Educational Assets, Resources, Barriers and Social Capital in a Semi-Isolated Community of Appalachia

A dissertation presented to
the faculty of
The Patton College of Education of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Education

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August 2013

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This dissertation titled
Educational Assets, Resources, Barriers and Social Capital in a Semi-Isolated
Community of Appalachia

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Abstract

ROUSH, JOHN R. Ed.D., August 2013, Educational Administration

Educational Assets, Resources and Barriers in a Semi-Isolated Community of Appalachia: Implications of Social Capital

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The idea that families within semi-isolated communities can struggle to achieve educational benchmarks such as high school graduation is a motif in rural education research (Williams, 2010). Despite well-known difficulties that these communities can face (Strange, Johnson, Showalter, & Klein, 2012), there is relatively little research on this topic based on a search conducted on EBSCO (EBSCO, 2013). There are well known models that explain these difficulties, such as Payne’s (2005) conceptualization of poverty that have been used to understand the needs of children who live in poor communities. But this sort of broad approach to understanding poverty can potentially yield iatrogenic education practice when working with marginalized groups of people in Appalachia. This is because the model might oversimplify an understanding of culture and dismiss a unique combination of assets upon which schools and communities may build upon for the future. Schools can thus be well served to take inventory of the gifts, skills and capacities of the community (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993), as well as the culturally-specific challenges and strengths that are prevalent in a given community.

A contrasting perspective that focuses not only on barriers, but resources, assets and social capital may yield better information. The goal of this study was to engage in an in-depth examination of factors that impact educational pursuits within a specific
Appalachian community called Cozumel (a pseudonym). More specifically, the study used a case study approach to examine the community and education services offered to it, and found that Cozumel has its own barriers, assets, resources, and social capital. It is also the case that several barriers appear to have been stable across decades.

Documentation of these factors might inform practice and policy decisions for the school professionals who serve Cozumel, but these findings might also transfer to other similar schools and communities.
Dedication

This project is dedicated to my wife Dana, my son Patrick and my daughter, Emily
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation to my dissertation committee, Dr. John Hitchcock, Dr. Jerry Johnson, Dr. Gene Geist and Dr. Francis Godwyll. I would also like to express appreciation to those who provided valuable feedback, insight and guidance through the oral defense and proposal defense. Those individuals deserving such recognition include; Mr. Shane Shope, Dr. Mike Hess, Ph.D., and Dr. William Larson. Dr. Francis Godwyll is deserving of recognition for his guidance through the oral defense and his participation on the dissertation committee. Dr. Gene Geist and Dr. Mike Hess provided so much enthusiasm and encouragement through this process. I truly appreciate their positive comments and support through this process. I would also be remiss if I did not thank Dr. Aaron Thompson. He is a true visionary and inspiration. I am a better person for meeting him. I would like to specifically thank Dr. John Hitchcock for his tireless review of manuscript drafts and his guidance in research methods, resources and insights. He is considered a friend, colleague and mentor for life. A special thank you goes out to Dr. Jerry Johnson. Had it not been for his leap of faith in taking a chance on a farm boy from southern Ohio, this opportunity would have never taken place. Dr. Johnson challenged me academically, professionally and personally in a positive way that I had never been challenged before. I also consider Dr. Jerry Johnson a friend, colleague and mentor for life. My friend and “brother,” Shane Shope, deserves so much credit for this research. I want to thank him for encouraging, challenging and let’s face it, competing with me to find the finish line. The long trips back and forth may not have been possible without his support.
I have so many teachers, both formal and informal throughout my life that confirmed the importance of social capital. A general thank you is expressed to those of you who blessed my life.

I would like to thank my mother and father, Terry and Gloria Roush. I was never allowed to not believe in myself thanks to them. From day one, I was blessed with parents whose faith, work ethic and expectations were an inspiration to me. Very few people are fortunate enough to have a grandfather, who at age 92 continues to inspire me in the same manner my parents did. Thanks, “Pap” for making sure I knew the difference between wisdom and knowledge and what to do with them when I found them.

Lastly, I thank my family; my daughter, Emily Roush, my son, Patrick Roush and my wife, Dana Roush. I love you all. I am so fortunate to have a caring, loving and supportive daughter like you Emily. It is impossible to be down in the dumps around you. I am so proud of your hard work and dedication in all you do. Patrick, you inspire me so much. I am proud you are my son. I cannot wait to see all of the great things you have in store for the future. Stay tuned… The last and most important person in my life is my wife, Dana. Twenty wonderful years of marriage to you encouraged and inspired me to see the best in people and fight for those who cannot for themselves. You would not let me give up or even think that failure was an option, with anything I do.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

This study focuses on a set of academic constraints enacted on a community by local political, social, and economic circumstances. Cozumel (a pseudonym)¹ is a small rural community located in the Central Appalachian region of the United States. It encompasses an area of approximately 8,800 acres or 14 square miles (Harp, 2012); over the last 44 years, the district that serves Cozumel, Bridgetown Local District Schools has graduated approximately 300 students from this community. The district is comprised of one elementary school that serves pre-school through sixth grade. There is also one junior/senior high school that serves grades seven through twelve. The district serves several communities, but Cozumel presents a rare if not unique set of circumstances. Students who travel from Cozumel pass by two different school districts before arriving at the junior/senior high school. More specifically, students from Cozumel must travel through what is effectively a causeway that is only a few miles wide and is bordered on both sides by those other school districts. This causeway is the single connection between Cozumel and the western portion of the district, and students spend as much as two hours on a school bus in order to attend school even though they are reasonably close to neighboring districts that they could reach in about 30 minutes. The redistricting that created this situation reportedly stems from a community member of privilege who was able exclude his property from the district during the consolidation in the 1960’s (details

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all names of communities, school, districts, people, etc. are pseudonyms.
of that process to be discussed below in Chapter 2- History of Political Decisions and Questionable School Consolidation).²

Cozumel presents as a case worthy of study because despite its high levels of poverty and a history of political decisions related to district boundaries that resulted in challenges to educators, students from the community (and, in general, from the district) have demonstrated a strong high school graduation rate (ODE, 2012). Such outcomes in the face of Cozumel’s rare if not unique circumstances and the resulting challenges educators face when providing services to this community strongly suggest it as a setting in which to examine stakeholders’ experiences and perceptions of schooling. A single, overall question oriented the study:

What key assets, resources, barriers and social capital are associated with high school completion in Cozumel?

(Mis) representing Cozumel

Cozumel includes a locally recognized settlement of people known as the Cozumel Indians. Kessler and Ball (2001) refer to this group as members of the “mysterious” Melungeons of southern Appalachia, the subject of much speculation since the late 1800’s. Melungeon is a term that historically refers to multi-racial individuals with Native American (primarily Cherokee), European, and African-American ancestry. Kessler and Ball’s (2001) report is of interest since it is one of the few published studies regarding individual families within the Cozumel area, and many of the available accounts are recalled stories or unfavorable recollections, rather than recorded history

² The specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality. Information was obtained from county school board notes from 1968, the county auditor and district attendance/data officer. Numerous citations information will be redacted throughout in order to maintain confidentiality.
There are critics of the Kessler and Ball report among the Cozumel residents. Prior conversations with a local family, the Willis’, indicate that their story has been historically misrepresented and incorrectly described in that work. Mrs. Willis, a family matriarch, stated to me in the fall of 2009, “That man that came here asking us questions about our family made us look stupid. I want you to tell our story, but don’t make us look stupid.” This work refrains from making judgment of that earlier report, but does call attention to the fact that research participants have stated the information is inaccurate. It is also noteworthy that others have taken an interest in this community and that this family has experience participating in a prior study. This background is pertinent because the Willis’ history with prior research provides further justification for careful accounting of the credibility of findings presented here. Note that one key technique used in this study is member checking. This is a process where findings are shared with research participants in order to examine the veracity of the data (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Patton, 2002). Additional credibility techniques will be described in Chapter 3.

This intrinsic case study investigated Cozumel’s social capital, assets, barriers and resources. Intrinsic case studies focus on rare if not unique sets of circumstances. Cozumel is an economically impoverished community and the researcher is interested in uncovering and describing how social capital manifests in the community. There is merit in understanding the support systems and advocates for this community, and reason to

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3 One of many historical accounts on the origin of Melungeons traces the ancestral heritage of a people who were African American, White, Native American or a combination of all three, but referred to with less than endearing titles, such as free, but not pure white (Nassau, 2008) or Free-Issue or “not dark enough to be recognized as free colored (Goins, 2009) and half white and half black who were bad people and the most damning of all, free persons of color as a result of “the ultimate sin” (p. 240).

4 The Willis family, (another pseudonym) is a multi-generational family from Cozumel who expressed their distaste for the manner their family and Cozumel had been represented in an impromptu conversation with the researcher.
believe Cozumel has experienced unusually adverse circumstances. This makes it important to document that which facilitates function and thriving in the community.

**Social Capital**

L.J. Hanifan (1920) is given credit for coining the term and concept of social capital. Hanifan, a state supervisor of rural schools in West Virginia, encouraged communities and schools to engage in “social capital” during a 1916 communication. Social capital was referred to as:

Those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely goodwill, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit… The individual is helpless socially if left to him/herself… If he/she comes into contact with his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his/her social needs and which may bear a social potentially sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community. The community as a whole will benefit by the cooperation of all its parts, while the individual will find in his association the advantages of the help, the sympathy, and the fellowship of his neighbors (Hanifan, 1920, p. 130).

Social capital can have many meanings, but generally refers to connections among individuals, social networks, and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them (Bourdieu, 1983). Social capital calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations (Putnam,
2000). “Social capital in this sense is relatively close to what some have termed, civic virtue. Social capital is connected more specifically to the way our lives have been made more productive as a result of social ties (Putnam, 2001, p. 326)”.

**Assets and Resources**

Community assets are essential to a capacity-building approach to working with communities (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993) (Beaulieu, 2002, p. 2). Instead of thinking of what a community does not have, capacity building helps focus on what you can do with what you do have or find out what you have (Roush & Shope, 2010). Further, assets or "things" of significance that are more organic in nature and sustainable come without diminishing the asset in question, and in most cases benefit the asset more than the thing itself (Johnson, 2012). A resource, by contrast, is a thing to be extracted and may not be as sustainable. Consider how a geographic feature might be an asset to a community. A river could generate economic growth through tourism, hotel and restaurant revenue in local areas, along with responsible stewardship through controlled fishing. Using the river as a resource could involve, for example, collecting tolls for barge traffic or extracting rock from the river for road construction. For another example, an urban asset could be an empty building which could provide opportunities for a variety of artists to perform and display works of art from a variety of cultures and genres. A resource, in comparison, would ask for the businesses in the neighborhood to donate a financial gift to help sponsor the event. Identifying key community assets can contribute to its long-term success and developing a sense of mutual responsibility among its stakeholders (Mattessiah, 1997).
The current study explicitly focuses on identifying community assets; an approach that offers a sharp contrast to research that adopts a deficit model (or lens). This is important because Cozumel could be viewed in a negative light since a majority of the students come from low Socioeconomic Status (SES) or low-income homes, few job opportunities are available in the area, and little if any elected political representation is present within the community. Despite obvious adverse circumstances, the community does at first glance possess assets such as a state forest, Native American fort and burial ground, a former state park with several large caves, campgrounds, riding trails, farmer’s markets and a bevy of flora and fauna. All of these attract visitors. What visitors will not find are factories, manufacturing, wholesale stores, gas stations, grocery stores, cell phone towers and housing complexes. There should be additional awareness of the assets in Cozumel. That awareness requires keen insight and a different way of thinking for many; in order to realize assets, one must know the ‘who’ and ‘what’ in a community, leverage collective gifts, talents and resources for the good of the whole community (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993, p. 4). Community works by bringing together resources, social capital and outside assistance along with collective resources (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001). One specific example within the Bridgetown Local Schools utilizes local assets through opportunities (such as Learn and Serve (Serve, 2013) and a Grant for the Ohio Appalachian Center for Higher Education (OACHE)).

Resources, on the other hand, may not be a renewable source and may only yield a one-time benefit. Resources or things of value do not necessarily benefit those in the community from which it was taken (Johnson, 2012). Our society has grown to value a

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5 Confidentiality is not a concern here since numerous institutions receive grants from these organizations.
product or profit rather than value community or human work, according to some (Berry, 1996). Consider, for example, the coal extraction of Eastern Kentucky and Tennessee by British-owned coal companies during the 1920-30’s (Gaventa, 1982). This example is noted as a non-renewable resource, and one that paints a negative picture of resource extraction due to the unfair practices forced upon the people of Appalachia. Further discussion is given to extraction of human resources in chapter two.

The School and Community Engagement

Scholars have argued that democratic education is essential for a democratic society (Dewey, 1916; Gordon, 2010; Putnam, 2001). Dewey (1916) argued nearly a century ago that “a democracy is more than a form of government, it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (p. 87). Furman & Shields (2003) state that any discussion of “democratic community needs to be grounded” in a “specific conceptual frame” (p. 7). Furman and Shields’ own concept of democratic community parallels Dewey’s. Collectively these authors posit democratic communities to include the following:

- Respect for the worth and dignity of individuals and their cultural traditions.
- Reverence for, and proactive facilitation of, free and open inquiry and critique.
- Recognition of interdependence in working with the common good
- The responsibility of individuals to participate in free and open inquiry, and
- The importance of collective choices and actions in the interest of the common good (Ryan & Cooper, 1998, p. 9).
Small and rural communities tend to have a closer relationship with their schools since schools are the center of many social activities and responsibility (Gordon, 2010). The implications for students and families in rural Appalachia (as for other marginalized groups) are enormous and far-reaching (Apple, 1999, 2002; Fraser, 1997; Giroux, 1997, 2001). Eagleton (1991) contends that marginalized groups must be actively taught the ideology that marginalizes them (i.e., individuals are not born with a sense of powerlessness; they learn it). Schools can teach such ideology (most commonly through the omission from the curriculum of the resident social and/or cultural group), or they can teach other ideologies that recognize, affirm, and value the resident population. A variety of other scholars have argued for the importance and necessity of democracy in schools (Johnson, Shope, & Roush, 2009, p. 3). Pearl (1999) writes, “Strong democracy must begin with schools because it cannot begin anywhere else. No other agency can introduce democracy” (p. 215). Jones (2006) argues that, “the quality of democracy depends on the quality of a people’s education,” hence “schools can be said to have a moral mission to develop the citizenry needed to sustain the democracy” (p. 7).

**School Leadership**

There is a need, specifically, for a *ready* school leader\(^6\) who facilitates, encourages, and promotes a positive outlook toward school and community relations (Tareilo, 2007, p. 1). A readied school leader may be measured or evaluated through their inspiration and implementation of any number of activities. Examples might include developing a mentoring program that increases graduation rates, implementing a breakfast program for a school with high rates of economically disadvantaged students,

\(^6\) Leader does not necessarily denote the principal.
arranging college on campus trips, and so on. A ready school leader has an awareness of the community’s uniqueness, and leverages specific resources to address specific challenges.

The leader cannot ‘go it alone’; rather, leadership is shared endeavor that requires the contributions of varied stakeholders. The challenge that schools face isn’t the lack of community support necessarily, but finding a way to genuinely engage the community in meaningful dialogue and participation (Boeck & Fleming, 2011). Being responsive to the needs of the community rather than the wants of a school is paramount. Leaders can then focus on assets (organic in nature, more significantly sustainable--e.g., a historic landmark or outdoor learning lab) rather than resources, (an extraction--e.g., department store donations) (Roush & Shope, 2010). When the community views itself as a means to merely fill the empty hand through donations (a resource), value to schooling is depleted to essentially view the community as a resource to fund schools and their wants and needs. School leadership and the role that it played in Cozumel, if any, will be explored throughout the study. Chapter two will further synthesize/integrate disparate literatures regarding the role of school and leaders.

**Methodology**

This research was conducted through a case study. Case studies may range in scope from one person, to an entire group or community or even a national institute. The defining stipulation is that a common bond or thread exists from a specific context. Thus, case studies are about the boundaries of a study rather than about the specific research tools deployed (Glesne, 2006; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). In that sense, a case study might
better be thought of as a goal rather than a method. Several approaches were used to understand the case of Cozumel. A key focus was on understanding the school’s role in the community. Part of the methodology therefore entailed interviewing recent graduates, other community members, and school staff. Secondary methods included document analyses that provided information about the community and the school that serves Cozumel. Some of the documents were identified at the outset of the study (e.g., school board meeting minutes, maps and correspondence) and others were discovered during the course of the work (e.g., historical school board minutes). This sort of flexibility is warranted given that an emergent design approach was used when convenient (Patton, 2002), which allows for alteration of method and even focus of the research as more is learned. In addition to using publically available documents, some of my own notes from prior observations were used. The key set of notes was compiled while doing a ride-along with teachers eight years ago in a school bus that followed the student bus route between the district and Cozumel. To the best of my knowledge, this was the only time the participating teachers saw Cozumel and the only time they were able to experience the ride for themselves.

**Audience**

The primary intended audiences for the study are community members from Cozumel, school administrators (particularly rural school leaders), and educators pursuing capacity building for students. The study was designed to produce a thick, rich descriptive picture and detailed account of education services in the community. The researcher was the primary tool for gathering information. I tried to maintain a sense of
respect for the portrayal of the community’s history and local culture. This study may have implications for school leaders and other educators who serve marginalized groups or individuals.

**Reflexivity**

An important part of research is demonstrating trustworthiness and truth. “The researcher is responsible for doing the best job to understand the nature of the respondents and data reported” (Glesne, 2006, p. 169). However, some bias was inevitable since I work and live in the region. In full disclosure, I am the former principal of the Bridgetown Local High School. This did yield distinct advantages in that I have considerable knowledge of the school and community, and this allowed for more efficient data collection and interpretation. In a sense, my experience allows me to rely on a sense of connoisseurship (Patton, 2002) and prolonged engagement (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). Simply put, I began this study with a level of localized expertise that not many people can claim. But there is an obvious cost to this as well. Such familiarity raises the possibility that I conducted this work with blinders. For this reason, reflexivity—which deals with a researcher’s effort to not only disclose assumptions but be aware of them during the course of the study (Bratlinger, Jiminez, Klingner, Pugach & Richardson, 2005; Milner, 2007; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005)—was a paramount concern. To elaborate, I tried to be aware of role that my subjectivity played when considering the Bridgeport school system and (2) my potential inability to recognize the strengths and weaknesses in Cozumel. After spending my entire life in the same county and a considerable time as a principal (seven years in this community and seven additional years in the neighboring
districts), I might have imposed much of my own view on participant analyses. For example, before the study, I expected to find a resilient people who have demonstrated the ability to overcome both political and educational obstacles and barriers. The particular analytic strategy I employed requires explicit examination of a priori assumptions (LeCompte, 2000), however, and I included a number of credibility techniques to check my assumptions (see Chapter 3). It is also the case that I am no longer employed with the school, and the nature of the questioning did not focus on my prior work as a principal. To minimize any discomfort, I emphasized to interviewees that the research questions focused on community factors as well as broader social issues over which I would have had no control. Furthermore, I stated at the outset of interviews that any school-related questions were not about my performance as an administrator. Part of this clarification entailed an explicit statement that I am not capable of objectively assessing my performance in this role, and research questions do not focus on this topic. I also planned to redirect the interview to focus on general school and community issues should the issue of my prior work come up. Having said that, redirection was not necessary in practice.

The topic of reflexivity is revisited in this chapter. For now, readers should keep in mind that I have attempted to present full disclosure about my relationship with the study subject and have included multiple credibility checks in my design. Finally, readers will see that I did react to my data. That is, I was genuinely surprised by some findings and I try to clarify such instances within the narrative in order to distinguish between surprises and points at which I think I helped to confirm some of my prior expectations.
Delimitations

Delimitations are those research elements that a researcher can control (Dusick, 2011) and they help articulate the scope of the research. This research was intended to help me understand the realities of community members in the Cozumel area. I asked about their assets, resources, barriers, and support (social capital), and focused only on Cozumel. Interviews were conducted with willing participants who have more than likely had repeated contact with the researcher as a colleague, student or parent of a student or community member. Although my main focus was on education, some of what I learned dealt with the local economy, history and politics. Most educationists (e.g., (Theobald, 1997) would contend that education is also contextualized by these topics.

Limitations

Data gathering and interpretation may have been limited by my former position as principal in the district. I have tried to deal with this in my design, but in the final analysis this will always be a limitation of the work. Another limitation to this study is that the sample of respondents may not be representative of all community members since contact may become difficult due to limited access to broadband and cell phone service along with residents working at a distance from home due to scarce employment opportunities. It is imperative that a mutual respect is established prior to developing the sample size, finding participants that will add to the case, arranging the interviews and reaching the ‘contract’ (Miller, 2000). Aspects of this case study work may be difficult because community members were asked about their K-12 experiences, but they may not have any other experiences with which to compare.
Operational Definition of Terms

1. **Assets**: Assets or “things” of significance that are more organic in nature and sustainable come without diminishing the asset in question and in most cases benefit more than the thing itself (Johnson, 2012). A community gains a stronger sense of mutual responsibility when the asset is treated with stewardship (Mattessiah, 1997).

2. **Barriers**: Barriers are things that exist between one thing or person and another and keep them separate (Oxford, 2011).

3. **Leadership**: Some of the same constructs discussed here will be revisited in Chapter 2. The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) refers to management as “involving the use of “tools” and leadership as being concerned with qualities, processes, styles and impact (Thrupp & Willmott, 2003, pp. 179-180).” The leadership “turn”, “institutes a change in a school’s internal power relations between transformational thinking, mobilization of educational leaders, and transactional task-oriented directives toward compliant co-workers. Leadership is a process of influence that yields achievement of desired purposes, whereas managing is more about maintaining an efficiency and effectiveness over the organization (Bush, 2003, pp. 292-293).”

4. **Resiliency**: Resilience is defined as a positive and adaptive response to a threat or adversity (Masten, 1990). Resiliency is a characteristic or trait that can empower individuals. (Masten & Obradovic, 2006). A resilient individual is capable of utilizing personal, social, or environmental resources to evade or lessen effects that adverse events have on less resilient individuals.
5. **Democracy or democratic schools:** Democracy is how people govern themselves and not a system where they are governed by others (Woods, 2005). Furman (2003) defines a democratic community as one that includes but is not limited by a respect for the worth and dignity of individuals and their cultural traditions; reverence for and proactive facilitation of free and open inquiry and critique, working with the common good through collective choices and actions and the opportunity for individuals to participate in free and open inquiry. Green (1999) defines democracy as respecting, communicating receptively, and cooperating with those whose values are different than but not hostilely fixed against one’s own, even while celebrating their cultural memories, rituals and traditions. Dewey (1916) argued nearly a century ago that democracy is more than a form of government; its primary mode of associated living combines communicated experiences.

6. **Resources:** Resources or "things" of value may be extracted from a place and/or utilized for the benefit of other places does not necessarily benefit those in the community from which those resources were taken (Johnson, 2012). Consider for example the coal extraction of Eastern Kentucky and Tennessee from British-owned coal companies during the 1920-30’s (Gaventa, 1982). This example is noted as a non-renewable resource and paints a negative connotation of resource extraction due to the unfair practices made upon the people of Appalachia. Once the coal is gone, the residents have no sustainable means of income and the natural resources are depleted.

7. **Social Capital:** Social capital refers to connections among individuals, social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from individuals.
Social capital is relatively close to what some have termed, “civic virtue.” “Social capital calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations (Putnam, 2000, p. 19).” “Social capital is connected more specifically to the way our lives have been made more productive as a result of social ties (Putnam, 2001, p. 326).”

Social capital facilitates a durable network among individuals (Bourdieu, 1983; Coleman, 1988; The World Bank, 1999). When people interact with each other, the opportunity to build communities and commit to one another become melded together (Smith, 2009).

8. **Semi-isolated:** Partly far away from any others (of buildings and places) (Oxford, 2011), in contrast to rural as defined by the National Center for Education Statistic’s website, which is "a school or district that's located in a community with fewer than 2,500 people” (NCES, 2006).

**Conclusion**

This study is an intrinsic case study of a semi-isolated region in Cozumel, Ohio.

The current chapter (Chapter One) of this study provided an introduction and an overview of its purpose. Chapter two describes background literature and focuses on: assets, barriers, democracy, graduation, leadership, resources, rural and social capital. Chapter three describes the methodology used to address the research question. Chapter four focuses on results of the study. Chapter five discusses the results and offers conclusions and recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

This case study examined resources and barriers associated with high school completion in Cozumel. In terms of barriers, Cozumel is characterized as a high poverty, semi-isolated community and it is generally expected that problems typically associated with low socio-economic status are present. In terms of assets, it is generally expected that the community is characterized by mutually supportive connections among individuals and broader networks. The school district that serves Cozumel is called the Bridgetown Local School District. The district is made up of one pre-school through sixth grade elementary building, and a second building that serves as a junior/senior high school building and houses grades seven through twelve. The district faces substantial barriers including poverty and a lack of financial resources. The literatures described here deals with:

- community responses to constraints and barriers,
- the relationship among school services, socio-economic status and achievement,
- school resources,
- state measures and expectations,
- political decisions,
- education and economic connections,
- and community relevance.
The Relationship between School Services, Supplemental Educational Services and Achievement in Bridgetown Local Schools

Numerous research studies, starting with the Coleman report (1968), have found that poverty is the single strongest and most persistent threat to academic success (e.g., Beeson & Strange, 2000; Borman & Rachnba, 2001; Coleman & Hoffer, 1982; Friedkin & Necochea, 1988; Plecki, 1991; Sirin, 2005). Poor schools, moreover, generally must operate with fewer resources (Borman & Overman, 2004; Coleman, 1968).

Counteracting the negative influence of poverty, smaller schools have been shown to serve low socio-economic students more effectively than larger ones (Howley & Bickel, 1999; Howley, Strange, & Bickel, 2000; Johnson, Howley, & Howley, 2002).

Bridgetown Local Schools is a Title 1 school district that provides supplemental education services. Supplemental Educational Services are meant to provide assistance with reading, language arts and math to the lowest achieving students from low-income families, who attend Title 1 schools (Education, 2012). Title 1 schools are characterized as serving low income communities, and are identified via funding formulas informed by census poverty data. Each school district determines which buildings participate in Title 1 programs based on both federal requirements and local decisions. Participating buildings must focus additional services directly on at-risk students. These funds may be used school-wide, but are specifically intended to improve outcomes across the building by not supplanting current resources (Education, 2012). The Bridgetown Elementary School is the designated Title 1 building and the high school therefore does not qualify. The 2010-2011 Bridgetown Local School District State Report Card indicates that out of the 726
students in the Bridgetown Local Schools, 97.1% are white, 53.1% are economically disadvantaged (ED) or low-SES\(^7\) and 15.5% are students with disabilities (SWD). The elementary school has an SES rate of 61.7%, the junior high 50.2%, and the high school 37.4%. Title 1 elementary school parent survey results indicate a 96% satisfaction rate with the district, although this represents only a 28% response rate since 118 surveys were returned out of 414 surveys distributed.\(^8\) According to state report card data, 95% of SES students graduated from the district. By way of comparison, the state average graduation rate this year this data was gathered was 84.3%.

The monies tied to students who qualify for free and a reduced price lunch (FRPL; this also includes breakfast) has a direct effect on schools:

“Only students in a Title I funded building (Targeted Assistance or School wide) in School Improvement status who are from low-income families are eligible for Supplemental Educational Services. These services are defined as additional academic instructional services offered by ODE-approved providers beyond the traditional school day.

If there are insufficient resources to serve all of the students who qualify, the priority is the lowest achieving students from low-income families (ODE, 2013).”

If students do not apply for FRPL, then buildings or districts may not receive the Title 1 funds for which they qualify (H.R., 2013), since states and school districts frequently utilize the percentage of students receiving FRPL to apportion Title I grants (and many

\(^7\) SES refers to Socio-economic status.

\(^8\) Specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality. The data here was taken from the district school wide Title 1 plan.
types of state and local funding (Cruse & Powers, 2006, p. 2). For instance, teacher and student loan forgiveness programs, literacy and reading grants, the E-rate initiative (for telecommunication and Internet expenses), and vocational and technical education funding are several programs that use FRPL data as a basis for deciding how to distribute resources (p. 2). In my experience in the high school, many students did not turn in FRPL forms to qualify them for free or reduced lunches due to a sense of embarrassment. Akin, Guilkey, Popkin, and Wyckoff (1983) found that FRPL decreases with increases in a mother’s work hours, but only for older children ages 12-18, which mirrors grades seven through twelve, similar to Bridgetown Junior/Senior High School’s grade ranges (i.e., when the mother works and income increases, students are less likely to qualify/participate in FRPL). Gleason (1995) suggested that children of mothers who work are less likely to participate in the NSLP. Hispanic and African-American children have higher NSLP participation rates than white children (Gleason, 1995). For some context, the Bridgetown Local School population is approximately 98% white. Other research reports a negative association between those who received formal higher education or lived in a suburban residence (defined in this study as non-urban and inclusive of rural areas) and participation in NSLP (Swann, 2007; Tiehen, 2008). For these reasons, the reported rate of 53.1% low-SES students is likely to be a low estimate of the extent of poverty at Bridgetown High School. As the former principal, I can draw on prolonged engagement and connoisseurship to say with confidence that many students did not participate in the FRPL due to embarrassment or pride. Students who qualified

9 The specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality. The data here was received from the district attendance and data coordinator.
for FRPL but did not apply, did not have money for breakfast or lunch on a regular basis; therefore those students did not eat or relied on friends (discussed later in document analyses) to buy food. It is not hard to argue that if someone is hungry, it is hard to learn.

Bridgetown Local High School is in a district qualifying for Title 1 funds. The high school has however attained levels of academic success needed to avoid being listed as a “priority school.” On the contrary, the high school specifically was rated as being “excellent”\(^\text{10}\) by the ODE.\(^\text{11}\) The provision of additional support by the department for resilient schools is based on its definition of success, and perhaps there are arguments for rewarding the “Bridgetown Locals” who achieve in spite of barriers such as high SES numbers and low resources. Schools are categorized in a variety of ways by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) (Education, 2012). One such category is called a “priority school” (p. 552). Priority schools are Ohio high schools with graduation rates below 60\% (Education, 2005).

**Minimal Resources; Success in a Low-SES School**

The purpose of this section was to review the district’s resources, opportunities and academic barriers in relation to academics--specifically rigorous coursework such as, Advance Placement Courses (AP)\(^\text{12}\) and coursework preparation for American College Testing (ACT)/Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT).

\(^{10}\) Ohio Department of Education rankings in descending order are: Excellent With Distinction, Excellent, Effective, Continuous Improvement, Academic Watch and Academic Emergency (Education, 2011).

\(^{11}\) More specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality.

\(^{12}\) AP scores range from 1 to 5 with a score of 1 receiving no recommendation for college credit, 3 qualified for credit and a score of 5 indicates extremely well qualified. A score of 3 or higher is significant since this is the minimum required for most courses (in this case, The Ohio State University’s standards are being utilized) to receive any transfer credit at the college level (Board, The College, 2012).
The district does not currently offer AP courses due to staffing limitations, and most students typically participate in advanced core courses (e.g., calculus, chemistry) by enrolling in post-secondary education options (PSEO) at the community college. These students receive credit for high school requirements as well as college, at no charge, so long as the student officially resides in Ohio. Another example of a barrier (and arguably a lack of resources) affecting instruction is that the English department includes one and a half English/Language Arts teachers for grades nine through twelve, yet in 2011 the total enrollment for these grades was 210 students. Approximately 20 students chose PSEO and 30 chose the career and technical center, leaving approximately 160 students served by the English staff. This yields a considerable workload for teachers to handle, keeping in mind that they had several other academic course preps to handle. Clearly, staffing was a concern in 2011 and this is likely the case today.

Nevertheless, the high school has managed to maintain a high graduation rate. ODE defines a high school dropout as an adolescent who has not enrolled in school and has not earned a high school credential (Witner, 2009). Ohio’s model for reporting dropout rates is complex, but the metric essentially averages high school graduation rates from a cohort group entering their ninth grade year. The group is revisited four years later at graduation. There are conflicting approaches for calculating graduation (NCHEMS, 2012; Kaufman, 2001; Partners, 2012). Graduation studies obviously have limitations, and the different definitions of graduation in both state and local policies have a profound effect on graduation reports in each state. Some states have in-house

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13 The specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality.
Graduation Education Development (GED)\textsuperscript{14} programs that require fewer hours to count graduates and some have forms of alternative credentials (Seastrom, 2005).

It is contended here that despite contradicting graduation requirements and calculations, Bridgetown Local Schools have produced results that demonstrate the ability to overcome the lack of academic, financial and human resources. Bridgetown High School enrolls approximately 45-50 students in each freshman class, which begins a graduation cohort. In order to receive a graduation success indicator from the ODE, 93% must graduate within four years; for Bridgetown, this means no more than three students in their cohort cannot graduate. Bridgetown High School meets this standard on a consistent basis, despite the barriers. Once again, this reaffirms that a low SES school with minimal resources can be successful.

One hundred percent of the students from Bridgetown Local Schools, which includes Cozumel, passed the writing portion of the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) during 2010 (ODE, 2010). The teacher for the writing class these students completed was a first year teacher who understood high expectations, relationship and support as demonstrated through her instruction and 100% student passage rate on the Writing OGT. In comparison, the state average pass rate on the writing test is 87.1% (ODE, 2013). Bridgetown Local Students graduate at a 93.8% rate over a four year average from 2008-2011 compared to the state average of 79.7%. How can a poor school district with so few

\textsuperscript{14} The General Educational Development (GED) test gives students leaving high school before graduating an opportunity to earn a High School Equivalence Diploma. The GED Test assesses five subjects: writing, reading, social studies, science, and mathematics. The GED can be used to pursue career training and a college degree (Ed, 2013).
resources, specifically in the Cozumel community, perform at such a high level? Chapter five offers some possible responses to that question.

**State Measures and Expectations**

A review of ODE’s website, (Education, 2012) makes clear that cognitive measures (standardized tests) are the focus and measure of success. Bridgetown Local School’s 2012 ACT results show a mean score of 19, which is within three points of Howland County’s highest high school average score along with two other bordering counties highest mean score (personal communication, October 23, 2012). The national ACT composite means is 22. Sixty-two percent of the recent high school graduates who took the ACT have composite scores lower than 22 (ACT, 2012); therefore, Bridgetown students appear to be doing well on ACT tests with minimal resources.

Numerous references and online resources were available for the ACT (College Readiness Test) and the OGT, but the site contained no references reflective of non-cognitive learning. ODE does not appear to recognize *systemic knowledge* (Johnson, Shope, & Roush, 2009) as a measurable means to high school success. Systemic knowledge integrates academic and contextual forms of information in a way that catalyzes an individual’s strengths (Johnson, Shope, & Roush, 2009) and must be seen against a backdrop of a shared experiences and it involves interpretation and experiences (Aspers, 2006). By contrast, academic knowledge refers to information gained from formal schooling and is often compartmentalized into academic disciplines (de Brabander, 2000). Bridgetown High School has demonstrated success based on measures

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15 The specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality. This information was obtained from an educational service center representative from Howland County.
of academic knowledge in spite of facing political and demographic barriers. Political barriers will be discussed in further detail in the sections to follow. Demographic barriers refer to the economic state of Cozumel.

**Who is Being Affected by Political Decisions?**

Ohio’s Core Requirements for graduation, starting July 1, 2010, required students who enter the ninth grade to complete 20 units (course credits) to graduate from high school (Education, 2012). The number of units did not change, but math increased from three to four units and electives are reduced from six to five. It is worth noting that an already overstretched faculty in the Bridgetown High School was asked to extend their load and teach up to seven preps a day since additional staff cannot be added to meet the additional requirements (C.V., 2012). Many of the teachers already cross over and teach junior high school as well as elementary.

Stan Heffner, then Associate Superintendent of for Curriculum and Assessment at ODE, stated: “The Ohio Core will give our high school students the kind of preparation they need to succeed in entry-level jobs, apprenticeships, military service and college” (Strickland, 2008, p. 9). Then-Governor Ted Strickland also wrote an initiative for increasing the graduation rate for Ohio students. In the initiative, Governor Strickland allocated $20 million in the state budget. State Senator C.J. Prentiss was appointed as a “noted expert in the field of education,” and reflects the Governor’s commitment to addressing Ohio’s academic status as an educational crisis. Prentiss stated: “Without a strategic plan to intervene, many of our children will not graduate from high school or even make it to 10th grade. We cannot afford to throw away any more children

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16 The specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality.
Governor Strickland’s “Close the Gap” model does contain numerous social and non-cognitive focal points, but must be considered in light of the Ohio High Schools that were targeted for assistance and or additional resources. Below are the targeted high schools by Ohio school districts. None of these are Appalachian counties or rural districts:

- Akron- East, Ellet, North
- Canton- Timken, McKinley
- Cincinnati- Aiken Career & College, Aiken University, Woodward
- Cleveland- Collinwood, East, East Tech, John Adams, John F. Kennedy, John Marshall, Martin Luther King, Glenville, Ginn Academy, Lincoln West, James Ford Rhodes, South
- Columbus- East, Linden-McKinley
- Dayton- Belmont
- East Cleveland- Shaw
- Lima- Lima
- Lorain- Admiral King
- Sandusky-Sandusky
- South-Western- Westland
- Toledo- Libbey, Scott, Woodward
- Youngstown- Chaney, East (Strickland, 2008).
Again, the “Close the Gap Model” supports a construct of systemic learning, but contradicts ODE’s graduation requirements of standardized testing as the mark of success. Bridgetown Local Schools, a low wealth rural Appalachian school district, is not present on this list, but in spite of the barriers they face, success is occurring. But there are reasons to remain concerned. The students who are falling behind the national standardized marks are in states and regions that are more racially/ethnically diverse and have higher rates of poverty (Warren & Grodsky, 2009). Warren and Grodsky specify that their claim cannot correlate increased dropout rates of SES more than non-SES students, but dropout rates are consistent with their claim. This claim contradicts to the earlier claims in Chapter two that if one is poor, academic success is more difficult to attain (e.g., Beeson & Strange, 2000; Borman & Rachnba, 2001; Coleman & Hoffer, 1982; Friedkin & Necochea, 1988; Plecki, 1991; Sirin, 2005). Some states have even made portions of the test easier to bolster scores and ensure that the graduation rate would rise (see California’s High School Exit Exam) (CAHSEE), class of 2006 mathematics portion, or Florida’s 1994 revision of their exit exam. In other words, expectations have been lowered to meet political standards.

There are both social and economic costs associated with not graduating from high school (Ziliak, 2007). Further, the absence of a diploma serves to continue a cycle of depleted opportunities in areas that are economically-deficient and lacking in opportunity to begin with. Small rural school districts such as Bridgetown Local are specifically affected by unemployable dropouts in an area with few employment opportunities.
Education and Economic Connections

Excluding a group from the curriculum can teach them that they do not matter (Williams, 1961). Eagleton (1991/1997) calls attention to the political tendencies of defining class (i.e., people are placed in homogenized categories) and the negative results of such categorization; Payne’s (1996) one size fits all model for understanding and addressing barriers associated with poverty is a prime example. As described in this section, reframing the way knowledge is understand and operationalized can work against marginalizing groups of people (Johnson, Shope, & Roush, 2009) (in this case Appalachia and more specifically students from the Cozumel Community). Dewey (1944) wrote that, “All education which develops power to share effectively in social life is moral… Interest in learning from all the contacts of life is the essential moral interest” (p. 360). Dewey (1944) further framed the context explaining, “It is a commonplace of educational theory that the establishing of character is a comprehensive aim of school instruction and discipline” (p. 346). Again, excluding a group from the curriculum (Williams, 1961) can teach them that they do not matter.

Poverty and the lack of human capital (i.e., investments in people and skills) (Putnam, 2000) create a self-perpetuating cycle. The link between educational opportunities/attainment and the economic earning power of individuals is well established (Ziliak, 2007). Graduation Education Development (GED) students enjoy higher earnings than non-graduates (Murname, Tyler, & Willet, 1999), and high school graduates earn 20% more than GED recipients (Heckman, 2006). From there, labor economists estimate a 10% average gain in annual income for every additional year of
schooling completed (Ziliak, 2007). GED recipients seem to obtain fewer non-cognitive skills (Heckman, 2006) such as persistence, effective communication skills and consistent attendance (Green, 2001). College graduates, by contrast, tend to exhibit and value such skills (Heckman, 2006). Based on the review of the literature, it pays to go to school and further one’s education.

Historically, education and career development have been the responsibility of the high schools (Ziliak, 2007). Ziliak’s (2007) research discusses cognitive and non-cognitive development, and the benefits of promoting appreciation for human capital as early as preschool. Zilak determined that pre-K students who participate in intervention programs, “are significantly more likely to complete high school, work, have higher earnings and commit fewer crimes than those in similar socioeconomic circumstances (Ziliak, 2007, p. 3),” yet lack exposure to such programs. Bridgetown Local Schools follows suit and offers pre-K programs in the elementary building. Given the unemployment rates and lack of job opportunities in the Bridgetown Local School District, there is an even greater need to prepare and graduate students from high school.

**School Effectiveness**

The problem of improving performance, for both teachers and learners, is increasingly viewed as a sort of personal fault for not meeting standardized scores (McWilliam & Perry, 2006). Conversely, the keys to effective school management are viewed as, “providing direction, gaining commitment, facilitating change and achieving results through efficient, creative and responsible deployment of people and other resources (Everard, Morris, & Wilson, 2004, p. xi).” In other words, it is difficult to
devote time to non-cognitive skills if you are being measured on cognitive (standardized tests).

The recent adoption of the K-12 grade level Common Core State Standards, adopted by 48 states, two territories and the District of Columbia, precipitated a need to evaluate current practices in leadership, as well as determining the methods that should be used to improve instruction (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010). Schools may not be overtly encouraged to ignore non-cognitive skills, but in short, will not be judged as effective unless their students perform well on measures associated with the Common Core standards. Schools limited in physical resources must then turn their focus to building capacity through partnerships amidst their community (i.e., social capital). Human capital is defined by the assets derived from individuals (Putnam, 2000). It is contended here that recognizing small rural communities as an asset versus a deficit model assists with needed support in small communities.

Schools are the only institution with the capacity and mandate to reach virtually every person in the country (Schools, 2003). A successful school usually reflects a successful community, and likewise an at-risk school is a reflection of a poorly established and unorganized community (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993). Schools that do not have the means or resources for educating their children are a reflection of the importance a community places on education. Finding the “pulse” in the community is vital to the continued heartbeat of a school. The reciprocity of school and the community is based on trust and mutual respect. Communities are ordinarily quite ready to respect
the school. The school must reciprocate by recognizing the community’s importance, must give an appreciation of human values that are basically more important than the school itself (Covello, 1938).

It is worth noting that many rural students are likely to leave their communities (Carr & Kefalas, 2009) due to perceived lack of opportunities and take their human capital with them. If opportunities are not available for graduates of the Bridgetown Local Schools, specifically students from the Cozumel Community, then staying may not be an option for those pursuing advanced degrees and employment.

Young people “leaving” rural communities creates a rural “brain drain” (Carr & Kefalas, 2009). Carr & Kefalas (2009) use several groups to describe groups from rural communities. One group of individuals is termed the “stayers.” Those who “stay” view small-town life as a place where, “people are hanging onto home and hanging onto pride, and hanging on by a thread” (Carr & Kefalas, 2009, p. 26). Embracing the notion that “stayers” cling would lend itself to the local resources and knowledge bases aforementioned. The “leavers” are a group who go away for educational or employment opportunities and do not return to the community. This is important because of their asset potential. When human assets leave their community, that community is depleted much like a resource would be extracted. Bridgetown suffers from such an extraction since there are very few employment or educational opportunities in the region.

One might then suppose that the lack of highly educated individuals would lead to a deficit of knowledge and instructional capacity within the Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) disciplines. Utilizing local knowledge is important for
small rural communities like Cozumel, Critical theorists assert that Knowledge (i.e., knowledge with a capital “K”—the information and skills deemed important and appropriate by recognized experts and authorities) represents a source of power and has historically been used as a means of marginalizing certain groups (see e.g., Apple, 1999, 2002; Fraser, 1997; Giroux, 1997, 2001). The result of this kind of knowledge is Deweyian and reflects common experiences and shared commitments, relating with learners (Johnson, Shope, & Roush, 2009). In other words, if rural communities lack a representative cognitive voice, then it is likely that those with power may take advantage of those who lack the representation to protect their community from resource extraction and long term harm to their community (see Gaventa, 1982).

**An Examination of SES and Achievement in Cozumel**

**Social capital.** As noted earlier, social capital refers to connections among individuals, social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). It also includes connections with people and productivity as a result of social ties (Putnam, 2001). Social capital can yield many benefits to a community and facilitates a durable network among individuals (Bourdieu, 1983; Coleman, 1988; The World Bank, 1999). When people interact with each other, the opportunity to build communities and commit to one another become melded together (Smith, 2009). This “network” of opportunities to build communities to commit to one another may be viewed as an almost elected representation and voice for the community where elected political representation does not exist, much like Cozumel.
No elected officials reside in Cozumel, including township trustees (Township Officials, 2012) and school board members,\textsuperscript{17} nor do any teachers live there, as indicated by an email received from school officials (Personal communication, October 10, 2012).\textsuperscript{18} Based on the prior explanation of social capital including the social networks and reciprocity developed within this study, the odds are stacked against this community since educational and political representation within their area is lacking.

**Politically Created Barriers**

The following account will help to characterize and clarify one of the key barriers to delivering educational services to members of the Cozumel community. Due to some persistent behavioral issues on a bus route, and since my position at the time involved serving as the junior/senior high school principal at Bridgetown Local Schools, it became necessary for me to ride the bus route to assist a then-substitute bus driver along with the full-time bus driver for the Cozumel Community. The account of that trip is as follows:

The day began as the driver left the elementary school at 5:10 a.m. to pick up the first student. Nearly forty minutes later, the bus broke over a well-worn hill to a stop on a windy one-lane gravel road. The headlights peered into the heavy fog filled valley and students began filing out of a cluster of homes tucked closely in a narrow opening between the hills. The beams of light were broken several times as the young men and women crossed in front of the bus to board at 5:55 a.m.

\textsuperscript{17} The specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality. The information was obtained from the school website and webmaster.

\textsuperscript{18} The specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality. This information was obtained in a personal communication from the district attendance/data coordinator.
Several delays occurred as herds of white tailed deer crossed in front of the bus at several locations. The driver mentioned a few times that this was their usual time and crossing point.

One particular stop sparked my interest as the driver and older students demonstrated compassion to a five-year old who boarded just before 6:00 a.m. The driver picked up the young boy, circled back around in a barn lot, and drove past his home again. One of the students said, “She does that so he can wave goodbye to his mom, it takes us a couple of minutes extra, but it’s worth it for him.” The bus meandered for almost an hour rarely hitting paved roads until we reached the elementary school where the elementary students went on to class and more junior and senior high school students filtered onto three bulging buses to make the second leg of the journey.

The bus rolled into the junior/senior high school at 7:55 a.m. just in time for the students to grab a hot breakfast and hurry on to class, unless the student attended the career and technical center. Those students (juniors and seniors) completed a third leg of the journey to the career and technical center thirty more minutes away. These students made the two-and-a-half hour trip every day. The second leg proved to be plenty for me, and more than enough to gain an appreciation of what it took for each of these students just to make it to school every day. The school staff then asks the students to participate in the formal side of education for six and a half hours.
Ohio has no current restrictions on bus ride length or time for most students. The following quote was obtained after contacting the ODE’s Transportation Department.

In Ohio, there are no ride time restrictions for students on school transportation vehicles. Our county board of developmental disabilities however, have imposed a one-way ride time limit not to exceed 90 minutes and can be found in Ohio Administrative Code 5123:2-1-03. Our rules for pupil transportation may be found under the Ohio Administrative Code 3301-83-01 through 23. (Harmon, 2012)

To clarify, there is no time limit on bus rides unless a student is receiving special services, in which case the time limit is 90 minutes. Travel time on bus routes and distance to school has an effect on student participation in activities as well as parent participation. Data from 2011-2012 provided by a Bridgetown Local School District’s staff member indicates that only three out of 42 students from the Cozumel area participated in extracurricular activities, one out of 42 parents attended parent-teacher conferences and five out of 42 students were on the honor role (C.V., 2012). It is worth noting that one family who had two of the three students participating in extracurricular activities moved out of the Cozumel Community and into a home across from the high school leaving one student left participating in extracurricular activities from the Cozumel Community.

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19 The specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality. This information was obtained from a school staff member who serves as a teacher and part-time discipline coordinator.
The Cozumel Community rests at the far eastern region of the district and the high school, and even during consolidation efforts during the late 1960’s (1968) remained at the westernmost portion of the district (see map below; the map has been altered to protect confidentiality).

![Map of Bridgetown Local Schools](image)

*Figure 2.1 Altered map of Bridgetown Local Schools adapted from Google Maps*

This map is an altered map of the Bridgetown Local School District and provides a visual view of the location of schools (designated as black squares with the high school located at the far left or westernmost part of the district and the elementary building to the right), and geographical distance of Cozumel (indicated as the circle in the easternmost portion of the district). The distance between the community and the school is approximately 35 miles, and road limitations create a two-hour bus ride (one way). There is an *island* in Figure 2.1 indicated by a star. This star represents a small, self-contained area of approximately 800 acres (Howland County Auditor, 2012) that was created by those with political power during 1968 (details to follow) to permit their students to

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20 The specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality. The information was obtained through county school board minutes from 1968.
attend the district of choice rather than merge with Cozumel into Bridgetown Local Schools. In comparison, recall that Cozumel is approximately 8,800 acres.

Many of the coves and irregular cut outs are areas where political decisions (further discussed in the sections to follow) were made to exclude students from the Bridgetown Local Schools. Furthermore, no businesses are present in Cozumel. The community does have a convenient mart that has periodically opened and closed over the years, but does not have gasoline. The nearest gas station is nearly ten miles away. The nearest doctor/hospital is 15 miles away. This is significant because the average distance to a hospital in Ohio is 1.51 miles for urban African Americans, 1.64 for urban whites, 4.35 for suburban residents and 7.31 for rural residents (Currie & Reagan, 1999). An electronic map search indicates that the nearest two year or community college is nearly 30 miles away and at least 40 minutes away from the Cozumel community. A 60-mile trip is necessary to reach the nearest four-year university. The Bridgetown School District only has two gas stations in the entire district.

**History of Political Decisions and Questionable School Consolidation**

The Cozumel School was built in 1914 and now serves as a personal residence. Cozumel then became part of the Brushy Creek Schools (located in Spriggs, approximately eight miles south) after the Cozumel School closed. The original Bridgetown High School was built in 1902 and was later demolished.\(^{21}\) Discussion began as early as March 10, 1952 regarding the consolidation of small school districts in the Cozumel area, indicated by a discussion in the local newspaper. Cozumel was given, “a brief discussion at this point on the procedure for bringing the matter to Albert A.,

\(^{21}\)The specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality.
president of the Cozumel School”, said, “a ing [sic] held by his board indicated that the community appeared toj [sic] be favor of the although the board had put ing [sic] down in writing.”22 The text is recorded with typos directly from the paper.

On July 16, 1968, the Howland County Board of Education met to discuss property transfers for the purpose of school redistricting in Howland County. Members from the Cozumel Community were present along with representatives from a nearby school district in the Ballast School System. It was noted in the board minutes that the individuals from the Ballast area were only there to discuss the transfer of property and tuition. The neighboring Ballast School District decided to transfer a small area in the northern part of the district to the Higgonsboro City Schools, which is also the county seat. It was also decided that residents on the fringe area bordering other districts would have the prerogative to take transfer petitions to the county board of education. The meeting minutes from June 13, 1968 included a motion (accepted) to allow any high school student from the old Brushy Creek District who so desired to attend Prebble Schools in the adjoining county. As a result of this meeting, the students from Brushy Creek were redistricted into the Prebble Schools. Bridgetown Local Schools would have to pay tuition and athletic expenses for the remainder of the year. This is another example of how those with political privilege or power have marginalized those who are powerless (Gaventa, 1982) (e.g., students from Bridgetown Local Schools, specifically Cozumel).

A county board member then questioned why Brushy Creek was tuitioned to Prebble Schools, but no consideration was made for Cozumel. Another board member

22 The specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality.
reported that the Brushy Creek residents requested to attend Prebble Schools due to extensive travel. The board member that questioned the decision raised a point of discrimination against the Cozumel students. Soon after the discussion, a board member arrived late to the meeting and presented a request to transfer 45 Cozumel residents to the Granville Schools just four miles from the school district line and also offered them an option to attend Higgonsboro City Schools as an alternative. The minutes recorded (School Board Minutes, 1968) show the motion was denied since the board member did not have a map with him. If approved, this motion would have moved students in the Cozumel Community to districts that are 15 to 20 miles away from Cozumel rather than 35 to Bridgetown Local.

A board member questioned the legality of a second motion to move students out of the Bridgetown Local Schools into the Higgonsboro City Schools. This area was located in the former Ballast School District about 15 miles west of Cozumel and had already transferred properties in the northern part of the district to Higgonsboro. The motion was moved and approved in spite of the legal question. Further motions included the transfer of a small parcels of land (the earlier described island) located in the Bridgetown District to the Higgonsboro City Schools. This is important, because according to the Howland County Auditor, a land island may not exist in another school district unless it is a standalone school district. Because no one from Bridgetown Local Schools questioned this transaction and the county judge approved the move, the illegal island still stands today, resulting in thousands of lost tax dollars for the Bridgetown Local School District.
According to the Howland County Auditor, one Mr. H., property owner, owned enough property between the Bridgetown Local Schools and Cozumel Community to physically connect the two land areas thus permitting Cozumel to join the Bridgetown Local Schools. This action took place after Higgonsboro City Schools, Granville Schools and Brickridge Schools all denied Cozumel entrance to their school district. I would conjecture based on my prolonged engagement that the students of Cozumel had been assigned undesirable attributes such as: poor and uneducated. All three districts touched the Cozumel Community and had high schools within twenty minutes of Cozumel. Some elementary buildings were only five miles away (1968).

The issue of district ownership and property location (see the comments above) arose again in 1991 when realtors approached the auditor regarding property advertisement and district location. The properties in question were once again the island in the Bridgetown Local Schools. The ruling was to keep the properties in the Higgonsboro City Schools since Bridgetown Local Schools had not challenged it and alteration might alter housing values and taxation. The auditor at the time actually called the original property owners who informed him that they knew the land was in the Bridgetown Local District, but no one had ever questioned it after the original ruling.

These accounts reaffirm some of the physical and political barriers placed in front of the students and community members from Cozumel. Because no one advocated enough for the students from Cozumel, they were forced to attend a school system much further away, while others with representation were permitted to choose their own school system.

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23 The specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality.
24 The specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality.
Personal Reflections

In order to give some clarity as to “what I know and how I know it,” some reflexive strategies were utilized in this particular section. Reflexive analysis strategies would in this case reflect my own voice and perspective and provide a credible voice that is authentic and trustworthy (Patton, 2002). There is an understanding in reflexive analysis that I was as objective as possible since much of my time as a principal was spent in the Bridgetown School District. As a reminder, I have not been employed by the district for nearly two years now. Many of the accounts were provided in first person along with a perspective from personal experiences: I have had the opportunity to grow up and raise my children as the sixth generation on our family farm in the same county as Cozumel. There aren’t many roads or fields I haven’t passed by (or through, if I include my teen years) in this county, given my experiences as a resident, teacher, principal, farmer and several other roles. As a lifelong resident of the county in which Cozumel is located, many of my opinions had been formed prior to ever working as a principal in the Bridgetown Local School District. Right, wrong or indifferent, the common theme I had heard from nearly everyone I came in contact with painted Cozumel as almost mythical even mystical. I had heard stories of people who lived in archaic and deplorable conditions. Cozumel Indians or even less endearing, Cozumelites was the name attached to the residents of this area. The reason the name was less endearing is because it was never intended as a compliment. Cozumelite meant you were someone from the Cozumel area who may or may not be racially mixed and a poor, uneducated, second-class person.
Every summer beginning at age five, a trip to church camp yielded confirmation
of my perceptions of a people tucked away in a remote area of our county. I would ride
down the windy roads cranking my head around to peer back into a “holler”\textsuperscript{25} hoping to
catch a glimpse of a “Cozumelite.” The houses were rumored to have no electricity or
running water, and had dirt floors. Who were these people? After several years had
passed, and time spent in the county as a teacher, assistant principal, athletic director,
farmer, coach and other various roles, I was hired as the Bridgetown Local School’s
Junior/Senior High School Principal. That summer, I went on numerous home visits with
the new vocational agriculture teacher. This served not only as a way for me to get to
know the students and parents, but an opportunity to understand the geographic and
demographic makeup of the school district.

Within the first few trips, the residents of Cozumel had refuted nearly everything I
thought I knew about them, without them ever saying so. Hard work, innovativeness,
creativity, pride, family and kindness were just some of the attributes that were apparent
at nearly every stop. It was not uncommon to have a glass of sweet tea and homemade
snacks to accompany each visit. Prize tomatoes, first place demolition derby cars, a new
colt or an unfinished quilt were some of the treasures I had missed all these years. I was
impressed with of all of the knowledge and skills nestled in the southeastern region of the
district.

\textsuperscript{25} A holler is an area recessed in between to hills commonly found in Appalachia. Many times these land
areas are abandoned by coal mines after the coal has been extracted, but in this case, just an area located off
of the main roads between hills.
Knowing your Community

After a year of serving as a principal, during the planning stages of a teacher summer academy, I suggested that the staff take the aforementioned bus ride to the Cozumel area. Most had no idea how to get there or how long the trip would take. Nearly one and a half hours into the trip, some began to grumble. I recall one teacher stating, “There is no way this is still part of our district. You are just messing with us.” Just then one of our students passed the bus on a gravel road riding her horse. I replied, “Don’t tell Jan that, because we still have seven miles to get to her house.” It was at that point that many of the teachers realized what it took for many of our students just to make it to school. The tour ended at the nearby church camp previously mentioned where teachers were asked to complete several curriculum tasks, a voluntary wellness exam and training sessions. Not all were excited about participating since I had just asked them to ride a bumpy bus for nearly two hours. The students who make that same trip demonstrate resilience and success making this trip daily given the barriers they have to overcome. Knowing one’s “customer” or community members is an important component of arriving on common ground and understanding what students, from Bridgetown had to go through every day in order to receive an education.

Resiliency

Resilience empowers individuals to utilize personal, social, or environmental resources to circumvent the negative effects on less resilient individuals, and for years, a scarce commodity even in extraordinary individuals (Masten & Obradovic, 2006).
We have always been astonished by children who succeed in surviving terrible ordeals and making something of themselves even against all the odds. Yet the classic way in which the statement is made shows that it has been interpreted even before it has been studied. We are “astonished” because they have “triumphed” over an immense “misfortune.” The implication “wonderful” is already associated with “misfortune” (Cyrulnik, 2011).

Barriers are an ordeal to overcome or a misfortune to circumvent, and when conquered, individuals are viewed as extraordinary. This research looked from the perspective of Cozumel, and if barriers are viewed from the same perspective or “misfortune” as non-community members, then it may help drive policy change or advocating for students from Cozumel. Having reviewed relevant local policies and political decisions particularly with Bridgetown Local Schools, the notion of democratic schools and leadership should be reviewed, since the students from Cozumel appear to be underrepresented.

Resiliency can be viewed in a positive manner. After all, resiliency helps empower Cozumel students to overcome a threat or adversity, (i.e., long bus rides) and as a result of their resiliency, they earn an education, which provides financial capital (discussed earlier in Chapter two) and opportunities to develop the community. It is somewhat of a progression for asset development (further discussed in Chapter three) for students to face a barrier (bus ride) and overcome that barrier by graduating or in many cases, just make it to school (e.g., an interview participant from the community, gives an account of students having to climb over the hill and trek through woods to board the bus
on the next road over when the road was snow covered since the bus would not come
down their road). These Cozumel students graduated from high school and have jobs
outside of the community, but continue to live in Cozumel and contribute that
community, including economic contributions made possible by their educational
attainment (attainment that reflects the resiliency of the Cozumel students).

**Deficits**

School leaders from Howland County and Bridgetown Local Schools may have
reasons to think of their current situation as being dismal.

**Assets versus Deficits**

Many communities do not have the financial resources to provide instructional
materials in schools (Title I Schoolwide Plan, 2012-13). As a reminder, the researcher is
defining assets as organic in nature and renewable or sustainable. Assets include people
as well. Recognizing people and their skills in a rural area are a means to enhance
education and grow community involvement while meeting student needs.

Models such as Payne’s (2005) are a popular resource for teaching, learning and
leading in culture and poverty. Payne’s work is neither exclusive, nor new as it was
parented by studies such as Lewis (1959). Payne’s work also has its critics (see Gorski,
2008) who paint Payne as peddling poverty for profit. Payne arguably proposes a one
size fits all method for curing poverty and that a student’s academic performance and
poverty status are inherited due to parental/environmental behavior. This is deficit
thinking. By contrast, consider Brofenbrenner’s *Ecology of Human Development*
(Bronfenbrenner, 1995), which is “credited with bringing attention to contextual variation
in human development, and helping to move developmental psychology from the science of the strange behavior of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time” (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 153). Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (EST) model gives an asset model of thinking dealing with the individual child or community rather than Payne’s broad stroke remedies. EST includes the micro, meso, macro, exo and chronosystems. The microsystem deals with the child’s immediate environment, and is at the level a child can immediately influence. The meso system deals with the school, and broader systems. The macro deals with yet even broader, but still local systems that influence child development even though decision-makers probably do not have contact with the child. The exosystem deals with policy and culture. Appalachia may be an exosystem. Chronosystems mean whatever was true years ago is true today. Schools can thus be well served to take inventory skills and capacities of the community (Kretzman & McKnight, 1993), as well as the culturally-specific challenges and strengths that are prevalent in a given community.

Examples of how community assets can support academic learning in a sustainable manner do exist. One such example is Bridgetown Local Schools’ “Ag Day.” Many of the activities, planning and instructors came from community volunteers. The program implemented non-traditional math lessons in the following manner:

- Bus driver- weed eater usage and mowing safety; teaching fuel mixtures and ratios, and additionally measuring radius for safety purposes
- History teacher- physics of whiffle ball, angles, force, distance, speed;
- Science teacher- water quality, particles, circumference of trees;
• County Soil and Water Conservation & Ohio Department of Natural Resources- ecosystems and measuring mosquito populations, fertilizer/drainage monitoring for nitrates and phosphates;

• Howland County Recycling- energy, volume.

**Maximizing and Building Capacity**

Experiential learning, (e.g., produced artifacts) (Del Favero, 2011), arise through choices and opportunities from educational leaders who exercise their knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by focusing on these actions: “promoting a positive school culture, providing an effective instructional program, applying best practice to student learning, and designing comprehensive professional growth plans for staff (Del Favero, 2011, p. 2).” Opportunity versus effectiveness refers arguably to Bridgetown High School, a small rural high school in Howland County, Ohio and their course selections compared to a financially affluent suburban district near Columbus, Ohio:
Bridgetown High School Senior Language Arts Course Offering 2010:
English 12 (1 section), English 12 (CP- 1 section), Classics (1 section), High
School Reading (1 section), Spanish 3-4 (1 combined section of juniors and
seniors) (C.V., 2012).

Columbus Suburban High School Senior Language Arts Course Offering:
General Intermediate French, German, Spanish; Honors French, German,
Spanish; AP French, German, Spanish; ESL- English as a Second Language;
World Literature; AP English Lit./Comp.; Adjusted World Lit./Comp.; IB World
Lit./ Comp.; American Studies; Adjusted American Studies; AP American
Studies; Film Analysis; Workshop Theatre; Theatre Production; IB Theatre SL;
Reading Intensive; Reading/ Writing Intervention. (There is no indication of how
many sections for each subject are offered – noted 1600 high school students
attend this school. (Schools, 2009).

There is some evidence that these types of initiatives help students. In 2010 for
example, 100% of the Bridgetown High School Sophomores scored proficient or better
on the writing portion of the OGT. During 2009, both of the high schools compared
above met AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress), both schools were rated
‘Excellent’ by the state of Ohio and both schools met 10 of 10 academic standards i.e.,
five OGT (Ohio Graduation Test passage at 75% for tenth graders and five OGT Test
passage at 85% for eleventh graders). During 2009, economically disadvantaged (ED) or
SES numbers are nearly 37% at Bridgetown High School (61% -unofficial district wide,
2009-10) and 0% reported at the Columbus suburban district. SWD (Students with
Disabilities) numbers are 13.8% and 8% respectively. Based on comparing resources and
opportunities for students against the outcomes, one could argue that Bridgetown is more

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26 The specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality. The course options were
provided by a current staff member at the high school.
27 Please note that AYP, is a federal formula developed to measure student growth and subcomponent
growth (i.e., math/reading scores amongst sub-group populations such as economically disadvantaged,
special education or minority students).
than effective or, arguably, more efficient with resources and overcoming barriers than the Columbus schools.

The building performance index is a formula indicating an overall look at the specific building and the indicators achieved and AYP calculated in. Nearly a decade ago, Bridgetown High School earned a continuous improvement and effective rating with graduation rates of 82.0 and 81.7%. The high school later earned an excellent rating in 2009 and 2010 with respective index scores of 100.7 and 104. Their graduation rates were also 89.9 and 94.6%. The 2008 graduation rate was 94.4%. As noted in Chapter 1, 93% of the students in a cohort must graduate to earn an indicator for the Ohio Report Card.

It is worth noting that during the 2008 graduation and attendance reporting period, the district did not permit students to utilize early release for job or community service and placed-based learning opportunities. Providing opportunities within the resources available is experiential learning (i.e., knowledge or practical wisdom gained from what one has observed, encountered, or undergone). Bridgetown High School utilizes placed-based learning opportunities as experiential learning (Covello, 1938; Longo, 2007).

Communities, Engagement and Capacity Building

Active community memberships coupled with educational experiences are keys to the best kinds of learning (Ryan & Cooper, 1998). This type of involvement can benefit from a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. A constructivist theory

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28 2010-11 Ohio Department of Education performance index scores and rankings divide categories into excellent (including excellent with distinction) 100-120; effective or continuous improvement 90-99.9; continuous improvement 80-89.9; academic watch 70-79.9; academic emergency 0-69.9. A formula for value added growth determines an adjusted score, therefore achieving academic indicators may not guarantee excellent with distinction (Education, 2011).
encourages an autonomous environment within a learning organization (Ashby, 2009). A constructivist classroom or learning environment provides the teacher and student with more opportunities to become an active participant in the educational experience. This practice further fosters a democratic institution where the leader ‘allows’, and more practically offers teachers and students to take ownership and freedom over their own instructional practices (i.e., find out what works for their classroom rather than a prescriptive one-size-fits-all program). Constructivist educators argue that background knowledge, prior experiences and the fundamental world view students bring to a learning scenario will impact their understanding of curricula (Theobald, 2000).

Constructivist theory encourages an autonomous environment within a learning organization (Ashby, 2009). A constructivist classroom or learning environment provides the teacher and student more opportunities to become active participants in the educational experience. Constructivism then leads to democracy in schools and communities. Significant opportunities have now arisen for small rural schools who choose to be creative and meet student needs. For many poor, rural students, earning college credit before leaving high school was just a dream.

**School and Community Potential**

In order to realize their assets, schools must know the ‘who’ and ‘what’ in a community, leveraging their collective gifts, talents and resources for the good of the whole community. Community works by bringing together social capital and outside assistance along with collective resources (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001). Developing trust at the local level between staff, students, families, and communities
foster an environment where incredible things can happen. Developing a culture of
caring builds familial coalitions blended with a common purpose for the community
(Kretzman & McKnight, 1993). Working together is a necessity, not a luxury.
Communities need a place where people with different agendas can come together to
share ideas and work together (Boundary Crossers, 1997). The school can serve as this
place.

Communities need a balance of trained workforce and needs, opportunities and
amenities. These investments come in various forms. Human capital refers to
investments in people through training or schooling and also their ability to participate in
a better society (Putnam, 2000). Physical capital is generally considered to be the
infrastructure of a community, such as highways, power plants, and sewer systems
(affordable housing, sports stadiums, civic centers) (Putnam, 2000). Social capital is
built through the social networks that create norms of reciprocity and trust in a
community (Putnam, 2000). Civic capital refers to those places and institutions that
bring people together (Putnam, 2000). Hybrid versions of this capital generally occur in
places such as parks, cultural centers and theaters. Financial capital provides access to
dollars and credit makers primarily for the disadvantaged. Environmental capital
recognizes the community’s natural resources (water, land, air, wildlife, and vegetation)
(Green & Haines, 2002).

“Successful community efforts have found the right combination of community
investments and amenities that foster, cultivate and encourage a different kind of place
for community and economic activity (Morse, 2004, p. 1).” Every town is open to the
influences of other communities and its transients (Morse, 2004). Communities need to have an attitude and confidence that is conducive to success managed internally and externally through the investment in people.

**Leadership in Context**

Leadership holds a key membership in a democratic school. Democratic leadership has been characterized as comprising four democratic rationalities: common good (ethical); deliberation and dialog (discursive); leadership dispersion, accountability and rights to participate in decision making (decisional); and contributing to the leader’s own growth as well as others’ potential (therapeutic) (Woods, 2005).

The desired implications gleaned from the Southeast Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) conference would propose said qualities that mirror democratic schooling. Further review of the forum frames and discussion panels indicate that students are taking ownership of their learning through independent and relevant subject matter. The Southeast Ohio STEM Conference; *A Child of Appalachia® Forum*, panel discussion was designed to give a voice to stakeholders in a regional effort to create a STEM hub for Southeast Ohio. The effort would provide students with 21st Century skills necessary for post-secondary studies in a global workplace. Students who spoke as panel members shared regional STEM experiences and what would be most beneficial to student’s STEM education (STEM, 2010).

Students gave testimony about actuated learning that was applicable to their ‘place’ (cf. Johnson, Shope, Roush, 2009) and additional global implications for the 21st Century. “Place” refers to the recognition and worth of skills in relation to where they
are from and what they know whether it is cognitive, experiential, contextual or systemic knowledge. Students from Southward High School, Ohio presented at the conference. Examples of personal ‘place’ application were demonstrated through gaming development with mathematics, technology applications with business and career development and student interest projects as young people took ownership of their learning, teachers took down the walls and barriers to provide the opportunities and leadership, gave refuge to those who wanted to grow human potential.

**Learning Organizations and Autonomy**

Etymologically, semantically and in ordinary usage, the term *leadership* is replete with relational significance. “Leadership and followership (Popper, 2004, p. 2)” retain a relationship of enculturated aims, purposes, directions and goals (Popper, 2004). The educational leader therefore is charged with ensuring others carry out their responsibilities and tasks in order to reach a desired target. These attributes are heightened in small districts such as Bridgetown Local Schools where titular authority or people with elected titles are very scarce. It is contended that the democratic school leader is assumed as the legitimate authority and advocates for those in need of social capital or a voice to represent them (Warehousing, 2012). This is especially the case for communities like Cozumel, who have little or no supportive political representation.

Students and teachers who participate in exercising pedagogical freedoms become more actively engaged in an environment where knowledge (i.e., knowledge with a capital “K”—the information and skills deemed important and appropriate by recognized experts and authorities) is activated and appreciated represents a source of power and has
historically been deployed as a means of marginalizing certain groups (e.g., Ashby, 2009; Apple, 1999, 2002; Fraser, 1997; Giroux, 1997, 2001; Johnson, Shope, & Roush, 2009).

School districts serving low income communities like Bridgetown Local may need to consider relying on and developing assets since resources are scarce. This may call for creativity and initiative from school districts. Leadership requires some autonomy. Friedman (1999), describes degrees of autonomy in a working environment that ranges from no autonomy, not authorizing teachers to take initiative in changing methods and curriculum along with any other element of school life to complete autonomy, where teachers are granted complete freedom to initiate and implement new ideas, programs or curriculum within commonly accepted moral and legal principles (Ashby, 2009, p. 1). The teacher is there to guide and introduce concepts with academic support to the students. This freedom affords teachers to find the type of instruction that functions effectively in their classroom, still meeting standards and instructional protocol for programs. In a world where competition for dollars becomes more essential to survive, many organizations have added gimmicks and quick fix opportunities to reel in customers. Open enrollment and online schools have created a competitive environment and when students mean dollars (i.e., student funding model) (ODE, 2011), every student who leaves a public school, cost that school district money. In the case of Bridgetown Local Schools, this is about $6,000. Creating an autonomous environment encourages and fosters the academic environment and creativity while maintaining the integrity of programs with established accreditation and monitoring.
Enhancement of social capital and mobilization of local relationships within a community should not be expected to spontaneously occur. These require leadership. Formal education is a context where such leadership can occur (Putnam, 2001). Parents are expected to support school norms rather than contribute in a formal manner. Schools however can embrace community input through genuine engagement and involvement in strategic planning and community meetings such as Bridgetown Junior/Senior High School Leadership Team- Parent/Community Survey Development) (Hartley & Huddleston, 2010, p. 17). Hartley (2003) suggested that in education these changes envisage the effective school as an affective school, producing more affective, responsive and creative consumers.

**Conclusion**

A community or advocate may need to rally around itself and that social capital may contend as the connection with people and productivity as a result of the social ties specifically in Cozumel (Putnam, 2001). Durable education networks may offer opportunities for students and parents to overcome longstanding barriers. Furthermore, failure to fully use such networks might contribute to longstanding problems. As a reminder, history and enormous empirical evidence demonstrates that for those who are poor, academic success and diploma completion is more difficult to attain (Borman & Rachnba, 2001; (Coleman & Hoffer, 1982).

These networks seem to matter in Cozumel. In spite of extremely long bus rides, high poverty and minimal resources, the community of Cozumel should not be experiencing the degree of success it does given the educational and political barriers imposed
throughout its history (1968). Former students, community members and Bridgetown Local faculty and staff were interviewed to further understand the dynamics of the Cozumel Community. Leaders can be urged to be proactive, utilizing the constructs of Woods (2005) and finding out what the civic mission of their school is (Schools, 2003) or the school’s recognition in community and human value (Covello, 1938). It can be argued that leaders may be well served to understand the success Cozumel and the Bridgetown Schools experience and benefit from the results of the research.

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29 The specific citation information was redacted to maintain confidentiality. The information was obtained through county school board minutes from 1968.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Purpose of Research Design

The central question of this study was: What are some of the key resources, barriers and assets associated with high school completion in the community of Cozumel? Although the question is the primary focus of the research, emergent design flexibility provides (even expects) an openness to inquiry as the researcher gains a deeper understanding and/or the situations change. The openness also prevents the researcher from getting locked in to a specific or rigid design that may eliminate new findings (Patton, 2002).

Design

This study is conceptualized as a case study (Patton, 2002) around the Cozumel Community. This study is identified more specifically as an intrinsic case study, because there is a need from the researcher to learn about a particular case. An intrinsic case study is done not because one wants to learn about other cases; rather, the researcher has an intrinsic interest with this particular case (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Many communities, like snowflakes, have similar qualities but a further look shows that each is unique. The researcher comes to understand in this case, a community, its activity within and important circumstances (Stake, 1995). It is, however, important to know if Cozumel’s former students, community members and school staff have information that might benefit current and future students and school staff. The effort may also yield information that other schools might use to replicate any positive experiences within the community and school district. It is also probable that Cozumel shares communalities
with other semi-isolated communities in Appalachia. For these reasons, study findings were described in detail so as to promote transferability (Patton, 2002).

A good case study reveals phenomenon and helps readers understand its meaning (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). The participants in this study had an opportunity to add an emic or insider personal perspective about their circumstances. Typical questions that get at a participant’s view ask, “How did you feel when ___?,” and “What did you think about when___ (pp. 547-548)?” This case study relied primarily on semi-structured interviews and document analysis (see below). The subjects were interviewed through video and audio and made aware that names along with any family members and the location of this community would be changed to provide confidentiality. A transcribed account of the interview was offered to the subjects. All data and interview materials collected are to be kept under lock and key for three years and will eventually be destroyed.

**Data Collection**

**Sampling strategies.** The participant selection process utilized purposeful sampling. The participants were selected in a way that allowed for a set of information-rich interviews (Patton, 2002). Typical case sampling was the primary approach used, so as to find participants who might speak to what is typical, normal or average (Patton, 2002, p. 243) in the community. In addition, snowball sampling (Patton, 2002) was used as a supplementary approach. As noted in chapter four, some interviewees who were initially recruited were unable to participate and replacements were found by asking those who could participate to recommend other participants.
Interviews

The researcher conducted four interviews from each of three stakeholder groups: community members (see Appendix A), recent graduates (Appendix B) and school district employees (Appendix C). Attempts were made to interview both Bridgetown High School graduates and dropouts; a representative of the latter group was not found, probably because of the high graduation rate in the community. The goal of the interviews in all cases was to understand some of the key resources, barriers and assets associated with high school completion in the community. Interviews occurred when participants were available to participate and in no particular order. All interviews were conducted in person, and transcriptions were prepared as soon as possible after each interview.

Interview protocols were designed to ask questions about key resources, social capital, and assets that are associated with high school completion in the community. Questions also focused on factors that helped students get through high school. The series of questions that asked about experiences and engagement in activities were designed to gather information about the personal connections to the district as a whole and tie academic and contextual information together. There were also questions about graduation and worth or values the stakeholder places on this benchmark. The financial portion of the protocol investigated the stakeholder’s perception as to the financial worth of a degree, the financial status of the district and a quasi-opportunity to assign personal priorities through an unlimited fiscal budget in Cozumel and the school system.
The interviews followed a semi-structured format with a script, series of questions and set of probes. When conducting interviews, I relied somewhat on my extensive background with the community and expertise gained as a principal in the Bridgetown Local Schools. In short, connoisseurship and prolonged engagement informed the interview process.

**Document Analyses**

Document analysis represent a major effort for this case study. Communities and schools generally develop dozens of current and historical documents that allow for intense study, and although Cozumel is small, it too yields many sources of information that can be used to help answer the key research question. Some of the documents used are available from the Howland County Chamber of Commerce, Bridgetown Local School’s web page, Howland County Auditor records, community members, and ODE website. County school board minutes were acquired from the auditor’s office. These documents contain conversations between then county board members, school officials and community members from the time period when school merger occurred in the county. The district web page provided many current statistics and demographic information. Chamber and records offices provide business and geographic representations of the county and Cozumel Community. The bus ride account discussed assists in solidifying travel time for students. Glesne (2006) refers to research saturation as “exhaustive” or to the point where documents and interviews do not yield new results. The researcher utilized community members, recent graduates and school staff to locate additional documents.
During document analysis, general questions I asked included: What was the document, Why was it developed and is it partially or completely relevant to the work? What is the accuracy of the document? (Patton, 2002). Documents obtained include accounts from the Howland County Auditor, archived in his office. The auditor provided the documents and verified their authenticity. The bus ride account was recanted from my notes as the former principal in the school district. It is relevant as it provides an account of the actual time traveled on a school bus route from Cozumel. All ODE information may be verified through the ODE’s website including information gleaned from the Bridgetown Local Schools. These documents assist in providing the academic success of the high school.

**Data Analyses**

This research reviewed documents and interview transcripts to develop themes. Analyses focused on identifying themes, recurring ideas, and patterns of belief (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Themes are defined here as patterns and are informed by taxonomies that seem to fit together or be related to one another (LeCompte, 2000). One aspect in thematic analysis is pattern recognition, which is the process of seeing arrays of data in what otherwise might seem to be random information (Patton, 2002). Logical analyses were also used, meaning I looked for emergent patterns that can be represented as dimensions, classification schemes, themes and categories (Patton, 2002). I also tried to remain cognizant of the difference between emic and etic information and findings (i.e., the difference between participant driven information versus my interpretations) and valence of responses (i.e., positive versus negative statements).
**Emergent Coding**

Through coding, my plan was to explore and explain data, and build rich descriptions of complex situations (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Although description, analyses and interpretation are often bundled together when coding, the three are not mutually exclusive. That is, the lines are not clear between where analysis begins and where analysis becomes interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Simple statements or propositions express links until they fall into sets of data and the linkages become more closely related. The researcher needed to analyze experiences of each group interviewed which help develop an understanding, to assist in checking or testing ideas.

LeCompte’s (2000) general analysis steps were used to analyze data. These are:

1. “tidy up”- (pp. 146-154) which simply means creating copies of interviews, placing interviews in order of their dates of creation and creating files based on types of data;
2. finding items- things that are coded, counted and assembled into research results;
3. creating stable sets of items- e initial items identified, must be organized into groups or categories by comparing and contrasting items;
4. create patterns- after determining what “things” go together, patterns need to be developed;
5. assemble structures- once patterns are assembled, and data are good and analyzed properly, this allows the researcher to solve problems, improve programs, assess their effectiveness, or develop theories (LeCompte, 2000). A key aspect to LeCompte’s approach is a recommendation to examine ones assumptions. Examples of assumptions I carry is that education is generally a good thing to pursue and can enhance things like social capital. I also carried a number of assumptions about the Cozumel community in that I think it has some
strengths along with a number of challenges and barriers. These assumptions are revisited in later chapters.

Data were coded using standard thematic/pattern analysis techniques where the range of responses will be identified and categorize responses to explain variation. I utilized Atlas ti (Atlas.ti, 2013), a computer software program with the capability to help researchers perform interpretational analyses. I then segmented the text into units of meaningful phrases. Categories of specific phenomena are identified with a value of 0 or 1. Coding practices were utilized to determine how phenomena fit into a specific category. The categories were then divided by identifiers such as: GA1, GA2, GA3 and GA4 for the graduate or school attendee and SS1, SS2, SS3 and SS4 for school staff, and CM1, CM2, CM3 and CM4 for community members. Numbers may be changed to reflect the interview participant’s career or experiences at a later time. For instance, CM1 may be coded as CM business lady. Theoretical saturation occurred when no new or relevant categories appear in the coding. An analysis was utilized to determine case study findings through means of interpretive validity.

**Reflexivity**

An important part of research is demonstrating trustworthiness and truth. The researcher is responsible for doing the best job to understand the nature of the respondents and data reported (Glesne, 2006). However, a priori questioning is inevitable since the researcher worked and lives in the region. Interviews were conducted with willing participants who have more than likely had repeated contact with the researcher as a colleague, student, parent of a student or community member. As noted in
Chapter 1, a potential discomfort that may arise is based on the fact that I am the former principal in the Bridgetown Local School District. I am, however, no longer employed with the school after accepting a position as a dean at a community college, and the nature of the questioning will not focus on my former role as a principal. The study focuses on current practice and community needs. To minimize any discomfort, and to promote objectivity, I emphasized to the subjects that research questions focused on community factors as well as broader social issues over which I would have had no control. Clarification was provided to the subjects that any evasive or declined responses will not reflect on our relationship. I stated at the outset of interviews that any school-related questions are not about my performance as an administrator. Part of this clarification entailed an explicit statement that I am not capable of objectively assessing my performance in this role and research questions simply do not focus on this topic. If responses began to provide information that could be reflective of my prior role, I redirected the interview so as to focus on general community issues. The participants were made aware that names will be changed and made aware of the pseudonym. Additionally, they were told that any identifying information (e.g., community, school district) would be presented as pseudonyms.
Credibility Techniques

**Triangulation.** Triangulation strengthens a study by combining several kinds of methods or data (Patton, 2002). I attempted to use cross-stakeholder triangulation, focusing on community members, graduates and school staff, as well as cross-method triangulation so as to compare and contrast findings from interviews and document analyses (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Patton, 2002). Examples of documents include records of parent-teacher conference participation, county board minutes and notes about the bus ride discussed in chapter two.

I also used a form of theory triangulation. That is, findings were situated in what the literature describes about Appalachia, semi-isolated communities and constructs like social capital. As a reminder, history and enormous empirical evidence shows us that if you are poor, then your academic success, specifically graduation is more difficult to attain (Coleman & Hoffer, 1982; Borman & Rachna, 2001). In spite of this, the students of Bridgetown Local Schools are performing better than what research tells us they should and methodological triangulation (the use of multiple methods to study a problem or program), possibly triangulation comparing a response to a document (p. 247).

**Member Checking**

Member checking is done to determine if information gathered has adequately captured what research participants are trying to say (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) (see also Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). A means to achieving confirmation would be a written summary given to participants to judge accuracy and provide reactions, corrections and further insights (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). “It is important to share interview transcripts,
analytical thoughts and/or drafts of the final report to ensure that you have represented their ideas with accuracy (Glesne, 2006, pp. 37-38).”

The first level of member checking involves checking the accuracy of the transcript. Member checking might then reveal factual errors that may be easily corrected. The second level may summarize the point of what the participant is trying to say or convey. The report may allow a participant to recall new facts or have new perceptions of the situation (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). The researcher may be encouraged to revert to reflexive strategies if controversial data or perceived wrong data are reported. This is a potential risk since the researcher spent several years as principal in the school district. I generally used level two member checking.

**Prolonged Engagement**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate time as the most important element of prolonged engagement, (i.e., spending sufficient time at the research site). The extended time in the field fosters an environment of trust, grasp of the culture and checks out hunches (Glesne, 2006). Further support is given to the research when the researcher has spent extended time at the site. In this case, it is once again noted that I spent my entire life in Howland County serving in many capacities.
Peer Debriefing

One other research validation is peer debreifing. Peer review and debreifing is a verification process that utilizes external reflection and input (Glesne, 2006). Knowledgeable colleagues were asked to react to coding, case summaries, analytic memos written during data analysis and the next-to-final drafts. Such transparency is paramount to the validity of the research, and includes all data collection and management in the field as well as how design decisions could be traced by anyone with reason (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Suggested peer reviewers included members of the dissertation committee and a local public school superintendent.

Negative Case Analysis

Negative case analysis refers to the search for disconfirming evidence (e.g., outliers, atypical cases) to ensure accurate portrayal of the range and variation of the target phenomenon (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). This process acts as sort of a “devil’s advocate”. In short, I may assume that the school is doing a great job, but one interview yields a highly negative experience associated with the school. During chapter four, a level two member check could then be conducted via phone to confirm interview results along the other members checks. Follow up questions or clarification may be in order at this point.

Conclusion

This intrinsic case study investigated Cozumel’s assets and social capital with an emphasis on the latter. This case study will pose a series of questions of interest to the researcher because Cozumel is an economically impoverished community. While
examining the barriers that Cozumel faces, there is also merit in understanding the
support systems and advocates that may have advocated for students. There is reason to
believe Cozumel has experienced unusually adverse circumstances, so while it is
important to document these there may be value in understanding forces (including their
own efforts) that enable them function or thrive from a situation that, at first glance,
likely undermined the community. The hope then is to replicate or glean positive
strategies for community asset development, school achievement, leadership (not
exclusive to the school administrator), and fostering social capital.

Awareness of community assets is paramount given the opportunity for school
leaders to think of their current situation as dismal and their communities as a deficit.
Barriers are an ordeal to overcome or a misfortune to circumvent, and when conquered,
individuals are viewed as extraordinary. This research looked at the perspective of those
from Cozumel and whether barriers are viewed from the same perspective or
“misfortune” as non-community members. Having reviewed relevant local policies and
political decisions, particularly with Bridgetown Local Schools, the notion of democratic
schools and leadership should be reviewed by school leaders.

Assets are renewable and organic in nature, people included. When a community
runs out of resources or they are extracted, either by necessity or force, the community is
left many times to advocate for itself or it needs someone to champion for them and
develop the assets that may remain. Cozumel, in this case, may have arguably found a
way to harness these assets in spite of the fact that they are underrepresented both
politically and economically. Leaders may need to be aware of the successes experienced
in an almost apparent dismal situation from an etic view. Knowing your customer and having an inside or emic understanding of who you are attempting to lead are transferable qualities across communities and organizations.

Although my role in the community was a concern throughout the study, I have attempted to promote my own reflexivity via full disclosure, the application of a concrete coding plan that requires examination of assumptions, and I compared prior expectations with actual results. Furthermore, I used credibility techniques such as member checks, negative case analyses and triangulation. These steps should be contrasted with the benefits of my doing this work. I know this community well and can navigate within it. This may have helped me to recruit interviewees, locate key documents and interpret results with the benefit of knowing the area well. In short, it is my hope that my experience helped me to recognize the need for this study and access information, while the application of credibility techniques minimized my having too many blinders.
Chapter 4: Findings

The overarching research question for this work is: What key assets, resources and barriers are associated with high school completion in Cozumel? The primary source of data collection for this study was a series of semi-structured interviews (see Appendices A-C); additional sources included a series of document analyses.

Description of Interview Respondents

The selection process worked according to plan, as described in Chapter 3. Interview participants were chosen via purposeful selection so as to obtain information from four Bridgetown Local School Staff members, four community members who live near but not in Cozumel and four Bridgeport high school graduates who are Cozumel residents (or former students who had attended Bridgetown Local Schools for a period of time). Contact was initiated through public access points (i.e., both hard copy and electronic phone book, public email and referrals of other cohort members) where no special permission was needed to contact the potential interview subject. All respondents were adults. Sampling criteria entailed typical case sampling, meaning the participants were not expected to be unusual with respect to their knowledge of or experiences with Cozumel. As noted in Chapter 3, I invoked prolonged engagement and connossieurship given my knowledge of the Cozumel area. In this way I initially identified respondents from each of the three groups but also used snowball sampling (Patton, 2002) so as to identify two additional participants. That is, two people did not respond to interview invitations so I found replacements per the recommendation of the sample. One person was a school graduate who was going to interview just prior to her mother, who was
going to serve as a community member participant. The mother had called her daughter to inform her that she was dealing with a custody issue and would not make the interview. The graduate completed her interview and suggested other community members who might participate. I had also planned on interviewing two sisters who were graduates from the district. One sister did not show up because she could not find a baby sitter, but her sister found another graduate I was able to interview.

The interview participants included a law enforcement officer who lives in the Bridgetown Local School District and works frequently in the Cozumel Community, but whose children attend an adjoining school district. This community member was coded as CM-officer. The second community member is a cashier and lived outside of the Bridgetown Local School District until after the consolidation of Ballast and Cozumel with Bridgetown Local Schools. Her children attended and graduated from Bridgetown Local Schools. This interview subject will be referred to later in this chapter as CM-cashier. The third interviewee was the parent of a student who lived in the Higginsboro City School District just a few miles from Cozumel, but chose to send her children to Bridgetown. This community member works throughout the schools in the county with talented and gifted students as well as students who are truant. This participant is referred to below as CM-educator. The last community member has ties to Cozumel through 11 previous generations. Her family runs small family farms in the Cozumel Community and graduated their godchild from Bridgetown Local Schools. The coding designation is CM-farmer for the last community member.
Four Bridgetown Local School graduates/attendees from Cozumel were interviewed. The first interview participant moved from an urban area to Cozumel and graduated two years ago. This participant noted that his family residence was within two miles of four school districts. Although this student attended Bridgetown Local Schools for eight years, he did not graduate from Bridgetown due to travel and distance. His family chose open enrollment in an adjoining district to finish his senior year. He enrolled at Granville, which was also a school he had previously attended for transportation issues and extracurricular activity participation.

This participant indicated regret for not graduating from Bridgetown Schools, which will also be discussed in the findings. This participant is currently a student at a community college and will be noted as GA-mover. Student number two did not graduate from high school in a traditional manner. This student did not pass all parts of the state graduation test when administered to her as a sophomore and through repeated attempts until the end of her senior year; she passed the last portion of the test during the summer after her class had completed graduation ceremonies. She received her high school diploma at that point. It has now been four years since she graduated. This student works part time at a retail store and is currently working part time on a certificate program in dental hygiene offered at a community college. This participant will be designated as GA-retailer. Student number three lived on the Bridgetown School District line in the easternmost part of the district just east of Cozumel and graduated eight years ago. Her family had to apply for open enrollment to attend Bridgetown Local Schools since the residence was just east of the district line. This student currently works part
time at an area pharmacy as a pharmacy tech, but still lives in Cozumel. This student moved in with her mother and indicated that alcohol abuse was prevalent in her family, and that they had lived in the area for numerous generations. GA-open enrollment is the designation for this student. The fourth student interviewed is not currently employed, moved out of Cozumel and currently lives with a brother and some friends in Higgonsboro. This student graduated a year ago and has a child. This student indicated that numerous generations of her family have resided in the Cozumel area. This student was designated as GA-generational.

Four staff from the Bridgetown Local Schools were interviewed. School staff included a variety of four different employees from the Bridgetown Local Schools; these included the superintendent, two teachers who have multiple roles in the district, and a guidance counselor. None of these participants live in Cozumel. In fact, none of the school staff in the entire school district live in Cozumel which further reinforces more than just a physical isolation from the rest of the district. Staff report they deal with social isolation because since they do not interact within the community itself. The superintendent moved into the school district and has been employed as a coach, organization sponsor, teacher, principal and superintendent for 34 years. The superintendent will be coded as SS-supt. Staff member number two is a school librarian, teacher, coach and a technology coordinator for the district. He does not live in the district, but does live in a neighboring district about 20 minutes away. It is worth noting that at the end of the interview, he indicated that he did not know where Cozumel was. He has been with Bridgetown Local Schools for 12 years. He will be coded as SS-
The third school staff member is the guidance counselor for the entire school district as well as the test coordinator. She has also served as an organization sponsor such as National Honor Society. Her time at Bridgetown Local Schools spans over 15 years. She lives in a suburban area nearly 45 minutes away. Coding assignment for her is SS-counselor. The final staff member is a teacher who also has served as a dean of students/assistant to the principal and coach for several sports organizations. He has been employed by the district for 22 years and lives approximately 45 minutes away in a neighboring county. He will be coded as SS-coach.

In sum, the 12 interviewees were fairly diverse. The interviewees ranged from 20 to 62 years of age, four were male, and the community members all had different jobs, as did the school staff. School staff ranged from having 12 to 34 years of education experience. The graduates all dealt with different life circumstances. Three of them were pursuing higher education, and two were unemployed. All of the respondents had considerable experiences with the Cozumel community or the school that serves the community.

**Interview Details**

The interviews were conducted in no specific order and were conducted at times and places that were chosen by each individual participant. None of the participants had prior knowledge of my interview protocol or the nature of the questions. Participants signed an interview protocol approved by the internal review board (IRB) from Ohio University explaining the participant’s rights and participation expectations. Each interview was recorded with two video camera devices. The interviews were then
transcribed into a word document. After informed consent was obtained, interviews lengths ranged from seven to 13 minutes for community members, 10 to 13 minutes for graduates and nine to 20 minutes for school staff.

The length of interview times were surprising. In retrospect several respondents were prone to pithy statements, that were also “matter-of fact” in orientation. It is however the case that several statements were packed with information that did not require much elaboration given my familiarity with the community. For example, when asked the question “What is the importance of a high school diploma in Cozumel?” a respondent stated: “In Cozumel, it is very important. I believe over the years, there was no formal education, so in that area I believe that it would be the equivalent of a college education in the city.” So as to probe I asked, “Does a high school diploma help students to find a job here or elsewhere, if you are from Cozumel?” The respondent stated: “That is the way today’s workforce is, and the economy is. I’m sure it helps with a college education. You know as well as I do, it is pretty much what you need now. Or some kind of vocational education.” I then queried about financial benefits of a diploma. The responded stated: “You can get a better job or job offer instead of just workforce wise down there. There’s just not that much, you know as labor work.” This brief interaction supports an a priori expectation that a high school diploma in Cozumel yields little in the way of economic advantage since so little opportunity is available in the community. Behaviorally speaking, the respondent did not appear to have much else to say about the topic. For another example, I asked a respondent, “What are some of the barriers for a typical student from Cozumel to graduate?” The respondent stated: “Like I said, the
economy, the culture of the area, the way they were raised. My parents did not need it [education], why should I need it? Parents don’t push it because they didn’t have it.”

When I asked for elaboration: “Is there anything you’d like to add?” The respondend stated” “umn, nah.” Although there were some additional ways to ask for elaboration, this respondent’s behaviors and affect generally indicated they had little interest in discussing topics further. The “like I said” phrase, in this context, conveyed a sense that the respondent was being asked to repeat information. Per my judgement, pushing respondents for further elaboration may have yielded irritation since many people in the area tend to be direct and short with responses.

As noted above, I am familiar with the community (I live in the county) so did not need to ask detailed questions about economic opportunities, graduate rates, etc. When a respondent states there are no jobs to be had in Cozumel, I understand the statement to be almost literal because the only functional business in the community is a family owned market. In a sense, I applied the notion of connosseurship (Patton, 2002) because my expertise allowed for quick processing of information, and I believe, a sense of when respondents were done talking about a topic. Although some of the interviews did not yield as much information as I would have liked, it is difficult to access this information in any other way, and document analyses proved to be useful approaches for better understanding Cozumel and how the local school district supports this community.

**Documents**

Seven distinct sources yielded pertinent documents for analysis: (1) historical school board minutes recorded when the local district took its current form, (2) Internet
data from the ODE, (3) School and District websites, (4) prior notes gathered during the school bus trip (see Chapter 2), (5) 62 pages worth of Chamber of Commerce community links and resources, (6) three county maps (7) a school Title 1 funding document and an a staff electronic communication including parent-teacher conference/extra-curricular/academic participation. All documents were analyzed after the interviews were conducted, transcribed and coded. When possible, codes used when analyzing interview transcripts were also used when coding these documents so as to promote data triangulation (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Patton, 2002). Information about these documents are summarized in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was the document?</th>
<th>Why was it developed?</th>
<th>How is it relevant to the research question?</th>
<th>Is there a reason to be concerned about accuracy of the document?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School board minutes from the late 1960’s were recorded when the local district took its current form</td>
<td>These minutes are recorded per the Ohio Revised Code and made publically available.</td>
<td>The majority of the document was relevant; however some information was redacted in order to promote confidentiality.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet data from the ODE</td>
<td>These documents were developed by the ODE for reporting purposes.</td>
<td>This website contains information about the district’s state graduation rates and standardized tests that helped described the school district.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School and District websites</td>
<td>Documents from the school’s website and ODE website were utilized to gather statistics about demographic information.</td>
<td>This document was partially relevant to the work since the document was not exclusively dedicated to Cozumel. The website included other general information about other schools and national/world events.</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 1: Continued</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prior notes gathered during the school bus trip</td>
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<tr>
<td>The bus ride account offered in Chapter 2 was also treated as a type of document</td>
<td>This document was used to contextualize the context of bus ride.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>analysis.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>62 pages worth of Howland County Chamber of Commerce community resource</td>
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<tr>
<td>Howland County Chamber of Commerce community resource directory was consulted for</td>
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<tr>
<td>over 62 pages describing businesses, resources and opportunities in the area; not</td>
<td>Local information about services, schools, businesses, how to contact the</td>
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<tr>
<td>one reference was made to Cozumel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>No, but this document is not complete since it does not provide a full</td>
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<tr>
<td>representation of the county, specifically Cozumel.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Three county maps</td>
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<tr>
<td>These documents were developed to show the school board what tracks of land were</td>
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<tr>
<td>be petitioned to transfer out of the Bridgetown Local Schools and redistricting</td>
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<tr>
<td>purposes as well as the district island causeway near Cozumel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>These maps were completely relevant to the research since they provided a view of</td>
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<td>who and where redistricting would take place.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Table 1: Continued</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bridgetown Local Schools Title 1 funding application.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participating buildings must focus additional services directly on at-risk students. These funds may be used school-wide, but are specifically intended to improve outcomes across the building by not supplanting current resources (Education, 2012).</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bridgetown Elementary School is the designated Title 1 building and the high school therefore does not qualify for any funding to assist educational instruction for at-risk students.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Electronic Staff Communication</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This electronic communication provided data for the number of parents who attended parent-teacher conferences, the number of students from Cozumel who participated in extra-curricular activities, and the number of students from Cozumel who were on the honor roll.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>This document helps contextualize the distance traveled and barriers students and parents from Cozumel face.</td>
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<td>No.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The table references three county maps. One of the three maps is a 1960 county engineer issued map of Southeast Howland County primarily including the current Bridgetown Local School District; another is a 1989 map of one of the areas in a township of the former Ballast School District noted plots of land that were petitioned to join Higgonsboro City Schools rather than Bridgetown Local Schools during the 1968 redistricting transfer. Finally, a 2012 map depicts overlap of three converging districts, one of which is Bridgetown Local Schools. No special permission was needed to access any of the public documents. The county school board minutes were transcribed from board meetings that took place in 1968 (recall from Chapter 3 that these minutes were thought to be particularly relevant because they support the finding that there is a lack of social capital or political representation for the Cozumel Community). These documents were obtained via the Howland County Auditor. Further details about this document that included maps and board minutes are provided below in the coding section. The school board minutes and maps from the county auditor were transcribed into a word document and later downloaded to Atlas ti and coded into themes with the interview cohorts.

Documents from the school’s website and ODE website were utilized to gather statistics about demographic information. The ODE was specifically used to access school graduation rates, standardized test score results and school demographics. The school district website also contained access to graduation rates, standardized test scores and demographic information. The bus ride account offered in Chapter 2 was also treated as a type of document analysis. Information from the bus ride was recalled from my personal notes when I served as principal in the district. This document was also used to contextualize the context of the ride and validate the bus distance traveled. Finally, the
Howland County Chamber of Commerce community resource directory was consulted. It turned out that this data source was more useful for what it did not offer than what it did; after an extensive search of over 62 pages describing businesses, resources and opportunities in the area, not one reference was made to Cozumel. Rather, local information about services, schools, businesses, how to contact the governor’s office, sources for economic development, etc. were described. The fact that no reference is made to the community further validates the finding that there is a general lack of concern or support for Cozumel. The Title 1 document discussed in Chapter two was consulted to help contextualize the economic state of the school district and review the support systems that did or did not exist in the schools. Because only one designated building in the district is permitted to receive financial assistant for at-risk students (the elementary building in this case), the junior/senior high school was not permitted to use dollars to help purchase resources or staff to help with instruction. This further validates the finding that Cozumel students have been marginalized since some of them could benefit from these services and because data analyses supports that students from Cozumel come from low-income or poor families, Title 1 dollars could help students succeed. The electronic communication helps further contextualize the context of the ride and validate the bus distance students face along with barriers that decrease student participation in extra-curricular activities and parent participation in parent-teacher-conferences.
Transcript Coding and Document Analysis

Recall from Chapter Three that the analysis plan was to use LeCompte’s (2000) five steps to analyze data; these include: (1) “tidying up” (p. 148) which simply means creating copies of interviews and documents, placing transcripts in order of their dates of creation and creating files based on types of data; (2) finding items (things that are coded), counting and assembling them into research results; (3) creating stable sets of items (once initial items have been identified, researchers must organize them into groups or categories by comparing and contrasting items); (4) identifying patterns- after determining what things go together, patterns need to be developed; (5) assembling structures- once patterns are assembled, and data are good and analyzed properly, this allows the researcher to see more clearly how to solve problems, improve programs, assess their effectiveness, or develop theories explaining what happened (LeCompte, 2000). As noted in Chapter 3, elements of logical analysis (Patton, 2002) were also used. This process entails searching for emergent patterns from the data to support classification and interpretation of themes. I was also careful not to introduce external controls and influence participants answers to questions while using descriptive coding (Patton, 2002) (see Chapter 3). A common approach for gauging the usefulness of patterns is to assess the degree to which they are both mutually exclusive (i.e., if data is in one theme it is not in another) and jointly exhaustive (i.e., there are few data points that are not able to be classified).

My first order of business was to organize the transcripts and documents in groups in order to help with potential triangulation and cohort data. I utilized Atlas ti (Atlas.ti,
2013), a computer software program with the capability to organize data to support interpretational analysis. Coded items were identified and totaled for frequency counts and later coding organization. Data were coded using standard thematic/pattern analysis techniques where the range of responses were identified and categorized to explain variation (this corresponds with step three in LeCompte’s framework). I segmented the text into units of meaningful phrases (Step four). These four steps helped lead me to develop aggregated units including; assets, resources, barriers and social capital which will be discussed in further detail later in Chapter 4.

Tables were created to help organize items into groups. For example, recall that community assets represent an a priori code. An a priori code is one that I, as the researcher, expected to glean from data at the outset of the study. Several asset entries were entered under codes such as: beauty, history hunting, nature and timber. These items could then be grouped under one umbrella of “assets.” Following the grouping and categorization, patterns and themes were developed. Step five of LeCompte’s approach is introduced toward the end of this chapter to assist in drawing further resolutions and implications for this study.

After all interviews had been completed, I then began transcribing all of the interviews. Field notes (i.e., written, short-hand accounts of any pertinent information taken during the interview, such as behavioral observations) taken during interviews were examined as a way to double-check transcription accuracy. Emergent coding was used in Atlas ti to assist in developing categories for the development of themes at a later time. The first round of coding produced 48 codes representing detailed ideas and themes
within the transcribed documents. After reviewing the codes, replicated items along with errors (e.g., the software coded asset and assets differently) reduced the actual codes to 30 which are described in Tables 2-5 (Appendix D documents the process).

Twelve interview transcripts were coded. These interviews came from a protocol developed to help determine what impact assets, barriers, social capital and resources have on students from the Cozumel Community. The documents from the aforementioned seven sources were also analyzed. Text data were subjected to thematic analysis much in the same way that interview transcripts were analyzed. Numerical data were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis. Personal notes pertaining to observations taken during bus trips were used for background information and were not formally coded. Visual analysis of the three maps were done to understand how the Bridgetown Local School District, and surrounding districts, were altered over time from the 1960’s to present. That is, these documents were utilized due to the rich information about how the districts came to be and where students were or were not placed and who advocated or did not advocate for certain communities. Certain motions from the minutes were redundant and others were business matters not related to redistricting and were redacted from the coding process. These documents from the Howland County Auditor, once again help validate the students and community members of Cozumel were not represented and a lack of concern or support for the community exists.

The participants in this study added emic/insider perspective. Typically researchers utilize viewpoints from this perspective to represent the case. I supplemented and
interpreted this information through my own, etic lens. In doing so, I think I was able to gain rich amounts of information from shorter responses.

Within each theme there are quotes that express a different valence (typically positive or negative). I determined the valence between positive and negative themes through a review of in vivo quotations. One such example recorded in interviews dealt with the question, “What changes would you make to the Cozumel Community?” CM-educator responded, “[laugh] Well I would say that to redistrict school districts so that they would be attend, well Higgonsboro would make the most sense, but there again, I still think there is an advantage to those kids coming here because of being in a small school and I think they have more support, so I don’t know. That’s one thing that could be changed. Personally I don’t know if I would change that or not.” I determined that this quote did not merit a negative valence because the respondent had both positive and negative thoughts about changing how educators interface with the community.

Findings

Four aggregated themes were identified: (1) assets, (2) resources, (3) barriers and (4) social capital. Note that these areas were specifically queried about during interviews by asking the following questions: What are some of Cozumel’s greatest assets? What are some of Cozumel’s greatest resources? What are some barriers that make it harder for a typical student from Cozumel to graduate? What are some things that help students from Cozumel be successful in high school? As noted below, although these themes were expected, my interpretation of them altered as I gathered data.
**Assets**

As a reminder, assets are more organic in nature, provide a benefit to both the entity interacting with the asset and to the asset itself, and are sustainable (Johnson, 2012). Sustainability refers to the idea that the asset tends to not diminish with use, which distinguishes this theme from resources. Examples of assets include: (a) natural beauty, (b) farming, (c) history, (d) nature (e) church, (f) community, (g) culture, (h) education and (i) resilience. A community gains a stronger sense of mutual responsibility when the asset is treated with stewardship (Mattessiah, 1997). Many data points were coded as representing an asset and they were generally coded as having a positive valence. As a side note, a negative valence when dealing with an asset might arise if respondents, for example, complained that an asset was not properly appreciated, utilized or can be improved. Most participants needed a clarification statement or definition as to what exactly an asset was. Once the explanation was given, the following ideas emerged from the direct question regarding assets in the interview protocol: beauty, farming, history, hunting and nature. Additional assets were identified through the entire coding process of all documents evaluated. These include: community, culture and education. Using connoisseurship, I took the liberty of designating resiliency as an asset. Explanation of how this theme emerged will be discussed later in this section. I recorded a total of 357 references made to assets in the interviews and school board minutes. Table 2 provides an overview of how the assets theme and subthemes are defined and coded.
### Table 2

**Overview of the Community Assets Theme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Representative In Vivo Quotes</th>
<th>Researcher Explanation</th>
<th>Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>&quot;Nature would be the greatest one.&quot;</td>
<td>“Things” of significance that are more organic in nature and sustainable.</td>
<td>Johnson (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“There’s a lot of parks out there. There’s a lot of historical stuff out there.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>&quot;When the school was located there, I think that they did because it was possible for the community to come together and help support what was going on....&quot;</td>
<td>Community is viewed as a sustainable source of support whereby its members help each other. A sense of community was invoked when interviewees described both the positive aspects of Cozumel and how it might be improved. School leaders often focus on building stronger communities and this goal was reflected in school documents.</td>
<td>Kretzman &amp; McKnight (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
<td>“I think in pockets, there’s community support for each other.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Culture | 42 | "There are several generations that stay within that area, so how do I want to say, uh families kind of have each other’s back, so to speak."

  “It’s generational poverty and it’s just their culture and way of life.” | Respondents at once saw Cozumel’s culture as an asset but also a detriment unless cultural strengths can be properly invoked. Culture can be defined as shared behaviors, values, expectations and perceptions. The culture of Cozumel was often viewed as an asset but was also, at times, viewed as a contributing factor for poor academic performance. Consider also Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems’ Theory (EST) (a) micro- a child’s immediate environment, (b) meso- school and broader systems, (c) macro- broader but local decisions maker do not usually have contact with students, (d) exo-policy and culture (Appalachia may be an exosystem), (e) chrono-whatever was true yesterday is true tomorrow. These systems describe some of the layers that emerged in the document analyses. | Thompson (2013) (Bronfenbrenner 1989, 1995, 1999) |
| Table 2: Continued |
|-------------------|------------------|
| **Education**     | 87               | "...It’s just that thing you obtain and it’s just kind of self-confidence. It gives you self-confidence."
|                   |                  | “But, work hard and take that work ethic and put it to schooling cause you know it’s going to be a benefit the rest of your life. That’s what I would tell them.”
|                   |                  | Many of these responses referred to the importance of a high school diploma. The fact that community members could offer concrete advice to a student from Cozumel led to my coding this as an asset. Education is not mutually exclusive to assets since the standard is not perfect here. This code also fits somewhat under social capital and is not mutually exclusive (see below). Dewey (1916) |
| **Farming**       | 57               | "I think just everyday life instead of living in the city you out where there’s farming and to me that was important growing up."
|                   |                  | “They sell flowers and produce pumpkins and watermelons and vegetables and build stuff.”
|                   |                  | Farming is noted on a small scale personal level, where individuals may have used this as a bartering tool or means of sustenance rather than an extractable resource that is outsourced. |
| Table 2: Continued |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Resilience          | Interviewees referred to positive and adaptive responses to a threat or adversity. This response in turn becomes an asset since the students’ resilience to attend school despite adverse situations was documented (i.e., having to walk through the woods over the hill to board the bus when the bus route was impassable on the other side of the hill due to snow). Education fits under assets which becomes an asset for the community. |
|                     | “they had to go through the woods to cross and days when it’s bitterly cold especially for one of them that had asthma.” |
|                     | “And I think there is some of that still and it affects the mindset of the people who live there because they know they are looked down on. That has a lot to do with their motivation to go out and do other things. It takes a tough kid to be able to survive that stigma.” |
|                     | Success widely revolves around the intentional question of what helps a student from Cozumel being successful in high school. I recorded success as an exploratory code. Success was never defined by me. Success emerged from interview responses and in this case may not be mutually exclusive since the support systems referred to here, mirror both social capital and assets. Success in many forms helps sustain a community and another asset. |
|                     | Cuseo, Fecas, & Thompson (2007)                                                                  |
|                     | Success          | 12 | "...so just all being together and being a group of friends in that area kind of helped with success in school." |
|                     |                     |    | “I think just everyday life instead of living in the city you out where there’s farming and to me that was important growing up.” |
|                     | Note. Asset refers to both a code/subtheme and superordinate theme. This is because respondents were directly queried about assets in the community. Codes with an exploratory label were identified during data analysis. Other codes were a priori in nature, in that they were expected. Quotes were drawn from transcripts or documents. |
Assets were identified in the overarching research question for this work. My research asks: What key assets, resources and barriers are associated with high school completion in Cozumel? Since jobs are minimal (further discussed in the resources section below), farming offers a means to provide sustainable opportunities. Interview participants, mentioned farming as an opportunity to learn. This type of learning refers to systemic learning discussed in Chapter 2. “Uh, yeah, there’s a few different farmers that lived in the area that taught us how to butcher animals and how to take care of animals and stuff like that. Always people willing to teach” (GA-open enrollment). Farming on a small scale appeared as one of the more frequent responses. Farming is a tricky theme since the process technically extracts a good, much like a resource and uses exhaustible resources such as nitrates, phosphorus and lime to balance the soil; however, on a small scale, farming in this community appears to be viewed as an asset and sustainable practice. Small scale farmers can utilize and repurpose natural fertilizers and sustain the environment without disrupting the natural setting. Free range chicken farming allows chickens to graze naturally on small plots of land and fertilize the ground promoting soil fertility for other crops. “There’s a lot of eggs and a lot of chicken farmers out there” (GA-mover). These are operations that would sustain a single family’s usage and/or provide a small side income for other consumers and no detriment to the land or community over a long period of time. Conversely, farming is referred to as a resource as well, “Um. I think resources, there’s a lot of farm” (GA-open enrollment). The comments appear as an asset on a small personal scale and potentially as a resource on a larger scale where farming is being used as a means to support the family. “They sell flowers and produce pumpkins and watermelons and vegetables and build stuff (GA-
As a sixth generation practitioner on my family farm, in my expert opinion, I did not determine any issues with resources and assets overlapping due to the option of personal application based on the scope and scale of each individual farmer.

Another asset to the community and educational opportunities were noted by (SS-supt) in the following, “For assets you got (redacted) Lake, that state park, you got (redacted) State Park. There’s a lot of parks out there. There’s a lot of historical stuff out there.” Comments will be further discussed in Chapter 5 regarding the underutilization, awareness or concern for assets in the Cozumel Community.

Resilience was an asset that I took the liberty of adding to the asset theme. In all, 19 responses were coded as being tied to a resilience category. Overall, there was an appreciation for the resilience displayed amongst the school staff and community members for the students who lived in Cozumel. For example, in response to the question offering the interview participant to share anything else in general about the Cozumel Community “I think that it is kind of important to think about the whole history of the place and this attitude for a very long time that, my father wouldn’t have anything to do with those people. Uh, because they were supposed to be racially mixed blood and so that whole community was considered in Howland County, second or third class citizens and treated accordingly. And I think there is some of that still and it affects the mindset of the people who live there because they know they are looked down on. That has a lot to do with their motivation to go out and do other things. It takes a tough kid to be able to survive that stigma” (CM-farmer).
When asked the question, “Would you make any changes to the Bridgetown Local Schools themselves?” One student responded, “I really like the Bridgetown Local District. I mean even though it was a trial, the long distance to go there (also noted as a barrier), I moved from Bridgetown Local and that’s the one regret I have. I wish I would have stayed in the Bridgetown Local School District rather than move and just growing up there and you just become family with everybody, but the biggest thing was something that I will never be able to change…” (GA-mover). One school staff member replied to a question about barriers in the following manner: “Well, I think with anybody if there is no value in education or the structure of education at home for any adolescent kid, I mean that’s a huge barrier. When they constantly get it driven in their head that it has no importance, it is a waste of time. (I also consider this thinking a barrier, since the definition of a barrier is someone or thing standing between that thing and another. In this case, the family member would be a barrier to the student’s education.) There’s other things like survival, honestly that is much more important. I mean any child especially an adolescent, is just not going to value it. It is easy not to value it if you are allowed not to” (SS-coach).

There are several items of note with regard to assets. Bronfenbrenner’s EST (1989, 1995, 1999) applies here and in several of the themes to follow. The microsystem is the child’s immediate environment that they can influence. If a student is resilient (an asset), then in this microsystem students may overcome barriers (discussed later). A political decision to join Cozumel with Bridgetown Local Schools and create long bus rides represents the macrosystem where the local decision makers do not have contact
with the students. Cozumel has its own macrosystem to deal with here since the community faces isolation and is cutoff from the school district and justifies a case study. This community is then faced with barriers (redistricting and transportation discussed in the following section). The culture represents exosystem-level information; Cozumel is located within Appalachia, which was previously discussed as an exosystem itself. Policies such as having no restriction on bus ride lengths (barrier) are also emblematic of the exosystem.

The common theme that I found with all of these responses was the appreciation for how hard it was or hard it had been made for these students to overcome something and still have the resilience to graduate. There is a sustainable drive and willingness to overcome and break through barriers, which will be discussed in further in the following section.

**Barriers**

Barriers are things that exist between one thing or person and another and keep them separate (Oxford, 2011). Barriers included a variety of sub-themes: (a) acceptance of Cozumel, which includes participant responses from direct questions regarding change to Bridgetown Local Schools or Cozumel, (b) challenges including redistricting and lack of opportunities/students leaving the community and lack of available technology in the form of internet access, (c) high poverty, (d) low expectations and the most glaring of all (e) transportation.

The barriers theme contains 595 related references. Table 3 provides an overview of how the barriers theme and subthemes are defined and coded.
Table 3

**Overview of the Barriers Theme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Representative In Vivo Quotes</th>
<th>Researcher Explanation</th>
<th>Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>&quot;It’s you know the hardships their parents go through to get them back and forth to school.&quot;</td>
<td>Barriers are things that exist between one thing or person and another and keep them separate</td>
<td>Hawley McWhirter, Rasheed, &amp; Crothers (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“So, I think that distance thing is a big problem.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of Cozumel</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>&quot;You don’t want to put them together, because that makes some people upset.&quot;</td>
<td>This quote provides an example of a community member (identified as CM-cashier) who was a part of the consolidation of Ballast and Cozumel. She was clear about the negative outcomes of mixing the Cozumel students with the rest of the district. Valence of the remaining interview responses depended on whether the respondent was talking about a person who is one is from or associated with Cozumel. Those who were not from Cozumel, did not give a favorable impression of the Cozumel Community.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Change Bridgetown Local Schools | 25 | "No, I don’t think so."
“Not really other than maybe build a school closer (laughs) (also coded as a transportation barrier).” | Community member’s response the direct question inquiring about what the participant would change about Bridgetown. Most respondents did not want to make or suggest any changes to Bridgetown Local School other than some financial or economic opportunities. All three interview cohorts were not dissatisfied with the Bridgetown Local Schools. Not one person mentioned concerns of cognitive measures or contextual knowledge. | deBrabander (2000), Johnson, Shope, Roush (2009) |
| Change Cozumel | 47 | "As far as what I would change, I would like to see some of the attitude change about the importance of education."
“Yeah, I’d split it up. I would split it into three. It would make a lot more sense for those kids to be going to… well there would be four possibilities.” | Interview participants gave responses to a direct question inquiring about what the participant would change about Cozumel. School staff and Community members spoke to changing the lack of concern for obtaining education in the Cozumel Community, but also mentioned a common theme the students had; distance and transportation to the school. | Morse (2004), Longo (2007) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>21</th>
<th>&quot;Uh. A lot of my family is into alcohol and that sort of thing so I think that could have…(pause)&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Yes, I would change, I don’t know how to word this. Maybe how much crime we have around that area.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The challenge responses mirrored barriers and also emerged out of comments at the end that permitted the participant to share any other personal items or further thoughts at the end of the interviews. Given my prolonged experience in the community and school district, I was respectful when the participants gave short responses; I believe I could draw meaning about these challenges without the need for extensive elaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hawley McWhirter, Rasheed, &amp; Crothers (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low expectations</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>&quot;School is really not a priority.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Yeah, you’re from that poor area, and you’re not going to do any better. That’s where you’re gonna stay. It’s just that I guess I’ve seen it or not really seen, I’ve seen some people that’s just the way their life is and you give them, maybe the parents a chance and maybe the parents beat the kid down.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low expectations refer to the responses from school staff and community members regarding the importance they felt students and families from Cozumel place on education. The theorist listed gives a homogenized perspective much like the school staff and community members did in their interview responses, and this approach might oversimplify an understanding of a culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Payne (1996)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Opportunity (negative) | 13 | “…there’s just not that much, uh you know, as far as labor work.”
| | | “There’s only one place in Cozumel you can get a job…”
| Respondents were very consistent regarding few opportunities for employment or financial gain in the Cozumel Community. Opportunity responses were also linked or transitioned to economic responses or leaving the area. |
| Carr & Kefalas (2009) |

| Poor/poor area | 73 | "I think they are so economically deprived."
| | | “Uh, you could tell he was from poor. He didn’t have much money, but attitude wise he was willing to work and to work his way out of it to make a better life for himself.”
| Poor/poor area refers to the Cozumel Community and the lack of financial and physical resources. |

| Redistrict | 24 | "I know years ago it’s uh you when all of the school districts started splitting, going from your smaller to your bigger and stuff like that uh nobody wanted Cozumel and that’s where Bridgetown Local you know, did step up and you know, take them."
<p>| Document analysis from interviews and school board minutes and maps were primarily the result of the recorded frequency in this code. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Continued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technology</strong> 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Transportation 141 | “Uh, right now, I think the one that’s farthest out is getting on the bus at 5:30 in the morning to be at school at 8:00.” |
|                   | “some of the kids from the Cozumel area, um I have been told, I don’t know if it is true but some of them are on the bus upwards of an hour and a half.” |
|                   | “It’s a long bus ride.” |
|                   | As a reminder, there are no restrictions on bus ride length in Ohio public school districts. A variety of interview responses deal with distance to the school, bus ride, or length of time to travel from Cozumel to either the school and/or county seat for supplies. |
"If they really want to leave, I think it’s important."

“I would highly encourage them to finish high school to get a high school diploma and to try to not necessarily get away from this area, but to push the boundaries a little bit and not afraid to look beyond Howland County for a future.”

Graduates were encouraged to leave Cozumel. Carr & Kefalas refer to three specific groups known as “stayers”, “leavers”, and “boomerangs”. The “leavers” leave the small community typically as a result of minimal economic or academic opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leave area</th>
<th>34</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;If they really want to leave, I think it’s important.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I would highly encourage them to finish high school to get a high school diploma and to try to not necessarily get away from this area, but to push the boundaries a little bit and not afraid to look beyond Howland County for a future.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Carr & Kefalas (2009)
The coding process designated 19 different references to the acceptance of Cozumel. Comments ranged from direct references to other school districts not wanted to include Cozumel students such as the following:

“I know years ago it’s uh you when all of the school districts started splitting, going from your smaller to your bigger and stuff like that uh nobody wanted Cozumel and that’s where Bridgetown Local you know, did step up and you know, take them” (CM-farmer);

“I moved from the city and my dad pulled out a map, so when we first moved out there they were wanting to get a school in Cozumel. You know, I can drive a mile down the road and be in Granville Schools. I can drive a mile the other way and be in Higgonsboro District. I can drive a mile the other way and be in Prebble. I could go to Lattamore, I think it is west. I mean there’s just so many school districts when you look at a map, it’s just a small slim area that comes out and pulls Cozumel in. I don’t know why or how it happened. I don’t know why or how it happened” (GA-mover);

“You know the Bridgetown area is kind of one set of people, I mean not good or bad, and you kind of have the elementary area, and you have, you know they combined back in the sixties, yeah and I think there’s still some hard feelings there that you have to kind of understand and accept. Then you have the Ballast area with, and honestly I think Ballast thinks they are separate from the Cozumel people too. That’s a whole separate issue. You don’t want to put them together, because that makes some people upset. But, I just wish funding could be different” (SS-Supt);
“Mr. D. asked the question as to why Brushy Creek was tuitioned to Prebble with no consideration for Cozumel. Mr. C. indicated the desire of the Brushy Creek (where students from Cozumel attended school just six miles east after the Cozumel School closed) people was to attend Prebble County Schools because of the distance and travel time and participation in school activities” (SB), but the students from Cozumel were not considered for transfer to this district as well.

Probably one of the more telling comments was made by a student when the following statement was made: “If you’re not from there, it’s hard to be accepted” (GA-mover). As a reminder, (GA-mover) moved into the community from an urban area around sixth grade and was referring to fitting in to Cozumel. Ironically, he makes several references to the friendships and positive experiences he develops.

All of these comments indicate a level of disconnect and sense of underrepresentation. Very few if any responses were positive comments associated with the acceptance of Cozumel. When asked if (CM-cashier) had anything further to share about Cozumel, the response was, “Good community in general” (CM-cashier). This offers an opportunity for conducting a negative case analysis. As a reminder, negative case analysis refers to the process of searching for disconfirming evidence (e.g., outliers, atypical cases) (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). This process acts as sort of a “devil’s advocate” and chases down any contrary conclusions that may exist. I contacted (CM-cashier) on June 6, 2013 to explore her comment as it was unique amongst the other statements. She responded, “Well, I wanted it to sound like there was something nice
there [laughs].” This comment reaffirms the general overall negative attitude toward Cozumel.

The theme focusing on challenges contained 21 coding references and 24 redistricting references which were alluded to in the first theme. Some of the challenges discussed included crime: “Growing things that aren’t supposed to be grown [laughs]” (GA-retailer); “…and more investigations in households with smaller kids. Things like that and a lot of littering. That’s a big thing too” (GA-retailer). The following was included with crimes since I had knowledge that this student and her sister had been physically abused by her mother. “Uh. A lot of my family is into alcohol and that sort of thing so I think that could have… [pause]” (GA-open enrollment). I then asked if alcohol abuse was prevalent in the community or, and then she quickly interrupted and said, “Not the whole community, I think a lot of people may be financial situations.” (Which was also coded in the poor/poor area); “Um, but as far as that, I wish I had control over working on the drug situation” (SS-supt).

Other challenges included responses dealing with the redistricting of the Cozumel Community. When I asked, “In what way do the resources connect to education or do they?” She responded, “When the school was located there, I think that they did because it was possible for the community to come together and help support what was going on, but since the school is so far away, I don’t think it happens now” (CM-farmer). The island pictured in chapter two is referenced here. The events that transpire next are the account of how people of social and political privilege were permitted to locate where they chose and the underrepresented students of Cozumel were denied acceptance by
multiple school districts and finally accepted by the Bridgetown Schools many more miles and minutes away. “The board came out of Executive Session and the meeting was thrown open to visitors. Mr. R. presented three petitions (three petitions and two maps) of twenty-two farms of the Barnesville and Ballast area requesting transfer to the Higgonsboro City School District” (SB). Portions of these small communities were permitted to request transfer to other school district. A county board member and his neighboring farms in the Barnesville area were permitted to transfer to the Higgonsboro District. This area created an island in the Bridgetown Local Schools.

When asked whether a diploma helped students find a job in Cozumel or elsewhere, the comments involving students leaving the Cozumel Community totaled 34 coded responses in the interviews. Some of the responses dealing with students leaving may also deal with or have been coded in the area of “poor/poor area” (which deals with the lack of economic opportunities and community members that have few if any financial resources), but for the purpose of this section the responses deal with leaving. One community member responded to a question about experiences that they would like to share if you were from the Cozumel Community in the following manner: “Yeah, you’re from that poor area, and you’re not going to do any better. That’s where you’re gonna stay” (CM-cashier). When asked what a high school diploma meant to a Cozumel Graduate, a community member offered a response that did not correlate to academic ties. “Hmm. It should mean a way out” (CM-farmer).

A school staff member stated that education does not seem to be valued in Cozumel. “As far as what I would change, I would like to see some of the attitude change
about the importance of education, because I think that they, there is a value there of education but as long as it benefits them and as long as the kid isn’t going away they are going away to college, or they are not going to be a part of that family clan, education is not at the top of the list” (SS-counselor). The common theme of school staff was steeped in a frustration, but more of a helpless frustration. There was a sense of wanting to help change the mindset and encourage student to overcome those barriers. “I’d say there’s, you had a good opportunity here at school, but don’t be afraid to go to a college out of state or a bigger school. Just see what it is like to live in an urban situation, but there are other schools, small colleges that you would feel right at home so don’t, just because we live out here in the rural area, don’t think you are not, you don’t have the ability to fit in. We are college material out here just as much as the urban, suburban types” (SS-librarian). Another encouraging response to get students to climb over the barrier was from (SS-supt). “Take advantage of every opportunity. You know, you can value your family and that area and it would be great to possibly stay there and live, but there’s a lot more out there that we would at least like you to kind of test the waters. You know there’s just so many things you can do.”

From a student perspective, students were not necessarily looking at leaving as a means to become further educated, but to just get out. “Just that you can go to … and get out of Cozumel [laughs]” (GA-generational). Employment seemed to be the primary reason to leave above and beyond leaving Cozumel. “(I-Interviewer) Does a diploma? And you kind of answer this help a graduate find a job in Cozumel or elsewhere or (GA-generational) pretty much anywhere. (I) Are there jobs in Cozumel if you have a high
school diploma? (GA-generational) There’s only one place in Cozumel you can get a job but,…”. Another student echoed the need to look elsewhere from employment. “There’s not really any job offerings in that area [laughs]” (GA-open enrollment).

High poverty and low expectations were two major barriers that were discussed throughout the interviews. A total of 73 references were coded responses to the poor/poor area associated with Cozumel. Low expectations were referenced 121 times. Community members responded in the following manner when asked what helps a student be successful if they are from Cozumel: “I would say [long pause], that’s a tough one because the area, being from a poor area” (CM-officer) and in relation to personal experiences with students from Cozumel, this community responded in this manner: “Uh, you could tell he was from poor. He didn’t have much money, but attitude wise he was willing to work and to work his way out of it to make a better life for himself” (CM-officer). There appeared to be quite a bit of empathy for the students who faced so many financial barriers and low expectations. “Um, the way you drive down the road and you see these little shacks these people are living in and it shouldn’t happen” (CM-cashier), although some frustration seemed to rear at times. “It’s generational poverty and it’s just their culture and way of life” (CM-educator).

The next statement transitions into low expectations along with the aforementioned poverty: “I think they are so economically deprived. There are two things going on. We’ve got people who are on welfare and they want to keep their kids at home because they get more money from the welfare checks if they are there, so they don’t see any point in letting them go and the others are employed in dead end jobs and I
think that they think that would not improve even if they have the diploma and you’ve got a couple out there right now who have the attitude right now that we don’t care if they graduate or not because they have to do the chores at the house” (CM-farmer). Many responses included references to low expectations, but did not necessarily “blame” the students for the outcome. “I mean any child especially an adolescent, is just not going to value it [education]. It is easy not to value it if you are allowed not to” (SS-coach); “To the people in Cozumel? I mean to them, it has no value whatsoever, because they don’t need an education to do the type of work they think needs to be done in order to prosper” (SS-coach); “Umm. I think I would say it would be a common. I would say that would be their way of dealing with a lot of their issues because they instead of dealing with a lot of their issues to use their words, they are going to use their fists. Use what they know and what works for them and what has worked for their family. You know a lot of times when I have had interaction with their parents, they will say, well if my kid needs to defend themself, then that’s what they are going to do is defend themselves. And if that be through throwing a punch and get suspended then oh well” (SS-counselor); “Well, I think, I think, I mean I do think there’s a real benefit from the family values even though I think some of us have different family values from some of the staff here. Uh, but I think the staff has a better understanding of some of the poverty and some of the assistance that these kids get…So I think, not necessarily just because a kid comes from Cozumel that they need that support, that’s not always the case, but I do think a lot of times” (SS-supt).
Most of the students or interviewees coded as (GA) talked about more personal barriers that were associated with low expectations. “There’s nothing out there” (GA-mover); “There’s big drug problems, so I’d like to change the drug problems down there (GA-mover); “Growing things that aren’t supposed to be grown [laughs] and more investigations in households with smaller kids. Things like that and a lot of littering. That’s a big thing too” (GA-retailer); “In Cozumel [laughs]? I’d say that there’s quite a few people who have dropped out in that area…” (GA-open enrollment); “Uh. A lot of my family is into alcohol and that sort of thing so I think that could have… [pause]” (GA-open enrollment); “Most people from Cozumel don’t have a lot of money and most people think that might help” (GA-generational).

Transportation problems represented the most prevalent barrier, with 141 references made to the topic. Indeed, this was the only coded item that appeared in every interview and it was a dominant topic in the school board minutes. When I asked about transportation, a variety of responses came up that dealt with distance to the school and the bus ride. I did find the responses rather surprising from graduate interviews. This group of graduates seemed to be tolerant of the inconvenience of traveling over two hours one way in some cases on a bus ride. It is worth noting that these conversations will appear in a resilient manner when social capital is discussed, since resiliency is not mutually exclusive to assets and an imperfect standard exists here. “That would be definitely the worst thing about living in Cozumel. It’s just the hour, hour and a half drive, and then forty-five minutes just to go to school and the parent teacher conferences and the sports just getting involved with the sports living that far away. It was really hard
for parents to do and kids you know parents had to go to basketball practice and parents have to drive that far and wait” (GA-mover); “(I) What are some of the barriers that make it harder for a typical student from Cozumel to graduate? (GA-retailer) I don’t know if this makes sense, but the bus ride. It’s a long bus ride [laughs]”; (GA-retailer) even offered words of encouragement to Cozumel students who had to face the long bus ride. “Um, no matter how long the bus ride is, hang in there. [Laughing] That’s the only thing”; Comments about the unpleasantries of riding the bus continued throughout the (GA) interviews. “Um, just getting in on open enrollment and there’s like a two hour bus ride [laughs]. That wasn’t ever fun” (GA-open enrollment); “If you miss the bus, it’s like a really long drive [laughs] (GA-generational)

The distance deterred many students from participating in extracurricular events. Any student who had participated in sports talked about the extra strain it caused for the family because of finances and distance. “…as far as extra-curricular activities like sports and those sort of things, we were never able to do that because driving that far back and forth no one was ever able to come and pick us up” (GA-open enrollment); “Yeah, cause some families aren’t very wealthy and can’t afford a uniform let alone extra gas” (GA-retailer); “and that was the only problem that we had and one of the big reasons we moved out of the district. It was just the drive and playing sports. Just gas prices. Pretty much the only thing I would change if possible would be the distance” (GA-mover).

Community members and school staff were also attuned to the transportation barrier. “Yeah, I think, I really think the distance and the amount of time they spend on
the bus. There’s not a lot of kids that drive from Cozumel and that’s just economics…Really distance is one of the main things cause there’s just not really a good way to get from there to here” (SS-supt); “It’s so rural out there where it’s at. Things, they have to travel fairly far to get to a town or to get to groceries, things like that and to school, they have to travel a good distance just to come to school, so I think location. Some trips are lengthy on the bus. I think that’s a disadvantage in our school district (SS-librarian); “The distance is huge I think because a lot of times because of the location I think getting them to and from and feeling connected to school I think can be a problem. I think also the lack of transportation in some situations for the student and also the parent can be a challenge and then in certain situations… depending on who is raising the kid I guess sometimes that can be a pretty big barrier as well” (SS-counselor).

A major disservice to the student population of Cozumel came from a Howland County School Board meeting where the following statement was made: “Mr. G. raised the point of discrimination by granting one and not the others wishes in the matter of tuition. It was brought out that 37 Brushy Creek people indicated a desire for Prebble and 14 for other locations” (SB). This comment was in response to Cozumel residents not being represented at the meeting with proper documents.

**Resources**

Resources or "things" of value may be extracted from a place and/or utilized for the benefit of other places does not necessarily benefit those in the community from which those resources were taken (Johnson, 2012). Consider for example the coal extraction of Eastern Kentucky and Tennessee from British-owned coal companies.
during the 1920-30’s (Gaventa, 1982). This example is noted as a non-renewable resource and paints a negative connotation of resource extraction due to the unfair practices made upon the people of Appalachia. Once the coal is gone, the residents have no sustainable means of income and the natural resources are depleted.

Of the four major themes in my findings, resource coded ideas emerged the fewest times by a substantial amount with 134 references made to resources in the interviews. I identified four additional sub-themes in resources: (a) research, (b) school staff, (c) economy and (d) diploma. Explanation of how this theme emerged will be discussed later in this section. Table 4 provides an overview of how the resources theme and subthemes are defined and coded.
Table 4

*Overview of the Community Resources Theme*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Representative In Vivo Quotes</th>
<th>Researcher Explanation</th>
<th>Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>&quot;Um. The Cozumel Market. Like there food and stuff there. &quot;</td>
<td>Resources not necessarily benefit those in the community from which it was taken. Consider Gaventa (1982) discussed earlier in this section. Some interview participants mention the forest as an asset, but a company an hour away clear cuts the forests in and around Cozumel. This is a clear example of resource extraction. The second quote began with a long pause, because CM-farmer could not think of any resources in Cozumel.</td>
<td>Johnson (2012), Gaventa (1982)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;I don’t know anybody who has conducted research in that area.&quot;</td>
<td>These two responses were two direct applications the interview question asking if education applied to any of the assets or resources.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| School Staff | 28 | "She does take a group to (redacted) and they do the ropes course and they spend a whole day of team building."

"Uh, but I think the staff has a better understanding of some of the poverty and some of the assistance that these kids get."

These references include coaches, teachers, bus drivers, administrators and support staff. Some interview participants interpreted school staff as a resource. The GA interview participants did not offer the same response.

| Economy | 45 | "I think they are so economically deprived. There are two things going on. We’ve got people who are on welfare and they want to keep their kids at home because they get more money from the welfare checks if they are there, so they don’t see any point in letting them go and the others are employed in dead end jobs and I think that they think that would not improve even if they have the diploma and you’ve got a couple out there right now who have the attitude right now that we don’t care if they graduate or not because they have to do the chores at the house."

The financial status of the community and/or school responses were a direct response to what the participant could change about Bridgetown Local, Cozumel or barriers in Cozumel. Economy is not mutually exclusive to resources since the standard in not perfect here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diploma</th>
<th>27</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“You can get a degree or job, better than not having one.”</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Now I mean now that we’re in this time period, a lot of people say a high school diploma is equivalent to nothing, but when you look at it, I’ve known a lot of employers that say even though a high school diploma isn’t really anything, it shows that you can attend and show up when you’re wanted to and get work done when you’re asked, so I think not so much in the area but, cause there’s not a lot of job opportunities there, but outside I think a high school diploma is something that helps you definitely get a job, especially for high school students.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There tended to be an economic relation to items that were positively associated with earning a high school diploma. Many of the responses came from a direct question about the importance of a high school diploma. The diploma in turn was a tool to access resources.

*Note.* Resources refers to both a code/subtheme and superordinate theme. This is because respondents were directly queries about resources in the community. Codes with an exploratory label were identified during data analysis. Other codes were a priori in nature, in that they were expected. Quotes were drawn from transcripts or documents.
The Cozumel Store appeared numerous times and seemed to be the main focal point for resources. A few examples are included here: “Um. The Cozumel Market” (GA-retailer); “It’s just a family owned business and they are famous for their pizza [laughs]” (GA-retailer); “Uh, I think the store is back open [laughs]. I think that’s an on again, off again” (SS-supt); “…but the store itself I’m sure employs a couple of people but I don’t think it’s very a large store, but it’s kind of the heart of the community” (SS-supt); The General Store” (SS-coach). These were all responses directly made when asked what resources existed in Cozumel.

Since manufacturing does not exist in this community, most of their extractable products fell in natural resources such as timber and farming. “Well, your timber industry would be, would fall under that” (CM-farmer); “Like farming?” (GA-retailer); “Um. I think resources, there’s a lot of farm. Seems to be a lot more farm area” (GA-open enrollment). I mentioned earlier that most interview participants viewed farming as an asset given the scale and method of farming in this community. “Well obviously I think the whole farming piece, there are still several kids that want to continue in the family farm, but I do see a shift in that they realize that the money isn’t there like it used to be when their grandpa or aunts, uncles actually did that so I think there’s a realization that farming a few acres is not going to be lucrative, it’s not going to take care of a family” (SS-supt).

The economy was portrayed in a negative light by most interview participants. This theme was identified in 45 coding identifications. Most responses dealt with the lack of opportunity for employment. “I think if anything I would change it would be get more
business out there and just grow it more cause driving to Higgonsboro is not that far, but Cozumel, there’s a lot of kids out there” (GA-mover). When asked about the benefits of earning a high school diploma in Cozumel, (GA-open enrollment) responded, “Yeah, it definitely helps get a job somewhere else. There’s not really any job offerings in that area [laughs]” (GA-open enrollment). As far as employment opportunities in Cozumel, one student summed up the job offerings effectively. “There’s only one place in Cozumel you can get a job but… the Cozumel Mini-Mart” (GA-generational).

School staff tended to encourage students to venture out and utilize their education to help improve their economic situation since the opportunities for employment are described as meager at best. Consider the following quote: “…in that area there’s not a lot of opportunities for jobs, so for them to drive in to Higgonsboro or in a larger area and kind of get out of that mode, I think the financial gains are there, it’s just helping the student see that because their families for the most part have not witnessed that and don’t really see that benefit so it’s kind of on us to do that” (SS-supt). Responses also referenced poverty at times. “There’s not a lot of kids that drive from Cozumel and that’s just economics” (SS-supt). These comments also transcended into the actual school and salaries of the school staff. “I wish we could pay. I wish our pay scale would be a little better, because a lot of the people haven’t had raises or very minimal” (SS-supt).

The school staff were consistent about their concern for the economic well-being of the district as well as the community. “I think it’s important, I would like to see if there is a way to bring businesses in this area to help with the schools, help promote job
opportunities for students after school or just help support the school that would just not just taxes wise. You know just to be there and support. I know a lot of schools districts, that’s an advantage for a lot of school districts. You know they have employers in their districts that support them, so we just don’t have that” (SS-librarian).

Community members were matter of fact about the economy. When asked, “What are some barriers that make it harder for a typical student from Cozumel to graduate?” He responded, “Like I said, the economy, uh the culture of the area, uh the way they were raised, my parents didn’t need it, why should I need it. Parents don’t push it because they didn’t have it [education]” (CM-officer). This response was in relation to what importance a high school diploma would play in the Cozumel Community. The theme continued in community member responses. “I think they are so economically deprived” (CM-farmer); “Uh, it’s, to put in words, that they reach a certain point in their life and it’s like, why continue to struggle to do something I am not going to get any farther” (CM-cashier).

**Social Capital**

As a reminder, social capital refers to connections among individuals, social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from individuals, attention to civic virtue and embedded networks of reciprocal social relations. (Putnam, 2000). Social capital sub-themes include: (a) encouragement, (b) family, (c) friendship, (d) high expectations, (e) relationship, (f) school district, which includes extra/co-curricular activities and (g) support. Explanation of how this theme emerged will be
discussed later in this section. Table 5 provides an overview of how the social capital theme and subthemes are defined and coded.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Representative In Vivo Quotes</th>
<th>Researcher Explanation</th>
<th>Theory</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Encouragement | 11        | "anything you put your mind to, you can achieve it."

“But, work hard and take that work ethic and put it to schooling cause you know it’s going to be a benefit the rest of your life. That’s what I would tell them.”

These were direct responses to an interview protocol question asking for advice from participants that yielded encouragement or offered hope to students from Cozumel.                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Strange, Johnson, Showalter, & Klein (2012) |
| Extra-Curricular | 22  | “I mean the staff, coaches understood you know if you couldn’t make it to a practice especially when it came to winter time even if we had school out where we live…”

“I: Did it make it harder to participate in activities or anything like that?
GA-retailer: (shakes head yes).”

Most of these responses later merged with transportation and distance since extracurricular activities became difficult due to distance. The lack of participation in extracurricular activities did not permit students to develop more peer relationships other peers or school staff/coaches outside of the school day.                                                                 |
"And I think they want what's best for their kids, but they don't have any idea how to go about doing what's best for the kids. Does that make sense?"

"I mean you have your friends and family that live out in Cozumel, but don't make that prevent you from having friends that live in closer to the school."

"I mean everybody that lived in Cozumel, they're the last one's on the bus so it was just like a big family and everyone was friends and just hanging out talking about life, so that was the best experience. Of course when you get to the school, you got all your friends that closer to the school that you hang out with, but typically the bus was the best connection and just that ride and everybody connects."

Friendships are defined here much like Hanifan (1920), Putnam (2000), and Bourdieu (1983). These items were coupled with social relationships and support below. These items were defined as a barrier or detriment to the student and the students indicated some unsavory behavior from family, but did not make any comments about family preventing them from getting an education nor support for getting an education.

| High Expectations | 27 | “I would highly encourage them to finish high school.”

“Make sure you stay in school, no matter how hard it is and get your high school diploma. You rise above everything that’s been told to you.” |

These responses developed from the interview protocol question; “If you were able to give advice to a high school student who is from Cozumel, what would you say to this person?” The comments were positive in nature from all cohorts and did not have negative valence. |

Williams, (1961) |

| Relationships | 53 | "I just think Cozumel is one of those areas that’s just one of those small off the map towns just you know just everybody’s family out there."

“I mean everybody that lived in Cozumel, they’re the last one’s on the bus so it was just like a big family.” |

(See friendship and support) Spending up to four hours a day on the bus affords the opportunity to develop relationships. In this case, the students from Cozumel spent approximately four hours a day together on the bus as a group of peers. |

| School Districts | 35 | "We have to put them first and sometimes they get lost in the shuffle. And that’s I think in any school district."
“…but there again, I still think there is an advantage to those kids coming here because of being in a small school.” |
|----------------|----| Any reference made regarding the Bridgetown Local Schools and the surrounding districts, their physical boundaries, origin of district boundaries and general positive comments about what participants would/would not change about Bridgetown Local Schools. |
| Support        | 69 | “...so we are supportive of each other and it’s easier for us if we have to study for anything in school we’re just right up the road.”
“It’s good cause you know everybody. It’s not big and usually everybody gets along pretty good.” |
|                |    | Support, much like social capital is a networking tool and/or way to provide meaningful relationships. (GA) responded with noted means of support provided by peers and developed friendships to help make it through school. The students from Cozumel spent approximately four hours each day on the bus together and six and a half hours at school for a total of 10 ½ hours or more a day together. |
Of the 11 statements coded under encouragement, all but one had a positive tone. “…you’re not going to do any better. That’s where you’re gonna stay” (CM-cashier).

Conversely, the nearly unanimous comments in response to the following question were as follows: “(I) If you were able to give advice to a high school student who is from Cozumel, what would you say to that person?” “Have faith. There is always something better. If you allow yourself to be pulled down, you will stay in the same clique, but anything you put your mind to, you can achieve it” (CM-officer). It is worth noting that interview respondent (CM-cashier) did respond in an encouraging manner when it came to the advice question. “Make sure you stay in school, no matter how hard it is and get your high school diploma. You rise above everything that’s been told to you” (CM-cashier). The more response that had a negative tone was in response to an experience the interview participant had. “…so we work really hard to try to show them and give them opportunities as far as like doing community service or doing job shadowing.” (SS-supt); “However, sometimes you forget about the main reason we are here and that is the kids. Bottom line, if the kids weren’t here, we wouldn’t have jobs” (SS-counselor); “Hmm. Stay strong with your family. Family is most important, but getting a high school diploma is critical in the world today” (SS-counselor).

Cozumel families received many negative associations from all of the CM and SS interview participants. Some of those responses appeared to be out of frustration. “I’ve seen some people that’s just the way their life is and you give them, maybe the parents a chance and maybe the parents beat the kid down” (CM-cashier); “Or indifferent [laughs]. I don’t know that there is a connection to education there because I don’t know that the families, well I can’t say that. Some of the families value education, I think. And I think
they want what’s best for their kids, but they don’t have any idea how to go about doing what’s best for the kids. Does that make sense?” (CM-educator); “Well, I think with anybody if there is no value in education or the structure of education at home for any adolescent kid, I mean that’s a huge barrier. When they constantly get it driven in their head that it has no importance, it is a waste of time. There’s other things like survival, honestly that is much more important. I mean any child especially an adolescent, is just not going to value it. It is easy not to value it if you are allowed not to” (SS-coach).

The GA interview participants responded with a sense of responsibility to improve their personal situation through education. “To me, it’s important because a lot of my aunts and uncles from that area didn’t complete high school, so that’s why it is important to me” (GA-open enrollment); “Um, just because of where you are located at shouldn’t stop you from doing anything that has to do with high school or where you grew up at” (GA-generational); “Yeah, cause some families aren’t very wealthy and can’t afford a uniform let alone extra gas” (GA-retailer).

One of the most telling findings encompassed the 29 references made to friendships. The graduates indicated their friendship or peer relationships as the most meaningful support system in helping them graduate from high school. “Everybody is close out there. There’s not that many kids that went to the school that live out there, you know you had a whole bunch of school districts that surround the same area and the school district that we are in there are very few kids that live out there so just all being together and being a group of friends in that area kind of helped with success in school. You could always talk about school and hang out and do homework together since we all
lived in a close area” (GA-mover); “All of our friends were on the same bus, so it kind of made it shorter” (GA-retailer); “People in Cozumel are like, they get along with everybody so you have like talking ability and the ability to get along with everybody” (GA-generational).

Ironically, one event that was not portrayed as a barrier and was mentioned over and over as a point of enjoyment and support for the graduates was the long bus ride and long distance from the school. “It was just the bus ride was always the best” (GA-mover); “We’re all pretty close as far as friendship goes, so we are supportive of each other and it’s easier for us if we have to study for anything in school we’re just right up the road” (GA-retailer); “The bus ride, you just had to put up with that. My mom was always home, so it wasn’t a problem getting off the bus a couple of hours after you get out of school” (GA-open enrollment).

The graduates did not mention the teachers, administrators or staff members as a reason for being successful in high school. Keep in mind that I only asked what things helped students from Cozumel be successful in high school. Graduation or academics were not given as a prompt and success was never defined for the participant. (GA-mover) did mention his coaches as being understanding and aware of the distance from school. “…coaches understood you know if you couldn’t make it to a practice especially when it came to winter time even if we had school out where we live, the roads didn’t get plowed so a lot of the coaches understood it. The staff and the teachers, I really never spoke with them about living out there. They knew where it was, but the coaches were
the main thing, I mean they kind of understood that you live that far away and explain to them what happens come winter time” (GA-mover).

The cohorts, SS and CM noted the school staff as one of the major reasons Cozumel students were successful in high school. Again, I did not define success nor prompt any of the participants on what success was referring to. When asked what helped students from Cozumel be successful in high school, the participants responded, “Uh, but I think the staff has a better understanding of some of the poverty and some of the assistance that these kids get” (SS-supt); “Definitely having interaction with those teachers and administrators and the fact that those teachers and staff they can respect” (SS-counselor); “Support from the staff at school and their own willingness to rise above their challenges” (CM-cashier). This is important because the responses did not triangulate with GA responses. The absence of triangulation will be discussed in later further detail.

Credibility

Several credibility steps were listed in Chapter Three. These include: triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement, peer debriefing and negative case analysis. I also engaged in a reflexive process so as to promote the validity of my conclusions.

Triangulation. I noted in Chapter 3 that my design entailed cross-stakeholder, cross-method and theory triangulation (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005; Patton, 2002). Cross-stakeholder triangulation was used to examine how community members, graduates and school staff agree and disagree based on interview data. Obvious disagreements did not
arise, but the GA cohort clearly viewed their reason for success and support systems as their friends or peers. By contrast, school staff and community members identified school staff as a source of success for high school students from Cozumel. The GA cohort did not say anything negative about the school staff, but did not reference them as a reason for their success in school. School staff and community members agreed that school staff were a major contributing factor for student success. When comparing findings from transcripts with documents such as school board minutes, maps, ODE websites, school websites, chamber of and commerce of guides, several areas of agreement were noted. In particular, transportation issues and excessive distance to the school was the primary sub-theme appearing as a barrier that was consistent across different sources of information. All stakeholder groups listed the same general sets of assets and resources. In some way, all stakeholder groups valued social capital in their own way. Again, GA clearly identified their peer friendships and relationships as a reason for their success in high school and SS and CM identified school staff as the student’s sources of social capital. All stakeholder groups saw social capital and assets as a way to improve circumstances. I did not find where one document undermined findings from another transcript. Triangulation is important for this study, because the process helps determine if documents or interview participants agree with each other. This process helps validate what resources, assets and barriers exist in the semi-isolated community of Cozumel and assists in validating that peers are the primary source of social capital and reason for their success as identified by GA.
**Member checking.** In order to complete member checking (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996), I employed the second level to check findings. I conducted five member checks including two school staff, one graduate and one community member. Only CM-librarian made any comment about the interviews. At first he was a little concerned about my making the comment that he did not know where Cozmel was. He stated, “I really have no idea how to get there. I mean I have a general idea where it is, but I do not know how to get there. Is that a big deal?” After I explained that there were no right or wrong answers and that his responses were coded in a confidential manner, he had no objection with the report. None of the other participants who participated in the member checking process expressed any surprise or disagreement with the report. For this reason, I am reasonably confident that I captured the perspectives of interviewees.

**Prolonged engagement.** Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate time as the most important element of prolonged engagement, (i.e., spending sufficient time at the research site). Since I have spent my entire life in Howland County and I have worked in this county and neighboring counties for over twenty years, prolonged engagement was an important aspect of this study. There were incidences where I invoked connoisseurship due to my prolonged engagement. For instance, when interview participants made matter-of-fact responses to interview questions, I had enough personal background information to know that the they felt as though they were repeating themselves and I was informed enough to know that although the interviews were short in length, they were rich in information.
**Peer review:** Peer review was utilized for research validation. A local school superintendent who did not participate in this study reviewed the document analyses after they had been coded, transcripts after pseudonyms had been added and sections of primary findings. Several members of the dissertation committee reviewed numerous drafts of the study as well as proposed findings from document analyses. It is worth noting that when peers do not agree, it does not necessarily mean the researcher is wrong, however, it is worth checking out. Having made that point, the process did not reveal any egregious errors or challenges to the findings. Rather, the peer review process helped establish clarity and there was general consensus that findings made sense.

**Negative case analysis.** I used negative case analysis (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005), when a CM-cashier made the comment, “Good community in general.” I followed up with her since this was the only positive response to this question from any school staff or community members. When I followed up, CM-cashier provided validity when she made a comment about just wanting to say something nice, but it was not a genuine statement. Her response was consistent with information provided by other school staff and community members. I need to clarify that CM-cashier graduated from Bridgetown, but is not a negative case analysis opportunity because she is not a Cozumel resident.

**Reflexivity.** Based on the literature review, my initial thoughts were that school staff were the primary source for social capital. After analyses and other credibility checks were conducted, I had to question this assumption. The students indicated that peers, not teachers, were reason they were successful in high school. It is worth noting
that all of the school staff commented about the importance of having an understanding bus driver on the long routes (this was drawn from my notes about the bus drive). Despite the politically created barriers of redistricted communities resulting in long bus rides, the graduates found a way to support each other and turn a potential negative experience into an opportunity to support one another.

The interviews confirmed my initial thoughts about the fact that Cozumel struggles with problems associated with high poverty. Many of the school staff and community members held low expectations of students. The only mention of school success or effectiveness was made by school staff and community members. The graduates did not focus their responses on the formal side of education, although they did not mention that they felt shorted on school resources or having fewer opportunities than other schools. None of the graduates entertained the idea of dropping out of high school. Although one graduate mentioned undesirable behaviors in their community, they all expressed a sense of belonging or pride throughout some point in their responses.

**Summary**

Four themes emerged out of the document analysis. Recall from Chapter 1 that the overarching research question for this work is: What key assets, resources and barriers are associated with high school completion in Cozumel? Each major theme (assets, resources, barriers and social capital) will be summarized below based on the findings from document analysis an overview of Chapter 4. I had prior expectations and biases that I had developed because I worked in the school district and live in the county. The most obvious issues I said I may encounter were: lack of objectivity when dealing
with the school system and (2) an inability to recognize the difference between strengths and weaknesses in Cozumel. I had stated that, after spending my entire life in the same county and a considerable time as a principal in the community, I may, for example, come to the belief that an event is a weakness, when residents of the Cozumel Community may view it as a strength. I expected the bus route would emerge as a weakness and students validated this as a means for support, friendship development and relationships which emerged as a theme in this research. I expected to find a resilient people who have demonstrated the ability to overcome both political and educational obstacles and barriers. This was validated in my document analyses of participant interviews, particularly the GA interview participants. Resilience was coded as a sub-theme of assets. To deal with this potential shortcoming is to be reflexive and to employ a number of credibility techniques (discussed in Chapter 3).

Many data points were coded as having a positive valence. There was a true appreciation for the natural assets that exist in Cozumel from interview participants (community, culture and education). Subthemes that were not triangulated were: community, culture and education. School staff and community members did not seem to think that the Cozumel Community valued education. Graduates, meanwhile, did not offer credit to school staff for educational success they experienced.

The Cozumel students are a resilient group. I did not find any resentment in their particular interview responses indicating that they see Cozumel is a low-income and physically isolated area. The students found a way to respond in a positive manner to
adverse circumstances and minimal resources. The student’s success came in many forms and helps sustain a community.

Students did list several barriers that were described in documents. These include: the lack of acceptance outside of their community; redistricting that limits educational, extracurricular and co-curricular participation, access to broadband technology; high poverty; low expectations and transportation issues that come with two hour bus rides and long distances to resources. One example of students overcoming these barriers is demonstrated through the findings that three of the four students interviewed are currently enrolled in high education institutions. Two of the three are working part-time and attending higher education institutions. Three of four are employed.

In comparison to the other themes, less discussion was given to resources since very few resources exist in Cozumel. Having only one employer in the community (a small family market), does not lend itself to economic growth. What is more concerning is what is not mentioned. The document analysis provided no mention of Cozumel’s assets in a resource guide from the county’s chamber of commerce. The economy was the focal point for much of the discussions. Since the community has few jobs and is located several miles from employment, this straps an already economically depleted community.

Going into the analysis portion of Chapter 4, I was certain that school staff would emerge as a major player in the success of student from Cozumel. This was true for the participant responses from community members and school staff. However, graduates/attendees did not have any negative comments about school staff, but indicated through their responses that their friendships and relationships developed with peers from
the Cozumel Community helped them be successful in school. Students also indicated that they spent time with each other studying and doing activities when they reached Cozumel. These students spent well over half of their day with each other on a regular basis.
Chapter 5: Findings and Future Research

The purpose of this study was to focus on a community’s response to a series of academic constraints created by local political, social, and economic circumstances.

Findings

Assets. A large majority of the interview participants were unaware of what an asset was or quite possibly had not considered what assets were present in Cozumel until I asked them the direct participants, “What are some of Cozumel’s greatest assets?” Once I defined what an asset was and gave examples, interview participants had little trouble identifying a variety of assets in Cozumel including: beauty, farming, history, hunting and nature. After document analysis was completed, community, culture and education were identified.

I found that outside of the interview participant’s knowledge of assets, little effort has been made to promote or advocate for the assets that exist in the Cozumel Community. The Howland County Chamber of Commerce had over 60 pages of information about the county and not one reference was made to Cozumel. It was also apparent through the school board minute document analysis, that little concern or value was placed on Cozumel given the redistricting results that joined Cozumel with Bridgetown Local Schools rather than four other schools districts much closer.

Barriers. The sub-theme emerging as transportation was the most prevalent item recorded in the barriers theme. This sub-theme was mentioned by every interview participant. A total of 141 references were recorded after the direct question, “What are some barriers that make it harder for a typical student from Cozumel to graduate?”
addition, the document analysis of school board minutes also mentioned distance from the school as a recorded barrier. Although every GA interview participant mentioned the bus ride as a barrier, each student mentioned a positive relation to the friendships and relationships they developed that will be further discussed below in the social capital theme.

It is important to know that despite SS and CM interview participants responding with low expectations of the family’s value placed on education, the students had nothing negative to say about the staff. Each student interviewed graduated from high school and three of four were attending higher education institutes. I was surprised that GA interview participants mentioned hardships they faced in their community such as: alcohol abuse, drugs and child abuse, but none made excuses for the barriers they had to overcome. Policy created a barrier between the Cozumel students and the children of the people with the political capital to do this. This is both a barrier in terms of educational rights and an actual policy barrier.

**Resources.** Very few interview participants had a clear understanding of what a resource was. Interview participants were hesitant to respond even after a definition and explanation was given. I found the minimal references to resources from interview participants mirrored the resources that were reported to exist in Cozumel. These responses were a result of the direct question to interview participants that asked, “What are some of Cozumel’s greatest resources?” Only 134 references were made to the sub-themes: research, school staff, economy and diploma. Cozumel is a community with few resources.
**Social capital.** The most important finding, from my perspective, emerged in the area of social capital. The sub-themes: support, relationships and friendships had 151 references recorded from interview participant responses. The three sub-themes outweigh all sub-themes in resources by themselves. The reason this finding was so important was not necessarily the frequency of the sub-themes recorded, but what GA participants responded and additionally did not respond. Every GA mentioned the importance of their peers through developed friendships or relationships specifically on the long school bus rides and the support that existed from their peers in the Cozumel Community as a response to the direct interview question, “What are some of the things that help students from Cozumel be successful high school?”

The students did not mention school staff as a reason for their success in high school. GA did not make any negative comments about school staff, but it is important to note that not mentioning them did not triangulate with CM and SS interview responses. CM and SS both mentioned school staff as a reason for the Cozumel student’s success. It is important to know, because what might be perceived as a reason for a group of students’ success may not be necessarily true. This statement is not to discount the efforts of the staff of Bridgetown, because the lack of their mention from the GA cohort does not mean that efforts are not genuine or effective, just not noted as the reason GA gives credit for their success. Social capital may work to help fill in the gaps or voids that exist for the students of Cozumel, and the school cannot fill, as opposed to what students see as getting what they need from social connections.
To imply that social capital exists in Cozumel would be an understatement given the responses provided by the GA interview participants. Their reliance on each other to overcome the political and economic barriers along with the minimal resources in the community is critical based on their interview responses. It is important to recognize the importance of relationships and support when distance or access to support outside of the community is limited, especially when the family has not been recorded as a means of support or advocate for education through document analysis.

**Strengths and Limitations**

There are limitations that I knew about in advance and others I found while engaged in the study. Recall from Chapter 1 that limitations are those research elements that a researcher cannot control (Dusick, 2011). I did not experience limitations in finding or contacting interview participants. Even when two participants did not show up, snowball sampling was employed and two other interview participants recommended several other potential participants. This also supports my findings mentioned above in social capital. The ties to other peers and community members are still very strong even after all of the graduates I interviewed have been out of school from one to eight years. Another limitation is that I could have interviewed more participants. Having conducted these particular interviews, I believe that saturation has been reached due to the consistency of all of the interview participant responses. I can however never be fully sure that saturation is a fair claim. After all, had I interviewed more participants, new findings could emerge.
I do not believe any discomfort arose from the fact that I was a principal in the district. Although the interviews were short in length, they were packed with details. My coding did not reach the standard of mutual exclusiveness (see Table 2); that is, some themes overlapped. In particular, education is both seen as an assets and form of social capital.

Some limitations were based on the context of the study. It is possible that graduate responses were limited by a lack of experiences. In other words, are the GA participants aware that political and economic barriers have been placed in front of them? Could they have more readily seen additional barriers, assets and so on if they had a broader frame of reference? Or could I be reading too much into theory and other forms of data and assume they should see more barriers? I did not focus on neighboring communities or similar schools. This part of the study was something I could control (a delimitation) (Dusick, 2011). My research was focused on the Cozumel community and their assets, resources and barriers relating to education. Implications of social capital were present, but their origin had not been determined until the document analyses were complete.

There are several strengths to this study. One was the consistency between interviewees in each stakeholder group. Although claiming saturation within each stakeholder group is tenable, doing so does not seem to be unreasonable. Finally, the use of credibility techniques supported my analyses and overall understanding. The fact that transportation or bus ride length is a concern was supported via the triangulation technique among all three groups because this was identified as a barrier. A strength of
the document analyses was the consistency among all of the interview participants and
documents referred to in Table 1. Only one negative case analysis was needed to help
clarify a statement made by CM-cashier. There was also a consistent validation of the
lack of concern or recognition of Cozumel’s assets in the document analysis of school
board minutes, maps and chamber of commerce documents that help provide validity that
political and economic barriers have been placed in front of the Cozumel Community.

The recommendations to follow may assist in developing future research as well.
In addition, these strengths, credibility techniques were engaged to help with confidence
in my findings. I can say with conviction that Cozumel, despite its negative depiction has
assets, resources and social capital.

**Where have you been? Where are you? By the way, where are you going?**

This study is about what I learned of Cozumel and how this community is served
by its school district. As a former educator in the district, a life-long resident of the area
and someone with several credentials in the profession, I started the study knowing quite
a lot. Much of what I found fits with prior beliefs, but I have been surprised by a few key
discoveries. Before getting into some take home points, I hope readers see a balance here
between my being reflexive, and having a general desire to challenge my own
expectations, with the ideas of prolonged engagement and connoisseurship. That is, I
think it fair to say that I walked into this work with a lot knowledge and expertise about
education services and Cozumel, but I didn’t just confirm what I thought I would find;
some things genuinely surprised me and I think what I learned might be useful for the
community and school.
Here are some challenges the community faces that are not going away soon on their own. First, Cozumel is an economically poor community (note: the rationale for using the phrase “economically poor” instead of just “poor” will be explained later). The interviews and document analyses yielded consistent findings. There are few jobs in the Cozumel Community, and there is no real reason to expect this to change without some sort of direct change. All interview respondents lamented the economic situation in their own way. In addition, Howland Chamber of Commerce’s 62-page resource guide makes no references to Cozumel. I expect that anyone doing cursory research in the area would not even know Cozumel exists. This, by the way, fits with my own experiences. I have been in the community numerous times and lived and worked in the county for a number of years. For some time now, I have thought there is not only little in the way of economic opportunity, but little concern about economic development. This sort of indifference carries obvious costs for the people who live in Cozumel. But there are also some not so obvious costs for those who are charged with serving the community.

Cozumel is just a few of miles from the following assets: state lakes, state parks, public hunting, public trail riding, campgrounds, natural beauty and small family farm markets (see document analyses of county auditor maps and interview findings).

Earlier, I mentioned that Cozumel is economically poor. Anyone who takes a look at publically available census data can get this point, and anyone who does some asking around the area will hear that it is not a great place to live. As discussed in Chapter one and two that generalizations about Appalachia are not uncommon (see for example Payne, 1996). Payne’s sort of broad approach to understanding poverty can potentially
yield iatrogenic education practice when working with marginalized groups of people in Appalachia. This is important because the model might oversimplify an understanding of culture that each community boasts given a unique combination of assets upon which schools may build upon for the future. It’s hard to think of Cozumel as a place of abject poverty given its assets. These assets give Cozumel a richness that may not be measured in dollars, but they could be if business and community leaders took notice. I have to wonder if many people might benefit from these assets, including both those who are marginalized, and in power, from some planning.

As noted in chapter 4, asset management should be done with a sense of stewardship. Although assets are self-renewing, they can be taken advantage of in a way that benefits only those who in power. This is no small point because documents show that the very formation of the district, and how it serves Cozumel, was done in a way to serve the powerful and with little if any regard to those who live in this community. It is not too much of a stretch to think that Cozumel’s assets can be used in a way that does not benefit those who live there. This relates to yet another set of assets: resilience, community and culture. The data I gathered indicates members of Cozumel have pulled together in the past but they have not always. Cultural analyses that use some ideas from Bronfenbrenner’s EST suggest that locals know that they can pull together, but have not always. Thinking about the larger exosystem, they are part of rural Appalachia, which has a long history of external exploitation (Gaventa, 1982). Any planning for economic development, on the basis of using natural assets, should be done in a way that allows for broad empowerment and a healthy respect for how this could be done well, and how
development has been done in the past. And to not lose focus, I asked about assets as they pertain to school services as well. The close proximity Cozumel has to historical and cultural sites can inform curriculum and using a sense of local place to motivate learning. Resilience of course has to help explain the high graduation rate for the district. Students here stick with it when it comes to school, and any development of the local economy and services should preserve this feature. The other assets listed above are distally related to school, but one might expect that economic development will yield more resources for schools.

Remember that resources are different from assets. Whereas assets are sustainable and renewable benefits, resources are extracted. Again, the literature and any sense of Appalachian history supports the idea that resources have often been extracted in a way that does not benefit the locals. At the beginning of the study, I knew that few resources existed because I had conducted a Community Asset Mapping exercise identifying assets in the Cozumel Community (Roush & Shope, 2010) in addition to researching resources in Cozumel. Outside of the small family market and a small junkyard, no businesses existed. The presence of these resources were confirmed by interview participants as the sole employers through document analyses. The high number of education accomplishments is also something I see as a resource. How is education something that is extracted? Well, because of the local economic circumstances, a common idea is that successful people should leave Cozumel. This conflicts with the idea that families have lived in the community for generations and should in turn create some real dissonance for graduates. In any case, this represents a potential for brain drain (Carr & Kefalas, 2009)
and if graduates are seen as a resource, who are being extracted to support other communities, then perhaps planning designed to empower local residents will focus on giving Bridgetown Local graduates reason to stay.

Many barriers were identified. Transportation problems that arise from redistricting are not going away soon for the students of Cozumel. Through this work I learned that no policies exist that restrict the length of bus ride for public schools. These guidelines are located under the Ohio Administrative Code 3301-83-01 through 23 (Harmon, 2012). This has to change. Spending four hours a day on a bus has obvious negative impacts for these students. Many such impacts are obvious. As a former principal, I recognize that there are other impacts that are not so obvious. Few parents attended parent teacher conferences and few students participated in extra-curricular activities. Document analyses along with an electronic correspondence from a teacher (that was redacted to provide anonymity) helped support that I knew this because; I kept record of all parents who attended each parent-teacher-conference meeting and I met with every senior three times a year to discuss the following: Where have you been? Where are you? Moreover, where are you going? These questions served to find out what the student had been through or experienced, what the student was going through at that moment and what their future plans were and how we were going to get there. In total, Cozumel students are marginalized, as are their parents, because they cannot participate in so many school experiences. The schools make choices without hearing voices from this isolated community. Any energy that can be directed towards school success, engaging in politics, questioning policy, and in general promoting change and so on is
sapped by distance. Add to this the brain drain concern and this might help explain why the Chamber of Commerce makes no mention of Cozumel. Indeed, transportation concerns like this provides some context for in the question raised in Chapter One: “who are these people?” Before I worked in the school, I didn’t know people from Cozumel. Like anyone else, I had do go on rumor and speculation. How much of this is due to the fact that students from the community spend four hours a day on a bus going back and forth between a school that should not be serving them and a place that, despite its assets, is not visited?

Adding to the problem is this will likely not change without intervention. I learned that little concern or care has been discussed regarding the physical land island that exists in the Bridgetown Local Schools (Title 1 identified school district) and the district has lost unknown amounts of much needed money to other school districts. This has been going on for 50 years. Students of individuals with political representation were permitted to petition attendance in the district of their choice (see Howland County Auditor, School Board Minutes) while the students of Cozumel were denied the opportunity to attend school at a number of schools that were much closer. What was the mindset of the people who made this decision? I didn’t interview them but my guess is that, at the time, they were concerned about their own children and neighbors and did not associate or have any commonalities with the community of Cozumel. I knew that redistricting decisions in the late 1960’s were not designed to benefit the students of Cozumel (see School Board Minutes, 2012).
Social capital refers to connections among individuals, social networks, the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from individuals, “civic virtue”, and most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations (Putnam, 2000). Social capital is connected more specifically to the way our lives have been made more productive as a result of social ties (Putnam, 2001). I learned that the students from Cozumel relied on each other for social capital (see Table 5). All interview participants responded to interview questions that asked about what helps a student from Cozumel be successful in high school by focusing on these sorts of relationships. In fact, responses that were coded as social capital were unanimous. Friendships and positive relationships with their peers appeared every time in their responses as a social network and a reason for their success.

Remember that I did not define success for these students in the context of this inquiry; they have their own definition. I have started to learn that definition as a function of this work. As a matter of fact, entrepreneurship, self-motivation and success is happening. There is also the aspect of these former students from Cozumel having conversations with me in the community about their own personal successes. I have already discussed some of those through document analyses, since three of four students are attending post-secondary education institutes. But again, I am not defining success here; academic success is just an example of mine. An example of these entrepreneurship that exist in Cozumel is a graduate who was not part of the interview stakeholders groups. I saw him the day of my dissertation defense and he was discussing how busy he was with his concrete business. He had several workers with him who were
all from the Cozumel area. He talked at length about his business and the skills involved.
He asked about the status of my professional career as well as how I was doing personally. Here is an example of where students have self-identified what is necessary to reach such success. Notably, school staff and school supports are absent from these steps. A powerful statement here is that views of success and the assets that are needed are separate from school. Keep in mind, the school met his needs as well as the GA interview participants; it is also particularly notable that students did not identify the school as a barrier.

None of the students mentioned school staff when asked about what makes them successful. This was a real surprise. Based on my extended time in the district, I know many of the staff at Bridgetown Local Schools are caring and supportive professionals, but I know them as a member of the group. In retrospect, I expected students to recognize the efforts of teachers, staff or administrators on a consistent basis. In fact, I must admit when I created the title of this study, my implications were predisposed to favor school staff as the source of social capital for students from Cozumel. But some balance is needed here. Students did not have anything negative to say about school staff. To minimize discomfort, and to promote objectivity, I did not ask students specifically about the role school staff played in their success, although I am curious as to how students would respond to a direct question about their relationship or opinion of school staff’s performance or level of support. I was also not interested in evaluating staff performance. I wanted to understand what helped students from Cozumel be successful and to let the students define what success was and who helped them reach it. But still,
the questions were worded in a way that school staff could have been mentioned and I interpret the fact that they were not mentioned when asking about factors that support success to be some referendum on how staff are viewed.

Of course, one should not lose sight of the fact that this is based on only four interviews. But triangulation of different findings does support my interpretation. Recall that a real key finding from the bus ride is that teachers were generally surprised at the distance these students travel every day. Recall that teachers could call attention to Cozumel in public documents but this has not happened. Later, I offer recommendations for how Cozumel’s assets might be considered in curricula, which suggests that if they are considered this is not obvious (to be clear I did not examine curricula in this study, but assume that if they reflected Cozumel then students might more readily recognize the contribution of teachers; I recognize this assumption could be wrong). These different sources of information point to an overall finding, and that is school staff may not be valued nearly as much as I thought they would be.

I was also surprised to learn that no one in the Cozumel Community was identified as a leader or positive role model for the students. This also reinforces the idea that a concerted and sustainable effort to recognize leaders in the community may help organize Cozumel’s assets and in turn develop more resources, which could help bolster the local economy. This in turn should yield more support (both financial and educational). By contrast, I am not be surprised that no one outside of the community identified a leader or advocate, since an overall lack of concern on direct involvement from those outside of the community has been demonstrated on any sustainable level.
Prior to my professional experiences in the community, I could have not identified any leaders either.

I expected before the start of the study that the students from Cozumel are resilient (Chaskin, 2008). Again, consider that bus ride and the fact that the graduation rate is fairly high. I knew I was exhausted after riding the bus for just one morning and the students from Cozumel do this every day. I know many of the students had shared experiences both during my time as a principal and then during interview responses, experiences where they overcame adverse situations such as: family alcohol and drug abuse, child abuse, hunger, homelessness, no heat or running water, and no winter coat.

As a reminder, all of the students I interviewed graduated from high school and three of four GA interview participants enrolled at higher education institutes (see Chapter 4).

Another social capital sub-theme, high expectations, seems to interact with such resiliency. “Make sure you stay in school, no matter how hard it is and get your high school diploma. You rise above everything that’s been told to you” (CM-cashier). One hundred percent of the students from Bridgetown Local Schools, which includes Cozumel, passed the writing portion of the Ohio Graduation during 2010 (ODE, 2010). These results came from the classroom of a first year teacher who understood high expectations, relationship and support. In comparison to the 100% passage rate on the writing test, the state average is 87.1 % (ODE, 2013) Every one of the students interviewed, graduated from high school and graduation rates rarely indicate a drop out in this school district. Bridgetown Local Students graduate at a 93.8% rate over a four year average from 2008-2011 compared to the state average of 79.7%. How can a poor school
district per so few resources, specifically in the Cozumel community perform at such a high level? This work suggests social capital and resiliency offer some answers. Having said that, I still think that, even though the students did not overtly identify staff as a reason for their personal success that some credit should be given to the schools.

It is easy to make accurate assumptions about reality. Had I not met and worked in the Bridgetown Local Schools, I would have probably never actually visited the Cozumel community. This opportunity gave me access to an emic view of the community and thus a lens to gain some appreciation of the place’s challenges, assets and potential. This section deals with interrelating themes from both logical analysis and one of Lecompte’s data analyses steps (Step 5). I hope this work can help increase the number of people who are truly aware of Cozumel, and understand its assets, resources, social capital, barriers and how they inter-relate. The barriers are numerous, and have conspired to undermine the community for decades. But despite these barriers, the students in Cozumel are generally resilient, and there is unrealized use of social capital, resources and assets.

**Recommendations for Cozumel**

Since the findings validated the initial expectation that there are few resources exist in Cozumel, but numerous assets exist, one recommendation is for Cozumel to foster and embrace its assets. Interview participants reported a variety of assets in the community of Cozumel. It appears that the state parks, nature, farming, beauty and other assets are underutilized to help promote economic and academic growth in this community. Community asset mapping (Roush and Shope, 2010) is a systematic means
of identifying community assets and developing their capacity. The literature from (Longo, 2007; Morse, 2004; Kretzman & McKnight, 1993) provides a framework for beginning and sustaining the process.

The GA interview participants reported that their peers were the source of their social capital and reason for their success in high school. Leadership does not necessarily mean the school administration, but identifying someone possibly in the community who can help organize a mentoring program where the students from Cozumel can come together and support one another academically and personally. The Bridgetown Local Schools may act as a springboard to help provide transportation to a drop off point or central meeting place in Cozumel during the bus route. A student or recent graduate who could associate with students could act as liason to the school district and help provide the actual skills, services or connection to the need. Identifying key community assets can contribute to its long-term success and developing a sense of mutual responsibility among its stakeholders (Mattessiah, 1997). Eagleton (1991) contends that marginalized groups must be actively taught the ideology that marginalizes them (i.e., individuals are not born with a sense of powerlessness; they learn it). This type of networking may suggest recommendations for other schools and school leaders as well.

**Recommendations for School leaders**

Remember from Chapter One, the leader cannot ‘go it alone’. However, I am implying that school leaders can help foster social capital. The challenge that schools face is not the lack of community support necessarily, but finding a way to genuinely engage them in meaningful dialogue and participation (Boeck & Fleming, 2011). Being
responsive to the needs of the community rather than the wants of a school is paramount. Leaders can then focus on assets (organic in nature, more significantly sustainable, a historic landmark or outdoor learning lab) rather than resources, (an extraction, department store donations) (Roush & Shope, 2010). I recommend that school leaders (not just school administration) become aware of the assets in their school district and communities. Completing a community asset map (mentioned earlier in Chapter 4 and Chapter 2 as well) is a process to identify assets in the community and how to maximize and maintain their integrity. Many districts have similar circumstances where few resources exist, but assets are plentiful. As school leaders, consideration to the manner in which GA-interview participants responded to barriers should be considered. These students did not complain about what they did not have, they reported much more about what they did have; friendships, relationships and an appreciation for the assets in their community. Despite the negative attitudes recorded in interview responses regarding their communities and families, these students demonstrated resilience and achieved success. School leaders may hear negative things about their district or not receive adequate funding, but mirroring the students from Cozumel, school leaders are encouraged to build those relationships with peers and work together to overcome educational and political barriers much like the students from Cozumel have.

Although the GA-interview participants did not have any negative responses about school staff, it is important to recognize that their success was attributed to their peers and not school staff. School staff and community members were under the impression that they were the catalyst for student success. It seems likely that school
staff played a major role in the success of Cozumel students; the students themselves did not raise this in their interview responses. This suggests school leaders should gain an awareness of what needs and support the student wants or perceive instead of making any assumptions that what the school is doing is beneficial. It was important to know if Cozumel’s former students, community members and school staff have information that might benefit current and future students and school staff. The effort may also yield information that other schools might use to replicate any positive experiences within the community and school district.

There is a potential transferability here since other schools and communities may struggle with some of the same barriers, and should have their own sets of assets and resources. The effort may also yield information that other schools or communities might use to replicate any positive experiences within the community and school district. Students in this community share a common experience or perspective. Those common experiences are discussed in the social capital theme and sub-themes of friendship, relationship and support from peers. There are no guarantees with transferability, so future research or applications potential applications. In other words, to say that this is a one-size-fits-all model could yield iatrogenic education practice when working with marginalized groups of people in Appalachia. Cozumel is a unique community with its own assets, resources, barriers and social capital. I recommend gaining an understanding of a community before taking a standard approach.
Interrelating Themes

Recall from Table 2 that education was not mutually exclusive to assets. The interrelated theme for education was identified as social capital. Education may be a result of social capital and the sub-themes; support, relationships and friendships. Another example of an interrelated theme is farming. Farming was identified as an asset because of its small-scale and sustainable practice in Cozumel. Typically, farming is a resource since it extracts non-renewable things such as phosphorus and nitrates. Since the standard is not perfect here, this is not a concern. Within the theme of social capital, sub-themes are not mutually exclusive as well. Friendships are much like relationships in the sense that connections are developed among Cozumel students. The implications of social capital here are that social capital can help Cozumel better take advantage of its resources and tackle several barriers.

Future Research

This study focused on one community’s response to a series of academic constraints created by local political, social, and economic circumstances. Future implications may reflect an exploration into peer relationships and support groups within school districts and communities. Other possible studies might focus on the development and awareness of community assets. Continued work with other types of stakeholders and constructs like student engagement, peer relationships and supports are other possible studies that might be suggested from this research.
Overall Summary

An a priori expectation that informed this study is the idea that families within semi-isolated communities can struggle to achieve educational benchmarks such as graduation. An important part of research is demonstrating trustworthiness and truth. For these reasons I embraced reflexivity and tried to be as responsible to understand the nature of the respondents and data reported (Glesne, 2006). However, a priori questioning is inevitable since I worked and live in the region. None of the responses were reflective of my performance as my former position of principal in the district. I had prior expectations and biases, but being reflexive is important here.

The idea that social capital may be the fulcrum by which Cozumel may see improvement in power, representation, the economy and school is supported through interview findings and document analyses. If social capital can be defined in part by cohesion and looking out for each other, then it should be the case that strategic development of the construct helps Cozumel out. It is contended in this case, a community may need to rally around itself and that social capital may be the connection needed to tie people and productivity as a result of the social ties specifically in Cozumel (Putnam, 2001). A community support system is not in place for Cozumel, at least no one was overtly recognized as someone who provided direct support for Cozumel. Fortunately, the GA cohort provided support for each other as supported through document analyses. The community supported each other and friends advocated for one another providing the social capital for all four interviewees. This research does not
contend that SS and CM do not advocate for students from Cozumel, however, GA clearly reported friendships and community as their support system.

I was guilty myself of prematurely patting myself on the back as a former principal in the district. I was ready to give myself mounds of credit for all the good I had done for the students of Cozumel. After all, I can quantify my effectiveness with all of the glowing increases in graduation rates and test scores. I hired the teachers who had 100% of their students pass the Writing portion of the Ohio Graduation Tests. I showed up for ball game after ball game. The previous sentences, although in jest are somewhat true for the general attitude I had formed prior to this study. I found however, that I had never really found out the real reason that students from Cozumel are successful (or for that matter, what success really meant to them). I appreciate the honesty and openness that all interview participants shared with me. I appreciate the time and information reported from the school staff and community. I have come to an understanding that the Bridgetown Staff are truly vested in the lives of the students from the Bridgetown Local Schools. I appreciate all I learned from the students from Cozumel and the assets they have ready for the rest of us to learn from. Thank you for allowing me to learn from all of you.
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Appendix A: Interview Protocol for Community Members

What are some of the key resources, barriers and assets associated with high school completion in the community? It is important to know if Cozumel’s former students, community members and school staff have information that might benefit current and future students and school staff. The effort may also yield information that other schools might use to replicate any positive experiences within the community and school district. It is contended that people in this community share a common experience or perspective. For this reason study findings will be described in detail so as to promote transferability (Patton, 2002).

Interview (Community Members: Who have lived in the area for an extended period, but may not be a Bridgetown Local School graduate or attendee):

What is the importance of a high school diploma in Cozumel?
Prompts:
If it is important, how? If not, why?
Does a diploma help graduates find a job here or elsewhere?
Are there any other financial benefits?
Are there any other benefits?

What are some of Cozumel’s greatest resources?
Prompt: In what ways do these resources connect to education?
Resources: Resources or “things” of value which, may be extracted from a place and/or utilized for the benefit of other places do not necessarily benefit those in the community from which it was taken (Johnson, 2012). An example would be extracting coal from Appalachia.

What are some of Cozumel’s greatest assets?
Prompt: In what ways do these assets connect to education?
Assets: Assets or “things” of significance that are more organic in nature and sustainable, come without diminishing the asset in question, and in most cases benefit more than the thing itself (Johnson, 2012). An example would be a state forest.

What are some things that help students from Cozumel be successful in high school?
Prompts:
Community resources
School resources
Personal relationships

What are some barriers that make it harder for a typical student from Cozumel to graduate?
Prompts:
Distance
Money
Participation in activities
Bus ride, time

Can you recall any experiences you would like to share that will help me better understand what it is like to attend school in Cozumel?
Prompts:
Staff
Activities

Would you make any changes to Cozumel?
Prompt:
Money

Would you make any changes to the Bridgetown Local Schools?
Prompt:
Money

If you were able to give advice to a high school student who is from Cozumel, what would you say to this person?

Is there anything else about the Cozumel Community you would like to share?

Signature__________________________________________

Printed Name______________________________________

Date______________________________________________

Principal Investigator Signature Date

Advisor Signature Date
Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Bridgetown Local School Graduates or Attendees from Cozumel

What are some of the key resources, barriers and assets associated with high school completion in the community?

Interview (Bridgetown Local School Graduate or Attendee from Cozumel):

What is the importance of a high school diploma in Cozumel?
Prompts:
If it is important, how? If not, why?
Does a diploma help graduates find a job here or elsewhere?
Are there any other financial benefits?
Are there any other benefits?

What are some of Cozumel’s greatest resources?
Prompt: In what ways do these connect to education?
*Resources:* Resources or "things" of value which, may be extracted from a place and/or utilized for the benefit of other places do not necessarily benefit those in the community from which it was taken (Johnson, 2012). An example would be extracting coal from Appalachia.

What are some of Cozumel’s greatest assets?
Prompt: In what ways do these assets connect to education?
*Assets:* Assets or “things” of significance that are more organic in nature and sustainable, come without diminishing the asset in question, and in most cases benefit more than the thing itself (Johnson, 2012). An example would be a state forest.

What are some of the things that help students from Cozumel be successful high school?
Prompts:
Community resources
School resources
Personal relationships

What are some barriers that make it harder for a typical student from Cozumel to graduate?
Prompts:
Distance
Money
Participation in activities
Bus ride, time
Can you recall any experiences you would like to share that will help me better understand what it is like to attend school in Cozumel?

Prompts:
Staff
Activities

Would you make any changes to Cozumel?
Prompt: Money

Would you make any changes to the Bridgetown Local Schools?
Prompt: Money

If you were able to give advice to a high school student who is from Cozumel, what would you say to this person?

Is there anything else about the Cozumel Community you would like to share?

Signature__________________________________________

Printed Name__________________________________________

Date__________________________________________________

Principal Investigator Signature ___________________________ Date

Advisor Signature ______________________________________ Date
Appendix C: Interview Protocol for School Staff

What are some of the key resources, barriers and assets associated with high school completion in the community?

Interview (School Staff):

What is the importance of a high school diploma in Cozumel?
Prompts:
If it is important, how? If not, why?
Does a diploma help graduates find a job here or elsewhere?
Are there any other financial benefits?
Are there any other benefits?

What are some of Cozumel’s greatest resources?
Prompt: In what ways do these connect to education?
Resources: Resources or “things” of value which, may be extracted from a place and/or utilized for the benefit of other places do not necessarily benefit those in the community from which it was taken (Johnson, 2012). An example would be extracting coal from Appalachia.

What are some of Cozumel’s greatest assets?
Prompt: In what ways do these assets connect to education?
Assets: Assets or “things” of significance that are more organic in nature and sustainable, come without diminishing the asset in question, and in most cases benefit more than the thing itself (Johnson, 2012). An example would be a state forest.

What are some of the things that help students from Cozumel be successful high school?
Prompts:
Community resources
School resources
Personal relationships

What are some barriers that make it harder for a typical student from Cozumel to graduate?
Prompts:
Distance
Money
Participation in activities
Bus ride, time
Can you recall any experiences you would like to share that will help me better understand what it is like to attend school in Cozumel?

Prompts:
Staff
Activities

Would you make any changes to Cozumel?
Prompt:
Money

Would you make any changes to the Bridgetown Local Schools?
Prompt:
Money

If you were able to give advice to a high school student who is from Cozumel, what would you say to this person?

Is there anything else about the Cozumel Community you would like to share?

Signature_________________________________________

Printed Name______________________________________

Date______________________________________________

Principal Investigator Signature      Date

Advisor Signature        Date
Appendix D: Round one of coding, definition of code

Acceptance of Cozumel- positive or negative response to being from or associated with Cozumel.
Asset- “things” of significance that are more organic in nature and sustainable, come without diminishing the asset in question, and in most cases benefit more than the thing itself (Johnson, 2012).
Assets- plural code for asset later merged with asset.
Barrier Cozumel – see barriers below. This coded item was an early standalone code that eventually merged with barriers.
Barriers- are things that exist between one thing or person and another and keep them separate (Oxford, 2011). These coded items came from a direct question in the interview protocol about the barriers that make it harder for a typical student from Cozumel to graduate.
Beauty asset- see asset. This was an original standalone code that was later merged with asset.
Bridgetown Local Positive- response the direct question inquiring about what the participant would change about Bridgetown Local Schools and later merged with the code (Change Bridgetown).
Challenges- many of these responses mirrored barriers and also emerged out of comments at the end that permitted the participant to share any other personal items they wanted to share. These included wages, places for students to meet or the crimes in the area.
Change Bridgetown- response the direct question inquiring about what the participant would change about Bridgetown.
Change Cozumel- response the direct question inquiring about what the participant would change about Cozumel.
Church- any reference made about the connection to churches as a place to gather or employment in the Cozumel Community.
Clerk of the Howland County B. - added as a code accidently. This was merely a quote that did not belong on the list.
Community- responses connected directly with Cozumel that was inclusively; positive, negative, encouraging and discouraging.
Culture- the way people from Cozumel act, their expectation of a student’s education, and the way they treat each other.
Diploma positive- items that were positively associated with earning a high school diploma. Many of the responses came from a direct question about the importance of a high school diploma.
Economy- the financial status of the community and/or school. Many of the responses were a direct response to what the participant could change about Bridgetown Local, Cozumel or barriers in Cozumel.

Education- many of these responses were in reference to the importance of a high school diploma or what advice the participant would give to a student from Cozumel.

Encouragement- responses to advice from participants that encouragement or offered hope to students from Cozumel.

Extracurricular- most of these responses later merged with transportation and distance since extracurricular activities became difficult due to distance.

Family- defined as support or detriment to the student depending on the participant.

Farming- was referenced numerous times as an asset rather than a resource. Farming is noted on a small scale personal level, where individuals may have used this as a bartering tool or means of sustenance rather than an extractable resource that is outsourced.

(State park) asset- see asset. This item was an original stand alone, but later merged with asset.

Friendship- much like relationships and support below, these items were coupled with social capital to describe coded items that help students develop connections among individuals, social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from individuals.

High expectations- responses from the interview protocol question; “If you were able to give advice to a high school student who is from Cozumel, what would you say to this person?”

History asset- see asset.

Hunting asset- see asset.

Leave area- referring to (Carr & Kefalas, 2009), “stayers” and “leavers”. Graduates were encouraged to leave Cozumel.

Low expectations- refers to the expectations of students or community members from Cozumel.

Nature- refer to assets.

Opportunity negative- very few opportunities for employment or financial gain.

Parents- refers to the parents of students from Cozumel.

Poor/poor area- refers to the Cozumel Community and the lack of financial and physical resources.

Redistrict- refers primarily to the results of the 1968 school consolidation and redistricting of Howland County, Ohio.

Relationships- see friendship and support.

Research- response to question asking if education applied to any of the assets or resources.
**Resilient**- is defined as a positive and adaptive response to a threat or adversity (Masten, 1990). Resiliency is a characteristic or trait that can empower individuals. (Masten & Obrandovic, 2006). A resilient individual is capable of utilizing personal, social, or environmental resources to evade or lessen effects that adverse events have on less resilient individuals (Chaskin, 2008).

**Resource**-"things" of value which, may be extracted from a place and/or utilized for the benefit of other places do not necessarily benefit those in the community from which it was taken (Johnson, 2012).

**School district**- any reference made regarding the Bridgetown Local Schools and the surrounding districts, their physical boundaries, origin of district boundaries and general positive comments about what participants would/would not change about Bridgetown Local Schools.

**School staff**- references to school staff in the Bridgetown Local Schools. These references include coaches, teachers, bus drivers, administrators and support staff.

**Success**- widely revolves around the intentional question of what helps a student from Cozumel being successful in high school.

**Support**- much like social capital (Putnam, 2000), or the connections among individuals, social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from individuals.

**Technology**- referenced only by school staff. These comments referred to the lack of broadband or internet access to students in Cozumel.

**Timber asset**- refer to asset. This was coded as a standalone early on, but later merged with asset.

**Transportation**- a variety of responses that deal with distance to the school, bus ride or length of time to travel from Cozumel to either the school and/or county seat for supplies.

**Vocational school**- references made to the career and technical center as a high school education option.