gotten better, I think, because she's tried to revitalize the place. Her enthusiasm catches on.

Victor shared Helen's positive evaluation of the Farmers' Market to bring about more learning for revitalization. Victor, a younger city resident, provided his assessment: "The Co-op, I think has been the biggest improvement that I've seen in the community. The Farmers' Market encouraged me to start growing my own vegetables as well. I plan to sell vegetables at the market." Victor was encouraged to start growing his own vegetables and engage with the Farmers' Market as a supplier through informal learning as he had conversations with other "hobby" farmers, and incidental learning as he observed the Farmers' Market activities.

Not everyone agreed Addie was a positive influence. Three participants expressed viewpoints that the negative energy focused on Addie was due to jealousy and personality clashes. Participant F stated her opinion in this way:

> You've had these stores for twenty years and have done nothing and so when you get a new person that's been here for seven years coming back and doing stuff, don't get mad because she's bringing people in. You should be thanking her because she's bringing people through your store. Isn't that the whole outcome of having a store, do you not want people to come through and buy something?

Participant M referred to a campaign against Addie: "there was a crusade against her success for some reason…I never have quite understood that…sour grapes, or whatever…I don't know what the mentality there was….because she was helping their businesses as well." Participant E provided history of the personality conflict:

> There is one person who doesn't own a business, who doesn't own property in town, but works for somebody, and is the most negative person I have ever met in my life. She took an instant dislike to someone who came and opened a business…and now there is this property line thing, an alleyway city abandonment…it is just a mess. It is on that end of town, and I really try to stay out of it. It is a legal thing they need to resolve…The city cannot resolve it unless they get surveys all the way back in history, title searches—both of them, and get that thing resolved.

> The city is not going to pay for it…the city doesn't care. The city doesn't have the money to pay for it.

It appears no one "took sides," attempted to determine the facts, or attempted to resolve the issue. The situation resulted in Addie resigning from the DDA although her influence continued in informal ways through personal conversations and her active participation in several city and county community activities.

Through informal learning as they collaborated, Addie and several Co-op farmers developed enhancements to the Saturday morning Farmers' Market. The Co-op introduced an online option to supplement the Saturday morning market. Implementing this enhancement required many one-on-one conversations with farmers to influence them to try the new option. And, it required multiple informal learning communications with potential customers. Allowing farmers to list produce ready to harvest and allowing customers to browse in the comfort of their home without needing to rush to the market to get the best produce, the system resulted in reduced spoilage since farmers harvested only what was sold. Collaborating with farmers both as suppliers and co-managers of the operations and logistics, the online system required ongoing conversations with farmers about upcoming offerings, updating the website, communicating with customers about their orders, and coordination of order fulfillment.

As a participant in the on-line system I found it easy to use and a convenience over the Saturday morning option. The co-managers appeared to be knowledgeable about the overall process and their particular part of the operation. The Co-op appeared to be open to improvements since the process included a request for feedback both online and in person when I picked up my order. Other informal learning included

conversations such as Addie discussing the pros and cons of "certified" organic gardening with several farmers. She referred to experiential learning as she described the Co-op team making small tweaks in the on-line system to create a smoother process. Addie expressed encouragement that the on-line system brought new customers and new farmers into the Co-op and a desire to continue growing the operation.

Hosting music events on select Friday and Saturday nights and providing a retail market for farmers, craftspeople, and artists, the Co-op became a downtown social gathering place attracting locals and people from surrounding counties. My "sensing" from participating in several special events at the Co-op and several nights of music was that the Artist and Farmer Co-op included collaboration and open sharing of information. Through historic carriage rides and sponsoring special events, Addie and her team at the Co-op provide heritage tourism leadership. Although heritage tourism projects enhanced Fresh Springs' economic activity for many years, participants report new focus in the last five years. The next section discusses learning through these projects.

Heritage Tourism

Serving as tourism representative for the entire county as part of the Piedmont County Chamber, Cheryl worked with state and regional tourism professionals. Cheryl explained her learning process for heritage tourism: "I attend a lot of preservation conferences and a lot of tourism conferences for the county." Cheryl's non-formal learning at these conferences provided a base for informal learning as she shared her knowledge with downtown merchants and other community members interested in heritage tourism and historic preservation. Cheryl provided details of how she shared her learning with fellow downtown merchants:

> I own this [travel and shopping] publication…I tried to get everyone to stay open so I could publicize that we were here from nine to five…I worked with people on the state level to publicize events here...I would let people know when the nursery was having an event, saying "you need to be open so the people who are coming through can stop."

Cheryl shared that over the years there were many short-lived small businesses, and it was a challenge to influence shopkeepers to keep regular hours.

Partnering with other Fresh Springs businesses, Cheryl coordinated a summer 2014 heritage tour of senior citizens transported by bus from 50 miles away. Tour elements included Divine Gardens, Co-op carriage tours, and a picnic lunch prepared by Jane's Café and The Bakery Shoppe. Allowing visitors to see historic homes while learning of the rich area history, the four local businesses collaborated and received sales income, while exposing prospective customers to other downtown merchants. Nick attributed the event with influencing people "passing through" to stop and take notice:

> Last week Cheryl had the bus tour group here in town, seventy-something people…they did four or five carriage rides through the town. I mean, these are things that people take notice of. When people see the town crowd is stopping…they want to find out what is going on…so the more you look like you're alive, the more people want to stop in and take part.

Recognizing the difficulty of keeping up with various event calendar deadlines in regional publications while managing business, community, and personal commitments, Roger, Addie, Jane, and Cheryl discussed creating a tourism committee to divide tasks. Their conversation provided an example of collective reflections, inquiry, and informal

learning which led to a decision to move the situation forward. They agreed a tourism committee would distribute the work and help ensure consistent results. Although observing discussions of this recommendation at a DDA meeting and in small group discussions, I have not seen or heard an action plan for implementation of the idea, perhaps due to focus on the 2014 Village Chronicles discussed in the next section.

The Village Chronicles. Attending a nearby town's living history event, Roger and his partner, Trey, envisioned how a similar program might be designed for Divine Gardens. Roger and Trey acknowledged needing help. Roger described how the idea grew:

> We decided to approach the Downtown Development Authority, the Chamber of Commerce, the community theater group in Harristown, the Historic Society, and a couple of other individual businesses to see if they would be interested in participating and assisting us in this production. It was well received and every one of them has offered assistance.

As Roger and Trey reached out to invite contributions from the city and county, their actions constituted developing a community of practice. Roger and Trey constituted the "core" group (Wenger et al., 2002) since they developed the original idea, hosted the event, assumed risk for most expenses such as musicians playing before and between performances and advertising, and managed the overall project. Roger and Trey invited participation to help with the event. The other members of the executive committee constituted the "active" group (Wenger et al., 2002). As the date for the event drew closer, Roger, Trey, and other executive committee members invited participation from a large "peripheral" group (Wenger et al., 2002) comprised of actors, vendors for food, and

volunteers to serve as docents, help with registration, and help with parking. Outsiders were invited to participate either as ticket holders, or as interested bystanders. Peripheral participants and intensely-watching outsiders constitute potential contributors to various topics, and a way to build "bench" strength (Wenger et al., 2002). Village Chronicles benefitted from its bench strength. When the costume director for the 2013 event resigned, Roger found a new volunteer to assume the position from the considerable bench strength of the event's peripheral members.

Describing initial meetings of the Village Chronicles executive committee, Roger noted how group members collaborated within and outside project meetings. He perceived a unique opportunity for different groups to contribute on a creative project in the county:

> We're still meeting, planning, and working every week. The Historic Society volunteered to have members research the characters and provide the information to Lilly's writing group. We are working together very well. I don't know how many opportunities so many different organizations have had to work together before this.

The process of planning, sharing ideas, and talking through processes represent informal learning (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Although not part of executive committee meetings in 2013, I observed several executive committee meetings in 2014. I observed committee members deciding on division of work and implementing a myriad of tasks such as researching characters, writing scripts, identifying actors, scheduling rehearsals, creating costumes, and creating a registration website. As executive committee members reflected on the 2013 event they discussed and made decisions regarding how they might

improve upon each process. Approximately one hundred volunteers, including high school students, full-time working adults, retirees, and busy parents collaborated to make the event possible. Nearly every research participant involved in Village Chronicles described a learning experience and a success story on which to build and improve future heritage tourism events. Roger summarized learning from the 2013 project:

> In the Chronicles endeavor, everything is a learning experience, because nothing like that has ever been done here…In addition to learning more about the individual characters who are being portrayed, we learn more about the different aspects of putting on the event, and the different things we need to do, and the different abilities of people, different things that they might say that you may not have ever thought of…Every little aspect, you make lists of things you think of and as those points are discussed, every individual there will be able to add to different aspects of that particular topic that you may not have ever thought about, and solutions, and more questions.

In the quote above, Roger mentioned learning several times. From observations of committee meetings, I witnessed members focused on creating an event with no discussion of what they were learning or how they could capture lessons learned through project artifacts, such as a project operations manual. Members engaged in dialogue, questioning and challenging, making enhancements in plans and moving forward with decisions. For example, when Lilly read an initial script, members listened without interrupting. After the reading was completed, members provided feedback, such as "That is a great story. I think you could cut out some of the specific dates and some of

the genealogy information. I don't think people will be as interested in that." Every member of the committee had an opportunity to provide input. At times a member who had personally known one or more of the characters would offer information about the character's personality so the script could better reflect the character, such as when Addie provided her personal childhood stories of interactions with one of the characters.

Describing Village Chronicles as different from previous tourism events, Harry claimed the project created new relationships, a new sense of accomplishment, and a new sense of community throughout the county:

> Chronicles, to me, is a little bit special. It's ratcheted up a notch in terms of size, complexity and cooperation of different parties. It has created camaraderie among a number of folks in Fresh Springs and Piedmont County. We banded together, created new relationships that hadn't existed before.

When he said the group members "created new relationships," Harry described building social capital through the Village Chronicles experience. Consistent with Harry's viewpoint, Frank asserted the project allowed for shared learning as individuals crossed organizational boundaries and discovered common goals:

> I think the whole activity of the Village Chronicles last year was very important in the life cycle of the DDA, the city of Fresh Springs, businesses, and the people that were working on it. Because when you look at the organizational boundaries that were crossed—there were groups that convened every Monday night that had never worked together

> before and they all had their own focus and they had their own objectives, and all of a sudden all that merged.

Frank specifically mentioned boundary crossing which Wenger (1998) described as providing rich learning experiences as information was shared between two or more communities of practice.

Although experiencing great turnout for the 2013 Village Chronicles event, several participants reported there was little downtown activity. Participant M, a volunteer with the event, said, "Nobody was downtown. Downtown was dead… It was incredibly dead." Some downtown merchants claimed planning for the event excluded them, and they perceived no community benefit from the event. Their comments communicated a lack of identity (Wenger, 1998) with the event.

Learning from and responding to downtown merchant feedback, the Village Chronicles executive committee increased 2014 communication and collaboration efforts. Providing event details to each downtown merchant, the DDA invited downtown merchants to its August meeting. Although downtown merchants did not attend the DDA meeting, a DDA member met with downtown merchants to review the ticket sales process. This deliberate outreach to downtown merchants constituted identity work (Wenger, 1998) as community of practice leaders consciously worked to pull these self-perceived "outsiders" into peripheral participation. Positive preliminary results included several downtown merchants selling tickets for the 2014 event. Encouraging further downtown merchant participation in Village Chronicles, the DDA recommended merchants decorate buildings and dress in period-appropriate attire per the age of each building. These DDA actions represented informal learning processes.

The county newspaper described a proud town after 2013 Village Chronicles. An article quoted the mayor: "I heard nothing but positive comments about the performance and about downtown Fresh Springs." In the same article, a different city council member remarked, "It was awesome. What a great event for our little town. Everybody praised it." Commenting two weeks later the editor wrote, "There is still a satisfying afterglow in the Fresh Springs community after the highly successful Village Chronicles." The 2014 Village Chronicles experienced lower attendance than the first year and the executive committee met to begin their collective reflection on what happened and what they could do differently as a first step toward planning the 2015 event.

Observing a predominantly White crowd at the 2013 and 2014 Village Chronicles events, it appeared the Village Chronicles events did not engage with Black community members. After hearing criticism for not having any Black characters in the 2013 event, the executive committee decided to have one Black character in the 2014 event. The executive committee had difficulty recruiting a Black actor, but did recruit an excellent actor from a nearby college. I did not observe any discussions of inviting Black community members to the executive committee, which may have convinced Black community members they were welcome and their input was valued. I heard slightly bewildered comments such as "We advertised in the local newspaper and made sure we mentioned the Black character and included a picture of the Black actor." There seemed to be an assumption that everyone read the county newspaper. Several White Fresh Springs and county residents verified they did not subscribe to the county newspaper and rarely read it. One Black participant expressed her opinion the paper had a reputation of

being for the White community and does not represent the Black community. Participant D, a Black woman, explained:

> There was a [Black] lady that used to write for the paper and I think she passed away….I hate to say it, but that newspaper is not for us…they were looking for another Black to write that column and it was called "Black Community" or "Black News" or something like that. I didn't like that.

It appears there is a serious divide between Whites and Blacks in the county which extends to each of the cities in the county. As Lambe et al. (2008) indicated, small communities need as many members of the community as possible to engage in revitalization and therefore, cannot afford to exclude anyone. Issues with a long history, such as racism, are not solved easily (Kahane, 2004) and require substantial identity work (Wenger, 1998). The Village Chronicles experience suggests it will take identity work to help Whites and Blacks see themselves as fellow community members with various talents to contribute, and welcome to meet in each other's living rooms on projects.

Motivated by the 2013 Village Chronicles, several volunteers developed and led two additional community projects designed to benefit the historic church and continue building on heritage tourism. Speaking about one of these events, Frank stated, "The real success of the [2013] Village Chronicles was not the event itself; it was the spark of having the Heritage Christmas service at the church." The next section discusses details of the events inspired by the 2013 Village Chronicles.

Concert Series and Heritage Christmas. Marveling at the architecture and acoustics of the historic church as they visited between last fall's performances, two volunteers discussed possible music performances in the church. Their informal learning

included discussions, reflections, decisions and actions (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). The two volunteers decided to explore an initial music event at the church, and possibly establishing a quarterly concert series. After recruiting additional help they organized a recorder ensemble performance at the church in February, followed by a string quartet in June. The result of collaboration between residents and business owners in Harristown and Fresh Springs and building upon the historic theme of the community, the church concert series became a quarterly event throughout 2014 with profits pledged to further renovation of the historic church. I attended two of these events, both of which were high-quality music events and well-attended by a White, older crowd.

As part of a carriage tour during the Village Chronicles, Lana walked into the historic church for the first time and considered it a perfect setting for her dream of an old-fashioned Christmas service. She shared her idea with others, was encouraged to pursue it further, and recruited many helping hands from downtown merchants and area residents. Providing several learning events, the project started with an idea and Lana learned informally and experientially as she interacted with her bucket list in her mind (Dewey, 1938). By sharing the idea and delegating tasks, Lana shared ownership and leadership. Lana's business does not directly benefit from Fresh Springs' heritage tourism. She acted as a caring member of the Fresh Springs community. Lana explained:

> When I went inside I immediately thought, "Oh, this would be so beautiful for our Christmas candlelight service." I mentioned this idea to a couple of people, including Nick. Nick encouraged me with "Oh, my goodness, that's an amazing idea." With many helping hands and innovative ideas

> we created a wonderful community event. The idea was to have nineteenth century decorations, and so no twinkling, plugged in electric lights and all that kind of stuff…with berries, greenery, and ribbons made from strips of cotton as opposed to those pre-made velvet bows. For this year we are going to try to build upon last year's event and expand it to a couple of Saturdays because there were so many people there—it was standing room only. It would be nice if we planned it so people can visit a little bit downtown and over at the gardens. We could have luminaries lining the street, and get the neighbors involved. Like last year I intend to have the crock pot with an aromatic concoction similar to the orange and cinnamon Tiffany provided; and, of course, beautiful decorations, horse and buggy rides, having the different readers and musicians, and children filling the place. This isn't about "me"; this is about us, our community.

Lana's story described her reflections as she first saw inside the historic church, described details of the 2013 event, and surmised possible improvements for the 2014 event. By November 2014 I did not see any promotions for a 2014 old-fashioned Christmas event at the historic church, perhaps because it was too early, although I did see promotions for Christmas in Piedmont at the Courthouse. Another possible issue was that Lana and her husband launched a new business in the Fresh Springs area in fall 2014 and Lana may have been busy helping her husband with the new business.

In summary, learning for rural revitalization in Fresh Springs was experiential as community members acted to complete tasks. The experiential learning was mostly informal learning and sometimes incidental learning as a by-product of other activities.

Informal learning in rural communities of practice included dialogue with other community members involved in a revitalization project, sometimes talking through an issue, sometimes networking outside the community of practice, or collaborating with members of the community of practice and/or outsiders on one or more solutions. Incidental learning in rural communities of practice included unintentional learning while working on a task, having conversations, sensing something in the community, or experimenting through trial and error. A common theme of leadership surfaced in most stories of Fresh Springs' revitalization. Similar to Lana's story, revitalization projects usually included one or two people initiating an idea, working with others to grow the idea, developing and refining project details, and inviting more community members' engagement for project implementation. The next section reports findings of Fresh Springs' entrepreneurial, servant, and civic leadership as facilitators of learning.

Leadership Facilitated Learning for Revitalization

Chapter Two defined leadership "as a practice, an activity that some people do some of the time" (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 24) with three main responsibilities: (1) give direction, (2) provide protection, and (3) maintain order; and two core tasks: first diagnose, and then act (Heifetz et al., 2009). Much like the chapter's opening story of Toby's contributions, participants provided stories of leadership facilitating learning for Fresh Springs' revitalization. This section covers three sources of leadership facilitating learning for revitalization: (1) entrepreneurial and servant leadership, (2) civic leadership, and (3) an organization representing a combination of entrepreneurial and civic leadership, the Piedmont County Chamber of Commerce.

Entrepreneurial and Servant Leadership

Often described as risk takers, innovators, and proactive (McCline & Bhat, 2012), entrepreneurs build and grow firms. Adopting the Greenberg, McKone-Sweet, and Wilson (2011) definition of entrepreneurial leadership, entrepreneurial leaders are not always business owners. Entrepreneurial leaders take action, exploring new solutions to old problems, assuming risks due to complexity and incomplete data, and inspiring and leading others to action (Greenberg et al., 2011). Several Fresh Springs and Piedmont County rural entrepreneurs, or small business owners, exhibited a willingness to take risks, innovate and be proactive as they navigated through uncertain times and shrinking markets, and often realized the interdependency between their businesses and the community. These leaders exhibited characteristics of servant leaders identified by Ricketts (2009) as valuing people, developing people, building community, displaying authenticity, providing leadership, and sharing leadership. For example, a heritage tourism event initiated by a small business owner, Village Chronicles included profit-seeking activities for risk-assuming businesses, non-profit benefits for the renovation of the historic church, and general economic development assistance to the town overall. Roger, the owner of Divine Gardens, explained the shared objectives of the Village Chronicles as building community:

> The event we are doing…promises to bring more recognition…more tourists to the county, more business to the area, whether it be more customers to my nursery…to downtown Fresh Springs…to the bed and breakfasts…to people providing food services…to the gas stations down the road.

Several participants applauded Roger as a Fresh Springs and Piedmont County entrepreneurial leader. Ignoring naysayers, the Fresh Springs newcomer confident in his product and business plan took a calculated risk that customers would drive a few additional miles. Roger described the decision to move to Fresh Springs:

> I remember when we first moved into the county, the wife of one of the County Commissioners commented how she felt it was going to be difficult to have a business like ours in the county because not many people would be interested in purchasing flowers. We commented to her that we had great hopes of attracting business from places other than just the county. That was one of our goals. We also knew that because of the uniqueness of our product and the newness of the market we were developing, it really did not matter where you were located, because if people wanted what you offered, they would come to you. We were encouraged by the fact that people did actually drive two hours to come buy plant material from us, or farther than that, and told their friends. We started having visitors from North Carolina, professors from different universities—Texas, North Carolina, Florida. We didn't fear losing business by moving just a few more miles down the road.

Roger applauded the Fresh Springs community for contributing to his business' success. Describing himself as an outsider, he recounted the old-timers accepting him and his partner and supporting the business:

> I'm an outsider…we were very well accepted by everybody who was already here. They were happy to see a new business….I couldn't have

> done anything without the support of the community that was already here, because the people who were here were very receptive, happy, and eager to assist us in a lot of different ways.

Roger's comments reflect his servant leadership qualities of valuing people and building community (Ricketts, 2009). Describing the partners' contributions to Fresh Springs, Ann offered: "they have been very instrumental…in bringing people out there because between their own personalities, and what they offered, it was just really fun."

Helen acknowledged Divine Gardens with promoting recognition of Fresh Springs and Piedmont County in many parts of the state:

> Divine Gardens has always been a wonderful place for Piedmont County. If you're out in the state somewhere and you say you're from Fresh Springs, either they've never heard of it or they say, "Oh, Divine Gardens." So, that has been a very good thing. We can't let anything happen to Divine Gardens.

Downtown merchants expressed similar sentiments and promoted Divine Gardens to customers visiting their stores.

Harry described Roger's leadership as modeling quality, speaking from personal experiences working with Roger on Village Chronicles, and observing Roger work with other volunteers:

> If he's going to be involved or have his name on it, he wants it to go off well. A lot of folks are like "Well, it's good enough. We did it, we got it done." That's not good enough for Roger. He wants it to be a very special event, mainly with the customer in mind.

The description of Divine Gardens provided in Chapter Four is consistent with Harry's comments regarding Roger's objective of providing a high-quality, "special" experience for his customers. Describing Roger's leadership style, Harry said, "Roger…was always soliciting comments and opinions from everybody." After attending a living history event in a nearby town a few weeks before the 2013 Village Chronicles, I observed Roger's leadership as a learning facilitator as he asked: "what worked well, what didn't, what could we do differently, do better?" In the early weeks when I was struggling to learn my lines for the 2013 Village Chronicles, Roger provided encouragement and mentoring characteristic of a servant leader (Ricketts, 2009). He told me: "You are doing great. As you study more and you come to see yourself as Ginny, the lines will come naturally." In addition to Roger's leadership, participants acknowledged several downtown merchants as leadership contributors.

Both old-timer and newcomer participants mentioned Cheryl and Addie as Fresh Springs' revitalization leaders. Nick described Cheryl's long-term involvement in downtown revitalization: "I think Cheryl…for the last twenty years she's attempted something every year, whether it be Christmas in Piedmont, or other events to bring people to town." Ann, a previous Fresh Springs business owner now located in the county area, mentioned both Addie and Cheryl as revitalization leaders noting, "There has been a…really nice little Renaissance down there in the last eight or nine years…it's been slow, but it's been gradual. Addie is very enthusiastic and she's been very instrumental, but Cheryl has always been there."

Participants described Cheryl as a vital component of heritage tourism in Fresh Springs, serving on nearly every tourism committee or project in the city and county in

the last two decades. Kay explained: "She's been very active throughout all the years and she's the doer…the one who gets over and decorates the courthouse for Christmas. She tries to do it all. She tries to do too much a lot of time." Similar to the Artist & Farmers Co-op, Cheryl hosts artists, writers, poets, and musicians at special events. As the county Chamber tourism representative, Cheryl works on Fresh Springs' betterment through several projects. Nick, Ann, and Kay described Cheryl's long-term efforts to serve the community and its members, attributing servant leadership characteristics (Ricketts, 2009) to Cheryl.

While discussing recent revitalization efforts, Cheryl acknowledged Addie's prior experiences in downtown development as an asset to Fresh Springs' revitalization efforts. Addie represents an interesting position on the old-timer/newcomer continuum. Having roots in the area going back many generations makes her an old-timer. Moving back to the area in 2009, she brought outside experiences similar to newcomers. Addie described her community position:

> This is my home. My father's family is nine, ten generations. As a child here, this was a vibrant little downtown. It wasn't anything glamorous, but there was something in every building and activity on Saturday mornings….When I got home literally all the planters …everything was dead….There were a few people who said "Where have you been all these years?" My father said, "You are an outsider and an insider."

Several participants associated Addie, the Co-op, and in particular Addie's efforts in developing the Farmers' Market with re-igniting city and county revitalization efforts. Harry argued Addie's efforts provided improved downtown visibility: "Of course, it has a

lot to do with one person, Addie, and her trying to get this Co-op going…She's getting a lot of people in town visible on the courthouse square, at least on Saturday mornings." Although claiming little knowledge of revitalization in general, a nurse at the County Health Department identified Addie and the Farmers' Market: "I live outside the city limits and have not heard of any revitalization in Fresh Springs other than we like the new Farmer's Market, and of course, we know Addie." Nick applauded Addie's contributions to community learning and understanding of downtown development principles:

> I want to give Addie a lot of credit….She knew that you had to stay at it. I mean, she was really the one that got us cleaning up the streets, planting the planters. Those are the things that make your town look like you care. If you look like you care, people are going to stop and see what's going on, and she knew we had to do that.

Establishing the Artist & Farmer Co-op (the Co-op) five years ago, Addie and her business partner provide retail space for many local artists and farmers. Actively marketing the Co-op through various methods, the Co-op promotes the town and its merchants, as well as the Co-op's artist and farmer members. The following advertisement excerpt for a special event sponsored by the Co-op provides an example: "Come spend the day, take a walking tour, swap seeds, buy seasonal produce and plants, visit Divine Gardens and other local shops, and enjoy lunch at one of our local eateries." Addie exhibits the characteristics of a servant leader (Ricketts, 2009) through her contributions to the community, her care and concern for people, and the development of her team. Descriptions of Addie sparking enthusiasm and re-igniting revitalization

efforts fit Smith's (2012) definition of an animateur, and as an entrepreneurial leader (Greenberg, et al., 2011) as she inspired, took action, and explored new solutions.

Participant conversations and document review identified Nick as an influential revitalization leader. Living in Fresh Springs for three decades and having a business presence for 16 years, Nick's revitalization activities include the city park development, organizing DDA, chairing DDA, and serving on city council, the Chamber board, and the regional planning commission. An August 2014 local newspaper article identified Nick, an avid tennis player, as the driving influence for county tennis courts, scheduled for installation in a Harristown park. Assuming city real estate holdings can be sold, Nick expressed his wish list for investing the funds:

> Let's improve our infrastructure so if we're going to bring people to our town to spend money…that it is safe while they're here, that they have the things that are needed: a place to shop, a place to eat, and a place to use the bathroom. We've got two of them, we need that third one.

Nick shared his reflections on his own actions and an evaluation of DDA's progress. He described personal learnings and assumed collective learnings of the DDA, when he said: "What you've got to do is be a better communicator, a better collaborator and get people to work with you better, and I think we're doing that." When asked about hard or difficult issues in the city, Nick expressed optimism saying, "However hard and difficult the effort is, it's worth the effort."

Jane's Café provides a story of Fresh Springs change driven by proactive, risk-taking rural entrepreneurs assisted by civic leaders. Jane serves as a current DDA member. Less than one year after opening the business, Jane and Jared applied for

approval to serve wine and beer by the drink, expanding their offerings beyond coffee, soft drinks, and light snacks. Assuming risks of several unknowns, including citizen reactions to newcomers introducing the serving of alcohol, Jane and Jared proceeded. Explaining concern of traditional beliefs possibly blocking the application, Participant K surmised changing attitudes and an influx of progressive people helped:

> [People] wanted to go downtown and have a meal, have a glass of wine or have a beer, things that ten years prior to that you probably wouldn't have heard; but you've had an evolution, a change of ownership and property and people that think it's okay to do that. City Council had the public meeting…I was a little worried…people started coming and before long the whole room is packed. I said to myself, "How many of these are Baptists? We could be in trouble." Not one person spoke against it….It's progress.

Participant L agreed attitudes had changed: "It would not have been that way five years ago. No referendum would have passed because of the fear." Informal learning from articles in the county newspaper (the editor serves on city council) covering city council and DDA reviews of the application may have helped ease fears.

Civic Leadership

Participants mentioned civic leadership facilitating learning for revitalization of both residential and business aspects of the community. Except for one part-time city clerk, all community members on city council, Downtown Development Authority (DDA), Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), and any committees those entities create serve as volunteers. Helen, a resident serving on HPC perceived volunteering as a

civic duty noting, "Everybody has to take their turn if you want these governmental agencies to work." As community members assumed leadership roles, they learned about various aspects of the civic organization they represented, and helped neighbors gain understanding. Helen shared how her learning of the HPC started when she was renovating her own home:

> I've learned a lot…when we were renovating our house we had to go three different times before the commission before I ever was appointed to it. We had to apply for different things that we were adding on or changing and so we became very familiar with the commission at that time.

Helen described non-formal training she received as a new HPC appointee, and how conferences provided an opportunity to network with other historic towns: "There is a training session…through the state of Georgia…they have workshops and seminars and you learn quite a bit about what it's all about…and you learn from other people how they treat problems within their communities." Explaining that HPC had no way to enforce its regulations, Helen explained that part of her job on HPC was to educate community members: "we…try to make them understand that it makes our community much better if they'll abide by the guidelines, and most people do."

Several participants recognized city council leadership for managing the operations of the city, keeping the city solvent, and supporting historic preservation. Cheryl expressed appreciation of the current council: "We have a good group of councilmen now; they are very forward thinking." She added, "They have always been supportive of historic preservation, which is a part of economic development in a city like

this." Roger acknowledged city council for their part in working with the county and Harristown to bring water and sewer to Fresh Springs.

Owning a county business and living just outside Fresh Springs, Lana's civic leadership extends to Rotary and the Chamber. Lana's previous story of conceiving the historic Christmas service included a story of servant leadership, as she developed the project and invited downtown merchants to join her. The historic Christmas service team created an event described by the local newspaper as having "standing room only." Lana continued her story:

> We had everybody in the square working together. I asked each merchant for help and let them know I was asking everyone else in town as well, and wanted everyone to be there. I said "I love you dearly and I need you to do this. This is about Christmas. This isn't about anything personal." Everyone pitched in and we created an amazing event.

Lana recognized talents among downtown merchants and proactively invited them to join her. Her actions exhibited all six factors of servant leadership identified by Ricketts (2009): valuing people, developing people, building community, displaying authenticity, providing leadership, and sharing leadership. When asked about the learning process for revitalization, Lana emphasized delegation as a critical factor in facilitating learning. She said: "I think the best way to pull together a team to pull off a project is somebody has to have the idea, but then whoever has that idea cannot retain complete 'God over everything' control over it." Lana described her theory of facilitating learning for revitalization:

> A project starts with somebody having an idea…You have to …share your vision, piece out parts of it, and then let people take ownership of their part…I would never have been able to implement a vision of old fashioned Christmas decorations the way Beth did…she took complete charge of it, she managed it, and she told me what to do at that point…when everybody has a piece of it…it comes off so well as opposed to telling people what to do. That's just not the way we humans work, we're team oriented, we're family oriented, and we're neighborhood oriented.

As a board member of the Chamber, Lana provides entrepreneurial and servant leadership as she mentors new county businesses. The next section discusses the Chamber's leadership influence on Fresh Springs' and county revitalization efforts.

Piedmont County Chamber of Commerce

With Chamber offices located at the historic train depot in Harristown, Frank, the chamber president, networks and collaborates with city and county governments, including the county school system. Roger praised the Chamber's support of county businesses and in particular credited the current leadership for growing the Chamber:

> There's always been a Chamber of Commerce since I have been here. It was started by a couple of people. One of them was an individual who did not own a business, yet she was adamant about trying to improve the business atmosphere and bring more life to the town…[and a] man, who did have a business...It has grown, especially under the current leadership.

In the quote above Roger emphasized the female founding individual's drive to build community, a characteristic of servant leadership (Ricketts, 2009). Observing a few

chamber events I noted how the chamber president acknowledged contributions of area business owners and civic leaders, provided and shared leadership, and appeared to have respectful relationships with the business community as expressed by Roger and Lana. Participating in the chamber since she moved to Piedmont County even before starting her business, Lana described the evolution of the chamber while she served on the chamber board:

> We'd taken the Chamber from being more of a social entity to being a real operating Chamber that was putting out economic development platforms. Frank came on and was able to liaison with the county for economic development...So, we took it to a different level.

In the quote above, Lana described moving the Chamber forward, making it better, moving it to an economic development organization. This infers experiential learning with past experiences building on new experiences (Dewey, 1938; Miettinen, 2000). She credited Frank's strong finance and business consulting expertise as another step forward for the chamber. Lana explained how the Chamber supports new businesses through informal learning of networking, mentoring, and sharing information:

> When someone comes in with an idea to start a business, Frank will send an email and say, "Can you share some information…" I've had many people come in that I've…talked with, and pointed them towards the Small Business Development Center which is where I got my initial help.

Lana exhibited servant leadership as she described valuing people and helping to develop people through informal learning. Taking part in a business-after-hours event sponsored by the Chamber, I noted how the event exposed Fresh Springs' businesses to other county

businesses providing an opportunity to socialize and network. I observed mutually respectful interactions between the county-wide business community.

Frank praised Piedmont County's entrepreneurial and civic leadership. He applauded visionary civic leadership from the retired school superintendent who continued to offer leadership on the Chamber Board:

> Here's a great example of visionary leadership…the retired school superintendent, he's on the Chamber Board right now… When the school system had the trench opened to bury the sewer pipe, they buried an empty conduit at the same time with pull lines in it…everything they need for putting in essential glass fiber all the way to the schools…to serve…whatever is in between.

Frank recognized entrepreneurial innovation and risk-taking connected with the Village Chronicles: "Roger's invention caused [Village Chronicles] and…he took a lot of risks making this happen." Referring to risk-taking by Wes and Addie, he commented: "what they committed in capital to expand the tours and bring additional capacity online just for the Chronicles weekend, they took a huge risk doing that." It appears Fresh Springs and Piedmont County have rich leadership resources upon which to develop and nurture future leadership. Despite the many positive leadership influences identified in this section, participants perceived lapses of leadership resulting in learning barriers.

Lapses of Leadership Created Barriers to Learning

Participants described frustration when talking about the community "being stuck" in several areas. Small businesses and residents took action in many areas without local government involvement, but they expected local government to provide certain

functions similar to the list of leadership responsibilities suggested by Heifetz et al. (2009)—give direction, provide protection, and maintain order. Keeping in mind Petrie's (2011) concept of leadership as not restricted to those in official leadership positions, I observed community members failing to assume leadership when they saw actions or heard comments that were disrespectful, and did or said nothing. This section discusses three main categories of lapses of leadership identified by participants: (1) lack of enforcement, (2) lack of overall plan, and (3) lack of diverse civic leadership. The discussion starts with the enforcement issue.

Lack of Enforcement

Nearly all participants mentioned the run down, empty buildings in the commercial block as preventing further downtown development. With two buildings having gaping holes in the roof structures threatening integrity of adjoining buildings, the other empty buildings represent lost opportunity for economic development. Participant E, a long-time resident and business owner, declared enforcement was the biggest issue facing Fresh Springs and difficult, if not impossible, to solve due to the lack of resources: "We have no policemen. We don't have an inspector. We don't have anything. It is all volunteers. Enforcement is your biggest issue." A joint planning retreat attended by most members of city council, HPC, and DDA in May 2013 included a short-term priority item of "Enforcement plan for repair of structures (local and absentee owners)," but as of August 2014 participants reported no progress regarding an enforcement plan.

With widespread agreement that enforcement represents a significant problem, viewpoints differ regarding solutions. Participant M, a long-time resident and business owner, expressed frustration at inconsistencies of having various organizations establish

regulations, but not enforce those regulations, and faulted city council for lack of enforcement, implying lack of enforcement partly due to delaying action and hoping the issue would go away:

> There is no enforcement here. That's…why so much doesn't get done and so many things get done improperly….and they'll…admit it at city council meetings…Then why go to all the trouble to create the ordinances?...I don't see the city doing a lot. They move very, very slowly…It gets tabled and tabled and tabled until sometimes it drops off the table.

One of the newer merchants shared her experience going to city council and bringing up enforcement issues. She summarized: "They were defensive and gave lots of excuses for doing nothing." Therefore, the lack of enforcement becomes a lack of action from which the community could learn and adapt as necessary. With no action, the community remains in a "stuck" situation.

Admitting to once belonging to the "grumblers club" regarding city council's inaction, Nick decided to see if he could do any better after retiring. As a member of the council, he gained appreciation for the difficulty of the job and argued the biggest problem faced by city council was lack of funds with which to enforce decisions:

> When you start talking about picking a fight with people that are on their own private property, you've got to be very careful about it because it can be a long fight, and if you're talking about having to hire legal counsel to fight your battles for you, it can become an expensive fight.

Participant F's viewpoint of city council's argument was: "If we send them letters to clean up the property then they'll want to sue us and we don't have the money to

[defend]." The failure to send letters to violators when requested by DDA and HPC does not sit well with several residents and business owners who "play by the rules" and creates conditions for mislearning if community members conclude: "They won't do anything, so we can do as we please."

A long-time resident of the county familiar with city council operations, Participant L provided a different viewpoint of the enforcement issue, assuming officials did not enforce regulations or create new regulations such as a "blight tax" for fear of setting a precedent potentially harmful to good-intentioned, long-term residents. Participant L hypothesized the difficult situation revolved around fear of the unknowns:

> You would open a can of worms. If you can condemn and take his property from him because he refuses to replace the roof or clean the trash out…or whatever, then if there is a person back on First Street that's fallen on hard times and can't afford to paint their house…Do you then take it to the next step, condemn them, and run them out of their property because they can't afford to paint their house? No. So, that's going to be the mindset…the "what ifs."

Participant L described an unwillingness to take risks on the part of city council, and uneasiness with incomplete information. Other factors may be the complexity of the issue which may require considerable time, time that city council members do not have. Participant L's specific mention of "a person back on First Street" triggered a connection with a claim made by a challenger in the fall 2013 election:

> I think some of the stuff that's been done has been by a small group of people who want things fixed up just in their neighborhood. When it

> comes to other neighborhoods, they haven't really tried to push in that direction.

First Street is where most the large historic homes are located. This made me wonder if Participant L's comment implied there was more concern for residents on First Street rather than the merchant/residents on Main Street or residents in other areas of the city.

In addition to the rundown buildings in the commercial block, other enforcement issues exist, such as city alleyways being claimed as property of adjoining property owners, and abandoned equipment presenting safety risks to small children. Some participants referred to enforcement issues as "unsolvable" and talked about needing to wait until somebody died (the abandoned property owner), or a storm came through town as mentioned by Participant O: "I've always said that an isolated tornado down that center strip would be just what we need." Participants perceive city council giving up on these difficult issues and community members want to see new attempts to find solutions. Declaring city council members less effective because they allow friendships to interfere with enforcing city ordinances, Participant F surmised, "They don't want to ruffle feathers because they want everybody to be their friend. No, you can't sit in these positions and want to be everybody's friend."

Participant H told me about attending a city council meeting and being heckled. She explained: "The mayor asked me a question, but some in the audience did not want to hear my opinions. They heckled me and no one said anything in my defense, not the mayor, nor anyone else there." While attending a city council meeting I observed heckling as city council members discussed an issue. None of the council members seemed to pay any attention to the heckling, and members of the audience seemed

nonchalant about it as well. I did a quick check of Robert's Rules of Order (Robert, 1915) and confirmed heckling is not allowed. There is a clear line between free speech and heckling. This lack of respect and decorum created a mis-educative experience (Rodgers, 2002), and enforcement of bad behavior.

Although city council laments about lack of funds for enforcement, and did not take advantage of a $100,000 grant for improving the Main Street sidewalks requiring the city to invest $20,000 on the project, a few participants noted city council found money to buy a building near First Street. Participant K told me: "They spent a hundred and twenty-eight thousand dollars cash which didn't sit well with me at the time…and they bought it because they didn't want to see another manufacturing plant go there." Participant K hopes the city will sell the building. Participant F related the same story, and fears the building is worth far less than what the city paid for it, and doubts the city will sell it since it is unlikely they will recoup their investment, and because Participant F perceives the city wants to control the building's future use. Participant M does not want the city to sell the building because she is concerned about who will buy it and what a new building owner might do with the building. Participants with knowledge of zoning ordinances, which can be crafted to control present and future uses of buildings and land, argue the city's actions indicated a lack of an overall plan.

Lack of Overall Plan

Participants voiced frustration of not knowing the overall plan for Fresh Springs. While acknowledging local officials served as part-time volunteers, with multiple competing demands from full-time jobs, small businesses, retirement, family, social, and other volunteer activities, several participants voiced an expectation of direction and

action from local officials. Participant O prescribed a need for leadership: "You've got to have somebody who…and I hate to use this word, has a "vision" or a plan or an idea that they want to see happen in an area. And then somebody has to start it."

Familiar with state-required comprehensive planning which entails generic documents without specific details looking to the future, Participant J noted the update process was required every five years, "but a lot of it is 'check the boxes.' It's a historical document; it's not looking to the future." Although expressing uncertainty regarding revitalization goals, participants expressed a variety of personal viewpoints. When asked "What would you like Fresh Springs to become?" answers included on one end of the growth continuum the desire for Fresh Springs to grow similar to "quaint" cities with three to four thousand residents. Participant F explained, "We have a lot of talented people. If we had more store fronts open we could have cute little restaurants and little boutiques and artisans to make it tourist-friendly…we have a lot to offer." The other end of the growth continuum represents desire for next to no change. Living in the county for several decades, Participant A indicated "I'm one of those ready to close the gates and say, let's not change much of anything. Honestly, when I think about it that's the way I feel. I don't want to change a lot to try to attract visitors."

Most participants voiced the viewpoint of wanting "smart growth" or "quality growth" including a desire for more shoppers downtown, but not significant changes. Brad described "the best of both worlds" where new zoning would allow development within certain parameters and residential areas would remain quiet rural areas. Cheryl provided her description of quality growth presented below as a "found" poem, meaning I

found the words in Cheryl's interview transcript and rearranged the words slightly to form this poem. Recall, Cheryl moved to the town in 1976.

Quality Growth without Widespread Development

We are one of the most intact 19th century villages in the state,
probably in the South.
People either grew up here in the rural community, or they moved here
to get away from an Atlanta or a Boston to live the rural lifestyle.
They don't want huge development, they don't want subdivisions,
they don't want shopping centers or anything like that.
They want it to stay peaceful, calm and green.
(Cheryl, personal communication, June 28, 2013)

Amy, a downtown business owner, speculated all business owners in Fresh Springs wanted the same thing, "We all want more business in town. There are differences in opinion about how to go about that, and how fast to accomplish it." She added, "Every person and every building has a story; people shouldn't generalize solutions and timelines." Participant L used a metaphor of the tension between those comfortable with rapid change and those desiring gradual change. Assigning rates of change on a ten point scale with one being gradual change and ten being rapid change, she described tensions between the extremes:

> One of the things I see occasionally in Fresh Springs is people that are wanting to pull it up to eight and ten, tend to lose sight of the great sacrifice and the extreme work of those who were back at, or having a struggle getting to, one and two. That creates a bit of a wall.

Many participants support Participant L's call for patience and gradual change. However, they want to see progress and they want to know the overall plan. Another short-term priority item identified by the joint city council, HPC, and DDA planning retreat in May 2013 was:

> Build on Charrette – develop a vision with goals, create a work plan with categories of action, and flesh out the plan. Take all previous plans as a starting point. Form teams to accomplish tasks and interact. Identify leaders for various efforts and get organized.

As with the earlier short-term priority of developing an enforcement plan, after 18 months I have seen no reported progress toward this goal. Perceiving a lack of an overall plan and lack of action on enforcement issues, several participants voiced a need for inviting residents with diverse viewpoints to civic leadership rather than continuing the long-term trend of maintaining the status quo. The next section discusses participant viewpoints regarding this perceived lack of diversity in civic leadership.

Lack of Diverse Civic Leadership

Heifetz et al. (2009) quoted a colleague, Jeff Lawrence, as saying "There is no such thing as a dysfunctional organization, because every organization is perfectly aligned to achieve the results it currently gets" (p. 17). Perhaps understanding that solving persistent issues in town would require a re-alignment in city council, several community members attempted to unseat three city council members. Publishing several articles on the fall 2013 election, the local newspaper reported the election as the first one held in 20 years. During those two decades city council members arranged replacement council members unchallenged by citizens, and it appears the council expected the practice to continue since they did not include election-related expenses in the city budget. Participant F referred to city council's practice as evidence of "a well-functioning boys network" where "they hand-pick who they want on the council and do not involve the entire community." A city resident and downtown merchant implied city

council manipulated election rules for the benefit of incumbents: "The rule used to be the three candidates getting the most votes were elected, but this time each person had to run against a specific incumbent, making it easier for the incumbents to stay in power."

Several participants recognized a need for engaging youth. Participant B, a newcomer and younger resident speaking of current leadership practices summarized, "It's good and fine for when the people who are involved are still here but they won't always be here…I'd like to see more teen and youth involvement in the city." Positioning youth leaving the county as causing lack of leadership diversity rather than an effect of it, Participant J noted, "When kids graduate from high school here, they're out of here as quick as they can get out. That's created a void of young leadership." From observations and review of documents, I did not see any attempts to invite young people to civic meetings as potential valuable contributors.

The perceived need for leadership development extends to revitalization work. Despite evidence of team work presented earlier, participants recognized the need for improvements. Participant K remarked, "I just wish we would all work together a bit better." Lamenting the difficulty of developing and managing teams, Participant J described his viewpoint:

> Most projects start off with the idea of "Okay, it's going to be a team work thing," but then it usually ends up being a power struggle over ideas or semantics or implementation. "We're going to do it my way" or "We've always done it this way," rather than figuring out how to come together and do it.

Recognizing the need to engage with youth, improve team building, and create strategic plans, Frank described the Chamber's plan for developing leadership capacity:

> We've got some young people who are involved, [our county commission chairman] is one of them, working with [the retired superintendent of schools and a bank branch manager]—they are getting the Leadership Development Program started again…We have to start developing leadership for the future because right now there are too many people like me with receding hairlines and white hair.

Frank described the long-term process of developing leaders: "These aren't things that you can get a team together and make turn around. These are things that will take years to reverse the trend." Assuming Frank was correct about the time frame required, his statement was a sound argument for getting started on solutions sooner rather than later.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided findings for the research questions: (1) How did rural community members learn about revitalization? (2) What facilitated learning for revitalization? (3) What created barriers to learning for revitalization? Community members described learning to revitalize their rural community through active practice. The learning included informal learning such as self-directed learning between meetings, networking with experts outside the revitalization group, coaching and mentoring others in the revitalization group, dialogue and collaboration within the group, reflection, and taking action and learning from outcomes. Incidental learning occurred as a byproduct of a revitalization project task, having conversations with colleagues, sensing aspects of the group environment, and learning from trial and error. Community members organized in

groups constituting communities of practice, sharing an identity with the group, having a clear objective, and crossing boundaries between other groups or other learning resources. Participants indicated leadership facilitated learning for revitalization when leaders formulated an idea and clearly communicated the idea to others so followers and "doers" understood the goal and their part of the project, often resulting in shared leadership. Several individuals identified by participants as revitalization leaders exhibited characteristics of entrepreneurial and servant leadership. Participants felt lapses in leadership such as inaction, failure to create an overall plan, and lack of diverse civic leadership created barriers to learning for revitalization. The next and final chapter provides a summary of findings, conclusions, and implications for theory, practice, policy, and future research.

CHAPTER SIX:

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

> *Learning cannot be designed. Ultimately, it belongs to the realm of experience and practice….It slips through the cracks; it creates its own cracks. Learning happens, design or no design. And yet there are few more urgent tasks than to design social infrastructures that foster learning. This is true not only of schools and universities, but also of all sorts of organizations in the public and private sectors, and even of entities usually not called organizations, like states and nations. (Wenger, 1998, p. 225)*

The purpose of this research was to understand how community members learned while working on rural community revitalization projects with their neighbors. The questions guiding the research were: (1) How did rural community members learn about revitalization? (2) What facilitated learning for revitalization? (3) What created barriers to learning for revitalization? This chapter examines the findings from a case study of the community of Fresh Springs as community members worked toward revitalizing their town. The discussion begins with a summary of findings presented in the previous two chapters. Then, the chapter presents three major conclusions, followed by implications for theory, practice, and policy. The chapter concludes with implications for future research.

Summary of Findings

This case study concerned one small community in the southeastern U.S. undergoing revitalization with little help from external groups or consultants. The selection of the case was done purposefully (Simons, 2009) since the case contained the

phenomenon I wished to study, there were people with considerable experience with the phenomenon willing to share their stories, and the case was accessible for extended fieldwork. Over a two-year period data generation involved participant observations, document review, informal conversations, and 16 in-depth interviews. Atlas.ti7 provided the data storage system (Stake, 1995), and facilitated coding, grouping codes into categories, and forming themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Communities of practice theory (Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002) informed the study. Although a literature review uncovered international studies of rural revitalization informed by communities of practice, it identified a lack of U.S. studies focused on learning for rural community revitalization. This study was designed to fill that gap. Summarizing findings by research questions, the next section recaps how community members learned for revitalization, followed by participants' views on what facilitated learning, and then what created barriers to learning.

How Community Members Learned

Most learning described by participants in the study involved community members working on revitalization projects with fellow city and county residents, constituting communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Community members learned experientially and informally through discussions, hearing different ideas about a topic or project, and being open to new ways to think about and complete a project. Although participants mentioned non-formal learning such as conferences and workshops, and self-directed learning such as Internet searches and reading through handbooks and guidelines, the research uncovered numerous informal and incidental learning examples while community members worked on revitalization

projects. Informal learning included networking with experts and those with prior expertise, and creating new associations with similar-interest outsiders while attending historic tourism and preservation conferences and workshops (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Community members learned informally through coaching, mentoring, planning, reflecting, collaborating, and taking action (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Sometimes learning was incidental as a by-product to focusing on a task and not intentionally thinking about learning, having conversations with colleagues, sensing aspects of the environment, and experimentation through trial and error (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Participation in county, regional, and state groups resulted in boundary crossing opportunities, increasing knowledge sharing and learning (Wenger, 1998). For example, Cheryl participated in several communities of practice within the community of Fresh Springs, the county, and the state. As Cheryl networked and shared information with state tourism contacts she acted as a boundary agent, creating a bridge between Fresh Springs' heritage tourism and the state tourism groups, and she learned informally from her tourism relationships.

At times one or two individuals initiating a project intentionally designed a group to work on specific tasks, such as Nick and Addie working with other community members to organize the DDA. At other times a group formed when people with common interests discussed an issue, invited people to the discussion, and the group decided to take action on a project, such as Roger taking his idea for Village Chronicles to several civic organizations in Fresh Springs and Piedmont County. Village Chronicles executive committee members learned experientially and informally as they discussed characters, challenged each other on certain aspects of the character, reflected upon

information obtained on the character, and decided what changes to make in the script. Community members learned experientially and informally as they networked both inside and outside the community, and collaborated on project needs. Sometimes learning occurred through trial and error described by Addie concerning early downtown development activities, or through a "sensing" described by Kay when she attended the charrette. Experiential learning was the norm as community members worked on revitalization projects and experienced results of their actions (Miettinen, 2000). As Frank said "you can't hit people over the head with it"—they have to experience it, they need to see small successes, and build upon them through additional experiences.

Community members learned that community-wide efforts could be successful, such as when Lana invited downtown merchants to participate on the old-fashioned Christmas event. They learned boundaries could be crossed between non-speaking cliques through the power of shared imagination, inviting people with diverse viewpoints, and sharing leadership. As community members worked on the organization of the DDA they learned the power of building upon ideas through dialogue and building camaraderie within the city and across the county. Community members learned that by joining forces to "figure something out," they produced results as described by Roger regarding Village Chronicles. Collectively, community members involved in heritage tourism agreed to form a tourism committee based on their learning of the difficulty for one representative to manage timely placement of heritage tourism events in numerous magazines, websites, and newsletters with various advertising publication deadlines. Participants described leadership as a facilitator of learning and key to designing and implementing revitalization projects.

Leadership Facilitated Learning

Leadership for revitalization emerged as individuals and groups initiated ideas, shared their ideas with others, and accepted calculated risks as they implemented projects. Participants indicated revitalization leadership facilitated learning. History-minded newcomers exhibited leadership when they took action to preserve the city's historical structures and created the foundation for continued historic preservation learning. Several rural entrepreneurs demonstrated leadership by ignoring naysayers, boldly developing their businesses, and increasing awareness of the town. Community members described motivation to work on revitalization projects from "catching" the enthusiasm of revitalization leaders. For example, Helen mentioned Addie's development of the Farmers' Market had "stirred up the pot" by fostering conversations and bringing more attention to community development efforts.

Entrepreneurial leadership introduced change to the community, including new activities on Saturday mornings, Friday nights, a new park for socializing and giving children a safe place to play. Entrepreneurial leadership brought more local area residents into town, and encouraged more people driving through to stop. A relatively new business expanded its menu and introduced the serving of beer and wine with the assistance of city council members who assured residents the council had carefully reviewed the application and implemented safeguards to ensure the café business operations remained suitable for the community. Entrepreneurial and civic leadership nurtured a chamber of commerce to coordinate economic development throughout the county. Participants identified servant leaders who valued people, developed people, built community, displayed authenticity, provided leadership, and shared leadership, such

as Lana when she created a team for the historic church Christmas event. Several entrepreneurial and servant leaders served the community through service organizations making long-term county investments by encouraging and nurturing youth and acknowledging youth as future leadership. However, participants perceived lapses in leadership as barriers to learning.

Barriers to Learning

Identifying community tensions concerning lack of enforcement, lack of an overall plan, and lack of diverse civic leadership, participants identified civic leadership lapses as barriers to learning for revitalization. Although a volunteer local government, residents expected direction (an overall plan), protection (enforcement of local ordinances), and order. Acknowledging civic leaders maintained order by providing city services and ensuring the city's solvency, participants perceived deficiencies in planning and protection.

Although tensions can be a catalyst for learning since feelings and emotions indicate importance (Boud & Miller, 1996), participants reported council members admitting to lack of enforcement and unsure of appropriate action, resulting in perceptions of the community being "stuck." Many participants, including local officials, described the issues as "unsolvable," some indicating "waiting it out" the preferred solution, including waiting for someone to die (the abandoned property owner) and hoping for a selective tornado (to clean unsightly areas). A participant hypothesized the underlying cause of lack of enforcement as the fear of the unknown, or the "what ifs." All participants recognized the city's tenuous financial situation, and most wanted gradual, steady change.

The city's cash purchase of a commercial building for nearly $130,000 appeared inconsistent for a town with no money for enforcement, leading some participants to conclude the city suffered from inadequate planning. Perceiving no revitalization direction, some small business owners and residents questioned their future in the town. State-required comprehensive planning consisted of generic documents without details for future plans, described as entailing "check the boxes." Participants voiced a variety of personal goals for the community, including the community growing to a few thousand residents, the growth of downtown economic activity with little residential growth, and a goal for no change. With growing impressions of leaders' lack of action and "big picture" planning, city council elections were contested for the first time in 20 years.

For two decades, current council members filled city council seats by networking within the community and arranging replacements. It appears city council expected this practice to continue since they allocated no election expenses in the 2013 budget. Participant viewpoints included council described as a "forward-thinking group," being "a well-functioning boy's network," and charges of the council manipulating election rules to benefit incumbents. Incumbents retained their seats with a wide margin of votes and participants reported downtown disagreements calming. Heckling and other disrespectful behavior in civic meetings created mis-educative experiences (Rodgers, 2002). Recognizing a need to develop leadership capacity, the Chamber plans to establish a leadership development program to build county leadership capacity. These findings led to three conclusions.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: Learning occurred through informal communities of practice designed to implement rural community revitalization.

Community members in Fresh Springs learned while they participated in and focused on revitalization projects. Unlike those developed within traditional organizations, communities of practice in Fresh Springs did not implicitly focus on learning. Experiential, informal and incidental learning occurred as group members focused on community economic development objectives: bringing more people into town, increasing sales for sponsoring merchants, providing downtown merchants exposure and opportunity for more sales. Informal discussions between community of practice members generated new ideas, new ways to accomplish tasks, or issues to explore further. Boud and Middleton (2003) found learning through interactions, such as discussions, particularly useful for atypical problems or projects where there were no set procedures or processes. Roger's description of the first production of the Village Chronicles provided an example of atypical project learning when he said "everything is a learning experience, because nothing like that has ever been done here before."

Describing the design of communities of practice as "much more like life-long learning than traditional organization design" (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 53), Wenger et al. (2002) explained how design often emerged as one or two members initiated discussions, invited additional members, built relationships, and then introduced other elements of structure. Nick and Addie described the development of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) in a similar manner when they talked about the DDA evolution over a year or more of discussions in Nick's living room and other informal community settings.

The DDA represented a more formal community of practice since organizers purposefully developed the group under the auspices of the city council. Organizers created by-laws and performed other requirements to meet statutory requirements. After completing a few projects, DDA members introduced a Facebook page and started linking to other groups to share information. These actions represented purposeful plans for learning and performing boundary processes as the DDA worked to facilitate learning across different groups within and outside the city.

Wenger et al. (2002) depicted degrees of participation in a community of practice as concentric circles. Roger and Trey constituted the core group in the center of the Village Chronicles community of practice. The active group included the remaining members of the executive committee. The peripheral group was comprised of actors, vendors for food, and volunteers. Outsiders were invited to participate either as ticket holders, or as interested bystanders. Peripheral members constituted potential contributors to various topics, and a way to build "bench" strength (Wenger et al., 2002). Village Chronicles benefitted from its bench strength. When the costume director for the 2013 event resigned, Roger found a new volunteer to assume the position from the considerable bench strength of the event's peripheral members.

Perhaps the most informal of the communities of practice, the city park development resulted from Toby sharing his idea with several other people and asking for donations. Nick assumed responsibility for the park development and further shaped plans as he gained input from others. Beth and Ben moved from peripheral members to active members as they implemented improvements through donation of their ideas, resources and labor.

Smaller heritage tourism projects, such as the 70-person tour group from a nearby metropolitan area, usually included Cheryl designing and coordinating the project through as-needed networking and collaboration with three to five partnering small business owners depending on the desires of the tour group. The small business owners involved in heritage tourism did not meet regularly except when attending Village Chronicles executive committee meetings. The group discussed forming a committee to assign tasks and establish regular meetings and activities, constituting a community of practice, offering improved learning, building bench strength for tourism requests, and sustainability through creation of artifacts such as guidelines, schedules, and processes.

The Farmers' Market consisted of a core group of Addie, Wes, and a few farmers assisting with operations. An active group included farmers and customers regularly participating in the market. The peripheral members participated on an occasional basis. The core and active groups learned as they held Saturday markets and implemented an on-line enhancement. Participants described ongoing learning about what worked well and what required tweaking as they continued to build the practice. The core group intentionally recruited members for active and peripheral groups. Active recruiting and encouraging movement between core, active, and peripheral groups helped ensure leadership succession (Wenger et al., 2002), identified by one participant as an issue negatively affecting progress of committees and work groups.

Conclusion 2: Rural entrepreneurs' business operations entwine with community economic development.

The findings in this study supported revitalization literature regarding the synergistic relationship between rural entrepreneurs and their communities. Appalachian

Regional Commission et al. (2001) argued entrepreneurship critical for both economic and community development. Many studies found small business profitability linked to the health and vitality of rural communities (Hannon, 2006; Kilkenny et al., 1999; Muske et al., 2007; Muske & Woods, 2004; Siemens, 2010, 2012; Weber, 2007). In this research several participants identified Divine Gardens as an integral part of the community. Downtown merchants proudly referred their customers to the nursery saying "if you have not seen it you really should." Helen expressed the importance she placed on Divine Gardens as part of the community when she said, "We can't let anything happen to Divine Gardens."

Roger and his partner did not consciously plan Fresh Springs' economic stimulus as part of their initial business plan. The economic stimulus to the town was a by-product as the partners built their business, attracting customers from hours away, and exposing downtown merchants to those visitors. Divine Gardens fits Bosworth's (2012) classification of a rural business selling a rural product, but not restricting its market area. Bosworth asserted the more rural-dependent a business was, the more that business was intertwined with the community. Despite Divine Gardens not relying on the rural market exclusively, Roger and the business considerably meshed with Fresh Springs and the county. Participating in economic development through the Chamber, inviting participation in Village Chronicles' and other nursery special events, Roger increased community awareness as he grew his business.

Identified as another key business presence in Fresh Springs, Addie and her business partner designed the Artist & Farmer Co-op similar to Divine Gardens in Bosworth's (2012) community-dependency groups. The Co-op designed its niche as

marketing county-grown or -crafted products and services, helping lifestyle entrepreneurs and those involved in "side activities" which the Bosworth (2012) and Markantoni and van Hoven (2012) studies identified as important for communities. The Co-op promoted itself and its member farmers, craftspeople, and artists to both the rural population and to nearby metropolitan areas. Participants applauded the Co-op's many activities designed to attract new Fresh Springs' customers. Addie explained the Farmers' Market was a tool of general community economic development, which she learned from previous downtown development experience. Addie withdrew from many revitalization projects when she perceived personal disagreements with community members having a negative effect on revitalization projects such as the DDA. Although less involved in community revitalization projects, Addie continued building the Co-op business. From her economic development training she believed the Co-op's prosperity would ultimately improve the livelihoods of Co-op members, the city of Fresh Springs, and the entire county, suggesting a social entrepreneurship element similar to the Weber (2007) study.

Jane's Café represented an example of rural entrepreneurs breaking a traditional community barrier while building their business and maintaining community involvement. Although hearing and reading concerns about their beer and wine application, including stories that "it would never happen," the business owners continued with their plans. A few participants hypothesized attitudes had changed and citizens realized the café's liquor license would benefit downtown development by giving more of those "passing through" a reason to stop. The business enhancement resulted in more local citizens spending their dining dollars in town since they could purchase dinner

with wine or beer without leaving Fresh Springs. Participants described this as a learning lesson for the community and confirmation change was possible.

Several rural entrepreneurs contributed to the revitalization of Fresh Springs through careful attention to one or more business operations. Cheryl and Dirk comprise two examples. Cheryl contributed to promotions of the town through special events she held at her store. Special events included art and craft shows and book signings. Cheryl promoted all merchants in her regional travel magazine. Dirk's promotions for his branch office in Fresh Springs included billboards in Harristown and Robinsville. Each billboard provided a subtle reinforcement there was life in Fresh Springs.

The chamber of commerce recognized the value of new businesses to the county when it instituted the practice of connecting existing and new business owners. On an informal basis Fresh Springs' small business owners collaborated over tasks such as setting up a new computer, establishing a Facebook page, discussions about business enhancements, and similar business topics. This type of assistance happened over coffee, or while visiting each other's shops for other reasons, and not as planned activities.

Conclusion 3: Rural community revitalization requires leadership to develop and nurture communities of practice, as well as civic leadership to direct, protect and maintain order.

Wenger et al. (2002) concluded development and sustainability of communities of practice required leadership at many levels. They noted the need for internal leadership to question ongoing activities, connect people, and continue developing the practice. They suggested the need for leadership at the boundaries to encourage new ideas and recruit members which ensured a vibrant community of practice. Wenger et al. argued a

need for organizational leadership to create a supportive and challenging environment. Research findings provide several examples of leadership initiating projects, connecting people and projects, and questioning community of practice activities. Roger exhibited internal and organizational leadership as he initiated the Village Chronicles, shared his vision for the event with several individuals and groups, challenged everyone involved to identify areas for improvement in the 2014 event, while showing appreciation and encouragement. Nick provided leadership at the boundaries when he encouraged Lana's Heritage Christmas idea.

This research confirmed several studies regarding entrepreneurial leadership. Noting the most successful small towns included entrepreneurial leadership, Lambe et al. (2008) delineated entrepreneurial leadership behaviors as being proactive, future-oriented, embracing change, and assuming risk. One Fresh Springs future-oriented group exhibited entrepreneurial leadership as they developed the historic district, the historic society, and new zoning ordinances. Nick argued the historic district work group's actions resulted in Fresh Springs having "something to sell."

Entrepreneurial leaders conceived ideas, shared their ideas, invited other community members to provide input and co-create revitalization projects, benefitting the entire community. Many participants credited Addie's idea of a revitalized Fresh Springs with motivating other community members to engage in revitalization projects. Starting with a small Saturday morning Farmers' Market, participants described how the community began to socialize more, leading to more interest in revitalization. With Addie's downtown development expertise, Nick's interest to learn more about economic development, and other knowledgeable community members, a diverse group organized

the DDA providing sharper downtown revitalization focus. Roger's idea for the Village Chronicles inspired the concert series and old-fashioned Christmas service in the historic church. Lana contributed civic leadership to create a downtown merchant and resident team which created a standing-room-only event.

Community members' actions confirmed they collectively had the skills and resources required to initiate, plan, and implement revitalization projects. They lacked authority to enforce zoning and other historic preservation ordinances designed to improve aesthetics and increase property values. Relating to the leadership duty "to protect" (Heifetz et al., 2008), participants voiced expectations that city council should enforce ordinances, and create ordinances as necessary to ensure property value protection, resident safety, and revitalization support, and perceived barriers to learning for revitalization when city council failed to take action in those areas.

Implications for Theory

As Fresh Springs' community members worked to revitalize their town, they exhibited three key structural elements of Wenger's (1998) communities of practice theory: levels of participation (Wenger et al., 2002), boundary processes, and identity. Community members coming together in a small group and working on a revitalization project represented a community of practice. Community members created several communities of practice to design and implement various revitalization projects. The most active of Fresh Springs' community members often worked on several projects, sometimes in the core group leading activities, or as the active group, or at times a peripheral member participating on an as-needed basis.

This study extends communities of practice theory to a rural community environment. Ricketts (2009) found leaders in more resilient communities thought of community on a county basis because they could access more resources. One county-level organization, such as a rural Chamber of Commerce may be a suitable sponsoring or overseeing community of practice that could serve as a boundary agent between multiple task-oriented communities of practice, or those focused on a particular city's revitalization issues. This study suggests official city councils, or boards of commissioners, may not be suitable sponsoring organizations because politics and business operations are likely to take priority over moving revitalization forward. The sponsoring community of practice can be seen as an infrastructure for a learning organization for small community resiliency.

Wenger (1998) indicated the importance of active engagement between levels of participation. Figure 6.1 on the next page depicts a rural community of practice architecture with a sponsoring organization providing organizational and operational leadership to help develop and nurture communities of practice, encourage engagement between levels of participation, boundary crossing across communities of practice, and shared learning. Interaction between levels of participation ensures bench strength for sustainability. The unit of community is on a county or regional basis.

Identity constitutes an important element of Wenger's (1998) communities of practice theory. Leaders strengthen communities of practice by reconfiguring identities (Wenger et al., 2002). Since leaders do not have formal authority over community of practice members, they attract members by creating connections between the project objectives and the new member, fostering new member shared ownership. Lana

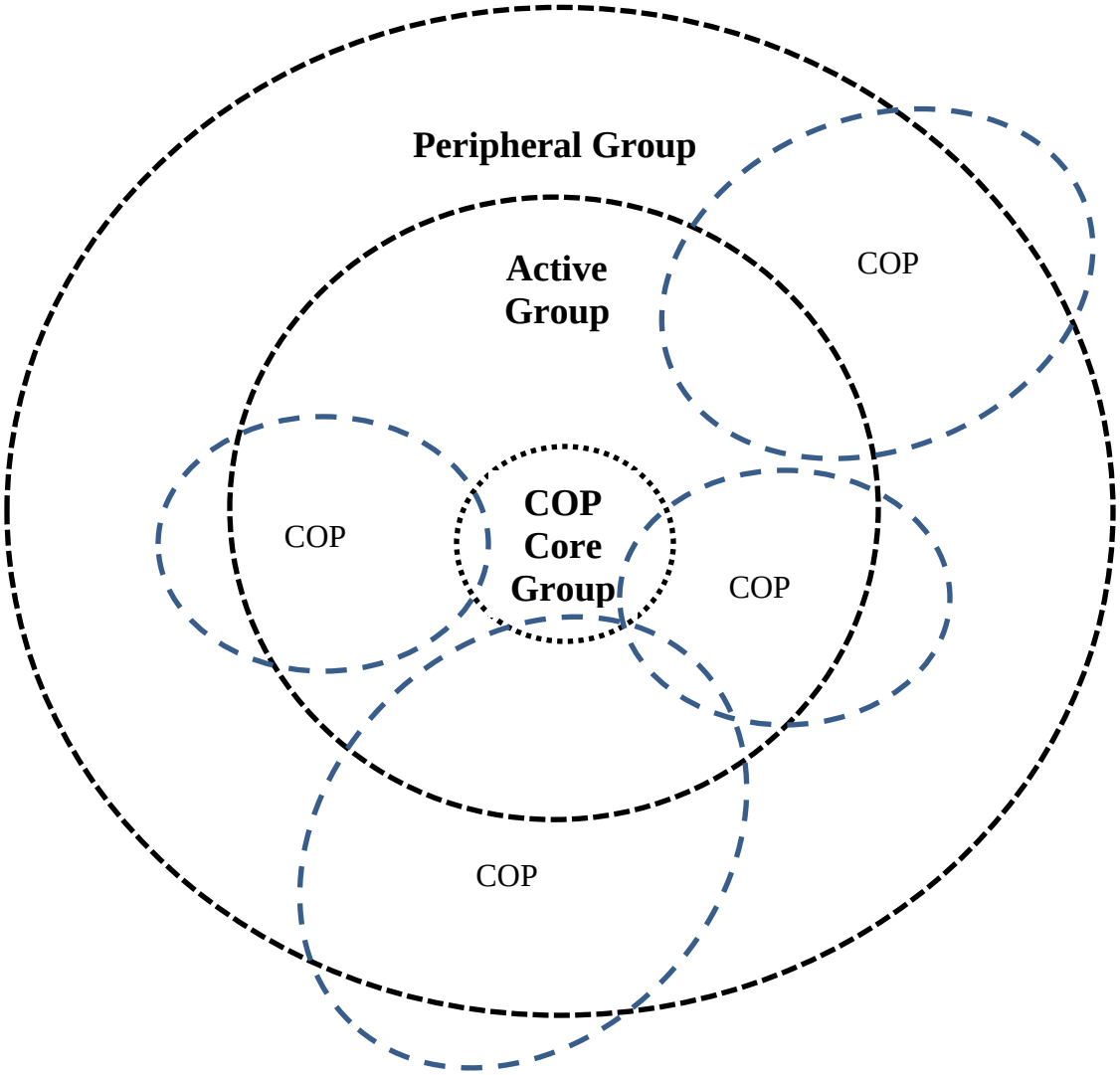

Figure 6.1 Rural Communities of Practice Model
Note. COP = Community of Practice; each COP comprised of Core, Active, Peripheral levels of participation; sponsoring organization (such as Chamber or other civic association) as Core Group which develops, nurtures, and encourages collaboration and shared learning between communities of practice; plan for permeable boundaries, denoting informal organizations, eschewing bureaucracy; unit of "community" on county or regional basis. Adapted from Wenger et al. (2002).

exhibited identity work when she invited downtown merchants and residents to join her, expressing belief in their talents, and allowing each volunteer to share project ownership. Likewise, Roger reconfigured identities as he invited and encouraged participation in the Village Chronicles event. Harry's and Helen's identities expanded to include their new roles as volunteer coordinators, and Lacey's identity expanded to include her new role as costume director. The sponsoring organization of rural communities of practice could assist in identity work required to reach out into the community and engage the "not usual" suspects for engagement in community development—such as "labeled" people, the poor, the unemployed, full-time homemakers, and others with potential contributions to the needs of the community.

Wenger (2000) identified several activities which fostered more effective communities of practice including social/team-building events, internal leadership, connectivity between people within the group, sufficient membership to keep interest and focus, learning projects, and maintenance of artifacts as the community continued to evolve. In addition to creating effective and sustainable communities of practice, these activities foster strong social capital within the community. Leadership is required to ensure regular meetings, the right amount of socializing, keeping members informed about meetings, projects, timetables, and actions.

An important distinction in this study, different from most research contexts exploring communities of practice, involved tacit learning and virtual work places. For example, the Village Chronicles provided several work settings where community of practice members worked on the project and learning took place—Roger's living room, the nursery gardens, and the cemetery in a nearby town where a similar living history

event took place. The implicit objectives of Village Chronicles and most revitalization projects included creating exposure to the town, generating sufficient attendance to cover costs, and providing profits for partnering small businesses and non-profit beneficiaries. Learning was incidental to the actions of the group and in many cases taken for granted. The maintenance of artifacts is a possible weakness of communities of practice without a clear learning objective. By keeping notes about activities, meetings, and decisions in an accessible on-line location, artifacts could be shared and maintained.

The positive experiences of community members engaged in communities of practice point the way to possible solutions. Kahane (2004) described the solution for solving tough problems as creating environments where new options can emerge and remaining open to what those new options might be. Community members designed creative environments for various revitalization projects. The research findings, conclusions and theoretical implications suggest implications to adult learning practice.

Implications for Practice

Findings from this study suggest several activities to build and support learning in communities of practice. With limited funds to purchase consulting services, rural community members often explore local, regional, and statewide resources. Each of the following activities for facilitating learning for revitalization could be organized and staffed by community members including high school students. However, college/university partnerships, internships, and other engagement/outreach arrangements constitute valuable potential resources. Community members may wish to consult with adult learning practitioners in extension offices or other public service and outreach offices to facilitate conversations or help organize one or more action research projects,

exploring community needs, possible grants, and scholarly research/engagement interests. Community websites or Facebook pages may facilitate storing and sharing of information, and may attract responsible volunteers from middle and high-school aged youth. Recognizing the limited availability of Internet in rural communities, hard-copies of directories, lists, and other information could be provided at city hall, downtown merchants, and other community gathering places. Since no one method of communication reaches all community members (not everyone subscribes to or reads the local newspaper, not every household has Internet access, etc.), it is important to use several communication methods.

Creating conditions for shared learning while not introducing stifling structures or pre-defined goals, represents a goal for adult learning practitioners, whether insiders or outsiders to the community. Wenger et al. (2002) clarified: "The organic nature of communities of practice challenges us to design these elements with a light hand, with an appreciation that the idea is to create liveliness, not manufacture a predetermined outcome" (p. 64). Implications from this study suggest five potential strategies for creating knowledge infrastructures to foster social learning in communities of practice in rural towns.

Create an Inventory of Community Assets

The path most often followed in community economic development (CED) focuses on a community's needs and problem areas. Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) represents the road less traveled focusing on a community's assets and capabilities (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). An ABCD approach fosters improved

relationships between neighbors as they work together on community revitalization. Identifying assets facilitate organization of new communities of practice.

Following the ABCD approach, a community creates an asset inventory by marshaling volunteers to reach out to various institutions within the community, keeping in mind the usefulness of defining community on a county or regional basis. Local institutions and citizens' associations provide physical assets and individuals offer skills, experiences, and expertise. Physical assets include businesses, parks, hospitals, schools, libraries, community colleges, churches, cultural groups, and other civic groups. Individual assets include residents, business owners, youth, the elderly, local artists, and "labeled people" such as the differently-abled and welfare recipients. Regardless of labels attached to people, Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) argued "In a community whose assets are being fully recognized and mobilized, these people too will be part of the action, not as clients or recipients of aid, but as full contributors to the community-building process" (p. 6). Many untapped resources of skills, abilities, and knowledge likely exist.

Create a Comprehensive Directory of Small Businesses

The community assets inventory process described above along with any existing small business directories provide a foundation for building a comprehensive directory of community small businesses. In addition to reporting name of the business, name of owner(s), address, phone number(s) and email, providing information about the type of business and interests/talents of the owner(s), helps the community learn about its small businesses and tap into its small business assets. As new residents and business owners get settled into the community, a comprehensive directory of small businesses provides a

valuable resource for engaging with local businesses as customers, for networking, or for mentoring, providing similar benefits for existing residents and business owners. A business directory facilitates revitalization leaders searching for specific expertise.

Maintain a Current List of Revitalization Projects and Committees

By maintaining a current list of revitalization projects and committees, new or existing community members can access the information and know who to call to volunteer their services. Possible project details include names of committee members, contact numbers, email addresses, and talents looking to add to the team. In addition to existing projects, project wish lists may attract people and needed resources. Being transparent about projects in progress and desired projects encourages more involvement from citizens, including youth, the elderly, and other labeled people often overlooked as potential contributors. Community members may consider publishing project details through a community newsletter on a quarterly basis and posting on community websites. In addition to facilitating participation within a community, a project list communicated with nearby communities facilitates boundary crossing.

Draft a Strategic Plan

Rather than wait for strategic planning from local officials who may not have the time or expertise, community members may wish to look for talent within the community, draft a plan, then share and discuss the proposed plan throughout the community. It may be easier to obtain local officials' engagement with strategic planning if community members present a recommendation already discussed by community members. Any material a community has from previous town meetings or previous community plans provide a possible starting point. As Morgan and Lambe (2009)

proclaimed in the title of their article, successful small communities "find a way or make one." The Internet provides templates and nearby colleges or universities may provide assistance.

Engage with County Leadership Development Programs

Developing leadership capacity ensures new leaders ready to direct, protect, and maintain order (Heifetz et al., 2008). Wenger et al. (2002) detailed necessary leadership to develop and nurture communities of practice. Crucial for rural community revitalization (Lambe et al., 2008), leadership allows for easier new program implementation and maintenance of existing ones. Enhanced when programs include diverse attendees, leadership capacity programs benefit from participation of youth, minorities, differently-abled, welfare recipients, and seniors. Communities may wish to consider the appropriate structure between traditional transactional leadership programs and transformative leadership programs which contribute to resilience and adaptive capacity through dialogue and collaborative actions (Madsen & O'Mullan, 2014). Barriers to learning are often complex adaptive issues not easily solved by transactional leadership skills, although basic leadership skills may be a necessary foundation. Attendees of participatory leadership development programs learn through participation in community projects (Drath & Palus, 1994). The research findings suggest policy enhancements.

Implications for Policy

Findings in this research suggest further review of rural policy with focus on benefits of small business development, community development, and leadership capacity development. Writing more than ten years ago Stauber (2001) argued rural

policies "do not meet the needs of rural people and communities; they are designed for the past, not the future" (p. 57). He made several recommendations including the replacement of the 19th century Morrill Land Grant Act with a 21st century "Information Grant" system, removing farm subsidies, and encouraging entrepreneurship, especially "homegrown entrepreneurship" (p. 82). Agriculture employs even fewer rural citizens today than ten years ago. Focusing on rural small business support, rural community economic health, and leadership development would benefit the majority of rural citizens and could stimulate agricultural-focused small businesses such as organic or boutique farming firms.

The rich learning experiences from boundary processes (Wenger et al., 2002) suggest a new focus on interdisciplinary learning in higher education to further support community needs. Scholars and practitioners benefit from shared learning across different disciplines as they work together to solve community challenges. By creating interdisciplinary communities of practice based on interest in solving problems or creating opportunities, new viewpoints and synergies of perspectives hold promise for enhanced learning. This would require a new focus on social, collective learning between disciplines. Research to evaluate implications for theory, practice, and policy will further contribute to learning for rural community revitalization as discussed in the next section on implications for future research.

Implications for Future Research

Future research in different rural contexts, exploring issues not a part of this research, and exploring learning with different theoretical frameworks would enhance the knowledge base of rural community revitalization. Action research or other scholar-

practitioner research could assist small communities in addressing strengths and building upon them. Evaluation of leadership development or other intervention programs would help small communities determine where to focus limited resources. The following discussion provides more details of possible future research.

Researching Other Contexts

As a case study of one rural community, this study is not generalizable or projectable to other communities. Lambe et al. (2008) conducted multiple case studies in rural communities ranging in population from a few hundred people to 15,000 residents. They found considerable differences between rural communities and cautioned against one-size-fits-all prescriptions. The purpose of a case study is to provide in-depth analysis and thick description so the reader can ascertain how s/he may apply findings to one or more cases of interest to the reader. There is a lack of research in U.S. rural communities, particularly regarding adult learning. Understanding learning that takes place naturally in these contexts allows scholars and practitioners to design the social infrastructures to foster learning (Wenger, 1998). Therefore, more case studies are needed in different contexts including larger towns, those located within an hour drive or more from a metropolitan area, and those with different physical and human capital. Such case studies may contribute to further understanding of learning for rural revitalization and how communities generate positive change.

Other Types of Research

Nearby colleges or universities constitute assets for rural communities. Community members may explore opportunities to receive low-cost or free interns, other types of outreach engagement, or sponsored research with nearby institutions of higher

education. Action research may uncover needs and point to new revitalization projects. Action research could help prioritize objectives for a leadership development program for cities, counties, or regions. Research to explore social infrastructures for small business development support could foster economic gardening as identified in the Morgan and Lambe (2009) study. Partnering with Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) in research programs could assist small communities obtaining needed business skills acquisition and facilitate SBDC in its design of future small business support services. Research exploring networking and collaboration support between rural small businesses and institutions within their communities and regions would help community members design appropriate learning infrastructures. Evaluation research for any learning intervention would enable further enhancements of programs within a community.

Summary

Rural communities in the United States do not constitute a homogenous group for which a standard prescription can be applied to ensure protection of natural resources, production of high-quality food and fiber, and a viable solution for urban overcrowding. This study aimed to bridge the existing knowledge base of rural community economic development (CED) with the knowledge base of adult learning theory. Communities of practice (Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002) with its key concepts of levels of participation, boundary processes, and identity informed the research. Community members of Fresh Springs organized communities of practice focused on successful implementation of revitalization projects. They learned as they worked together, discussed alternatives to design and implement projects, and solved problems they encountered. Learning was informal, incidental, and tacit. Community members

working in multiple communities of practice became boundary agents and shared learnings across groups. Communities of practice nurtured a sense of community. Entrepreneurial and civic leadership facilitated learning, and perceived lapses in leadership created barriers to learning. By sharing their stories through this research with other economically-depressed towns, community members of Fresh Springs continue to cross boundaries and facilitate new learning.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval of Protocol

APPROVAL OF PROTOCOL

July 2, 2013

Lorilee Sandmann

706-542-4014
sandmann@uga.edu

Dear Lorilee Sandmann:

On 7/2/2013, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Modification
Title of Study:	Understanding the Learning Network of Small Businesses within a Rural Community
Investigator:	Lorilee Sandmann
IRB ID:	MOD00000072
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None
IND, IDE, or HDE:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Oral Consent Card Wild Spirits in Pleasantown.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Consent Form Wild Spirits in Pleasantown Georgia.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Non-Public Document Review Consent Form.pdf, Category: Consent Form;

The IRB approved the protocol from 7/2/2013.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

Larry Nackerud, PhD
University of Georgia
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

Appendix B

Invitation to Participate (Oral Consent Protocol)

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled ***Learning and Change in Rural Community Revitalization.*** The purpose of this study is to understand how citizens and small business owners learn together as they work toward revitalizing their town.

My name is Gloria Pobst. This research is being conducted as part of my degree requirements in a graduate program at The University of Georgia (UGA). My research study is under the direction of Dr. Lorilee Sandmann in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy in the College of Education at UGA.

Your participation is voluntary. If you choose to participate in this study, your participation will involve informal conversations with me and I may observe your interactions with others. I may take brief notes of these observations and conversations, and I may collect written materials. By agreeing to speak with me, you grant permission to me to use this information in my study.

In order to protect the confidentiality of both the community and individuals I will use pseudonyms. Participation is completely voluntary and all information will remain confidential.

The potential benefits to the community include obtaining a better understanding of learning within the community, resulting in improved civic engagement and economic development. The potential benefits to humankind are having a clear example from which other small communities may see potential applications for leading their own towns on a path to revitalization.

You can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason without penalty or loss of benefits which you would otherwise be entitled. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

You are free to remain silent on any topic.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research you can contact me, my professor, or the Institutional Review Board at the University of Georgia:

Gloria Ferguson Pobst, Researcher
Telephone: 770-530-9407
E-mail: gfpobst@uga.edu

Dr. Lorilee Sandmann, Professor
Dr. Kathleen deMarrais, Professor and Department Head
Department of Lifelong Education, Administration & Policy
College of Education, University of Georgia
Telephone: 706-542-3373

The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board
University of Georgia
629 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center
Athens, GA 30602
Telephone: 706-542-3199
E-mail: IRB@uga.edu

Appendix C

Non-Public Document Review Consent Form

I hereby provide my consent for Gloria Pobst, Researcher, to review the following document which is not in the public domain for use in the research study **Learning and Change in Rural Community Revitalization**, which is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Lorilee Sandmann in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy in the College of Education at The University of Georgia.

Description of Document:

_____

_____

_____

In order to protect the confidentiality of both the community and individuals, Researcher will use pseudonyms in any reference to this document or any of its contents.

_____ (Document owner)_____(Date)

Gloria Ferguson Pobst, Researcher
Telephone: 770-530-9407
E-mail: gfpobst@uga.edu

Dr. Lorilee Sandmann, Professor
Department of Lifelong Education, Administration & Policy, College of Education
University of Georgia Telephone: 706-542-3373

The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia
629 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, GA 30602
Telephone: 706-542-3199 E-mail: IRB@uga.edu

Appendix D

Interview Consent Form (Written Consent Protocol)

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled "LEARNING AND CHANGE IN RURAL COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION" conducted by Gloria Ferguson Pobst from the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy, within the College of Education at the University of Georgia (770-530-9407) under the direction of Dr. Lorilee Sandmann, Professor and Advisor, Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy, University of Georgia (706-542-3343). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at anytime without giving any reason without penalty or loss of benefits which I would otherwise be entitled. If I decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as mine will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless I make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

The purpose of this study is to seek understanding of how citizens and small business owners learn together as they work toward revitalizing their town. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

1) Take part in an in-person/face-to-face interview which will be audio recorded and is estimated to be 60 to 90 minutes in length
2) Answer any follow-up questions either over the phone or in person; such follow-up interview questions would be no longer than 90 minutes in length.
3) Review the transcription or summary of the interview(s) and provide any needed corrections, additions or further clarifications.

The benefits for me are that I may obtain a better understanding of learning within my community, resulting in better civic engagement and possibly improved community economic development. The benefits to humankind are that the findings from this project may provide a clear example and other small communities may see potential applications for leading their own towns on a path to revitalization.

Possible social and economic risks could occur if my identity were to become known within the community. In order to minimize these risks I understand both the researcher and I will to refer to me, any business I may own or at which I may work, and my community by pseudonyms. I understand my identity, audio recordings and transcripts will remain confidential.

No individually-identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others without my written permission, except if it is necessary to protect my welfare (for example, if I were injured and need physician care) or if required by law.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project. I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Gloria Ferguson Pobst, Researcher Telephone: 770-530-9407 Email: gfpobst@uga.edu	_____ Signature of Researcher	_____ Date
_____ Name of Participant	_____ Signature of Participant	_____ Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher. Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 629 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

Appendix E

Interview Guide

Research Purpose: The purpose of this research is to understand how community members learn to revitalize their town.

Research Questions:
1. How do community members learn to revitalize their town?
2. What facilitates learning for revitalization?
3. What creates barriers to learning for revitalization?

Learning For Rural Community Revitalization

Thank you for being part of this research study. I look forward to working with you. This interview guide will provide you with an idea of the interview process. The purpose of the study is to understand how community members learn about revitalization and facilitate change required for revitalization.

1. Background
   a. Tell me how you came to live in this town?
   b. What was the town like then?
   c. What kind of changes have you seen since then?

2. Tell me about revitalization efforts in the community.
   a. When did you become aware of revitalization efforts?
   b. What initiated these efforts? Events? Individuals? Groups?
   c. How have these efforts changed over time?
   d. What is the learning process for making revitalization happen?
   e. What groups are actively involved in revitalization currently?
      - Tell me about them—how do they contribute to revitalization
      - In which of these are you active? (Role, goals, each group)
      - How do these groups work together? Examples
      - Tell me about the leadership in these groups
   f. What "hard" or "difficult" issues have arisen? How were these issues handled?

3. What has helped revitalization? What has hindered revitalization?

4. Tell me about the following in the community:
   a. Communication
   b. Collaboration
   c. Cooperation
   d. Disagreements

5. What else would you like to see happen in this town?

6. What else should I know about revitalization in this town?

I will transcribe our conversation right away. If I have questions during the transcription, I would like to call you for any clarification. I will send you the transcript or summary of our discussion via email in a few days so you can review it to ensure I heard you correctly, and see if there is anything you would like to add. May I call you within a week of sending you the transcript or summary to check if you have any changes or additions? What is the best way to contact you? Thank you so much for your help!

Appendix F

Log of Field Visits

Log of Time in Field				
Researcher: Gloria Pobst				
Topic: Learning for Rural Community Revitalization				
Date	Day of Week	Time(s) of Day	Duration (hours)	Topics
8/1/2012	Wednesday	Afternoon, evening	4	Charrette, group dinner
11/16/2012	Friday	Afternoon	2	Interview with Addie
11/27/2012	Tuesday	Afternoon	2	Interview with Jane
6/1/2013	Saturday	Morning, afternoon	4	Observation at Farmer's Mkt
6/20/2013	Thursday	Afternoon	2	conversations with Informant
6/27/2013	Thursday	Morning, afternoon	5	Interview with Roger
6/28/2013	Friday	Afternoon, evening	3	Interview with Cheryl
8/30/2013	Friday	Afternoon	3	Drafted as understudy; observations
9/22/2013	Sunday	Afternoon	3	Chronicles rehearsal
10/5/2013	Saturday	Morning	4	Observations, informal conversations
10/6/2013	Sunday	Afternoon	2	Chronicles rehearsal
10/13/2013	Sunday	Afternoon	2	Chronicles rehearsal
10/20/2013	Sunday	Afternoon	2	Chronicles rehearsal
10/24/2013	Thursday	Afternoon, evening	4	Chronicles dress rehearsal
10/26/2013	Saturday	Morning, afternoon	9	Chronicles Performance - 1st day
10/27/2013	Sunday	Afternoon	6	Chronicles Performance- 2nd day
1/25/2014	Saturday	Morning, afternoon	6	Observations, informal conversations
2/1/2014	Saturday	Morning, afternoon	6	Observations, informal conversations
2/3/2014	Monday	Evening	1.5	Chronicles board meeting, other observations
2/15/2014	Saturday	Morning, afternoon	6	Observations, informal conversations; drove around area
2/17/2014	Monday	Evening	1.5	Chronicles board meeting, other observations
2/27/2014	Thursday	Evening	3.5	Dinner, church event
2/28/2014	Friday	Afternoon	4	Zoe's retirement event at bank, other observations
3/1/2014	Saturday	Afternoon	4	Good Eats restaurant; other observations
3/3/2014	Monday	Evening	1	Chronicles board meeting, other observations
3/8/2014	Saturday	Morning, afternoon	5	Observations, informal conversations; driving in area
3/13/2014	Thursday	Afternoon, evening	6	City Council meeting, other observations
3/17/2014	Monday	Evening	2	Potluck dinner at Chronicles board meeting
3/29/2014	Saturday	Morning, afternoon	5	Heritage Day events, other observations
3/31/2014	Monday	Evening	2	Chronicles board meeting, other observations
4/8/2014	Tuesday	Afternoon	4	Observations, informal conversations
4/12/2014	Saturday	Afternoon	4	Observations, informal conversations
4/17/2014	Thursday	Afternoon	5	Observations, informal conversations
4/24/2014	Thursday	Afternoon	4	Observations, informal conversations
4/28/2014	Monday	Evening	1	Chronicles board meeting, other observations
5/1/2014	Thursday	Morning, afternoon	4	Observations, informal conversations
5/8/2014	Thursday	Afternoon	4	Observations, informal conversations
5/12/2014	Monday	Afternoon, evening	3	Chronicles board meeting, DDA meeting, other
5/22/2014	Thursday	Afternoon, evening	2	Observations, informal conversations
5/26/2014	Monday	Evening	1	Chronicles board meeting, other observations
5/28/2014	Wednesday	Afternoon	1	Observations, informal conversations
6/9/2014	Monday	Afternoon	2	Chronicles board meeting, other observations
6/16/2014	Monday	Afternoon	2	Observations, informal conversations
6/19/2014	Thursday	Afternoon	1	Observations, informal conversations
6/20/2014	Friday	Afternoon	2	Observations, informal conversations
6/21/2014	Saturday	Morning, afternoon	4	Observations, informal conversations
6/23/2014	Monday	Evening	1	Chronicles board meeting, other observations
6/25/2014	Wednesday	Afternoon	3	Observations, informal conversations
6/29/2014	Sunday	Afternoon	3	Craft beer festival, performance
7/21/2014	Monday	Evening	3	Chronicles board meeting, other observations
8/4/2014	Monday	Evening	1	Chronicles board meeting, other observations
8/20/2014	Wednesday	Afternoon	1	Observations, informal conversations
8/25/2014	Monday	Evening	1	Chronicles board meeting, other observations
8/30/2014	Saturday	Morning, afternoon	1	Observations, informal conversations
Total hours			168.5	

Appendix G

Research Database—Selected Data Extracts

Initial Code(s)	ID #	Data Type	Code Family	Data Extract
Context—Cluster of merchants Downtown Context—Lack of heat, air, bathrooms Downtown Context—merchants helping merchants	P6	Field Notes	Context	A woman came in with a flannel shirt, jeans, and boots (Amy). She went over to the space heater to warm up. The women came out of the kitchen and said good morning. Amy said, "I don't have heat over there and I'm freezing. I had insulation installed last year under the floor and it helped, but it is just too cold." She followed the cook (Betty) back into the kitchen. She had long grey hair pulled back in a ponytail and wore a baseball-type hat. Amy and Betty seem to be friends and Amy was welcome to be in the kitchen.
Lack of communi-cation, open dialogue, building trust Lack of inclusiveness	P6	Field Notes	Barriers to learning	"The town has at least two factions. A group of us merchants feel the DDA is a self-serving organization. For example, we did not know about the [Village Chronicles] until about 3 weeks prior to the event. We were not asked for any input, but merely notified of the date and the events that would take place.
Context: Environmental issues, economy, regulations	P122	Document	Context	The mayor said that [the chairman of the county commission]'s agreement with the proposal signaled yet another sign of his cooperation with the small cities in the county."
COP—Farmers Market	P129	Interview	COP--community of practice	She was bringing the locals out because of the Farmers' Market because everybody has to eat. And that's hard, it's hard to get the locals out here in town…and there was life again.