“We used to…” The Decline of Social Capital on Providencia Island, Colombia

THESIS

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By
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Abstract

Providencia Island is a paradise with an interesting culture, beautiful people, and lovely memories of collaboration and communityness, but farmers today are having difficulty joining forces even though they need to do so. This study draws on historical evidence, local leaders’ perspectives, and theories of social capital to explain the decline in social capital and collaboration among the farmers of Providencia and to assess the possibilities of reclaiming this important asset for the social and economic development of the Island. After analyzing the sociological literature relevant to this case study, I conclude that structural forces and a decline in social capital have affected the Islanders’ abilities to collectively address community problems. These findings contribute to a sociological understanding of the challenges that collective action confronts on Providencia due to its particular characteristics.
Dedication

To Soph and Mom, who give me the strength and motivation to keep going.
Acknowledgments

Writing this thesis has been a process of intense learning for me, not only in the academic arena, but also on a personal level. It has taken many people to bring me to the point of completion.

First, I would like to thank my thesis advisor Dr. Cathy Rakowski of the School of Environment and Natural Resources at The Ohio State University. Prof. Rakowski was the guardian of this work. Her continuing motivation made finishing this work possible. She consistently allowed this paper to be my own work, but steered me in the right direction.

Thank you also to the members of my committee: Dr. Linda Lobao and Dr. Kendra McSweeney. Without their participation and input, the thesis would not have been complete.

I would also like to thank the Fulbright Colombia and their Afro-Colombian Leader’s Scholarship Program and The Ohio State University, without whose support, the opportunity to pursue my Master’s degree would not have been possible.

Finally, I must express my very profound gratitude to my parents Guendolin and Miguel, my daughter Luna Sophia, and my friends Ellen, Phil, and Kristyn, for their love and support during this time.

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Fields of Study

Major Field: Environment and Natural Resources

Specialization in Rural Sociology
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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

I was born and raised in a natural paradise—a small island in the Caribbean Sea—where you can find magic all around. The sea of seven colors and the green hills are surroundings that inspire and provide tranquility to the natives. People speak “Bende,” a colorful English-based Creole that gives meaning to the traditional music and everyday interactions. The fruits of the sea and from the ground feed and nourish the proud souls of the “Raizal people.”¹ Some stories that people tell are full of nostalgic memories of a time when we used to drink sugar cane juice next to the mill under April sunsets or when grandpas used to tell us “Anancy’s”² stories under the moon and around the boiling pots of syrup. Others remember the times when the aroma of papaya, sugar cane, and wood smoke were a sign that later we would eat papaya sweets with coconut bread. Many would like to live this again, but those practices seem to have vanished with the passing of the years.

Providencia is a paradise with an interesting culture, beautiful people, and lovely memories of collaboration and community, but islanders today are having difficulty

¹ This term refers to natives of the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina. The Raizal people are a Protestant, Afro-Caribbean ethnic group, speaking English-based Creole, and who live in the Archipelago.
² Anancy’s stories originated in West Africa (Ghana). They were brought to Jamaica and other parts of the New World by Ashanti slaves, and were handed down orally through generations. The character in the stories is also known as Breda Anancy, Ananse, Kwaku Ananse, and Anansi; in the southern United States, he has evolved into Aunt Nancy. Typically, he is a spider, but often acts and appears as a man. Anancy is a greedy, lazy, inventive trickster, cunning and smart in the extreme. Anancy loves jokes, and when he is not sleeping, he is always up to something.
joining forces to solve local issues. For centuries, farming was one of the most important economic and social activities on Providencia.\(^3\) Farming was not only a source of food and the livelihood of many families; it meant togetherness and progress for its inhabitants. Today, farming is no longer an important social and economic activity on the Island; it went from being the base of the economy and a social space for interaction to being a simple traditional individualized subsistence activity. Access to fresh and affordable fruits and vegetables is an issue for many islanders today. Even though farmers know they need to join efforts to help alleviate food insecurity, they are failing to do so.

The questions in this thesis are why don’t people collaborate today and how can collaboration be rebuilt on Providencia? I strongly believe farming on the Island needs to be revolutionized. Farmers need good conditions to do what they do best —farm! Institutions at every level need to join efforts with farmers toward one objective and stop working separately. Rubin and Rubin (1992) state that “community development involves local empowerment through organized groups of people acting collectively to control decisions, projects, programs and policies that affect them as a community” (p. 6). Farmers on the Island need to reinforce their relationships and networks, engage in farmers’ organizations, and generate changes in local agricultural production and the local economy together with local institutions.

However, the social historical processes experienced by the Raizal people in times of slavery and the tense historical relationship of the Archipelago with the Colombian

\(^3\) One of the three islands of the Colombian Department Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina. Also known as “Providence,” “Old Providence,” or “La Vieja Providencia” in Spanish.
national government have been identified as possible barriers to collaboration and organization on Providencia. So, if lack of cooperative spirit is an outcome of slavery and the islanders are descendants of African enslaved people as some suggest, why do islanders claim there was a time of unity and collaboration? Or, has forced acculturation through centralized policies led to a level of mistrust that has disrupted long-held cultural practices that stressed collaboration? Can collaboration be recovered?

To answer these questions I consider the historical effects of slavery and the mistrust created in the process of acculturation conducted by the national government as possible barriers to collective participation on Providencia, but I also extend consideration to broader theoretical frameworks and understandings of social capital and civic engagement. Such literatures point specifically to components that are needed in a community to influence citizens’ abilities to jointly solve common problems. Building on such work, I then turn to my own analyses of historical materials and perceptions of local leaders on Providencia and to the components of social capital to understand the contemporary lack of collaboration and organizing on Providencia.

**Providencia Island**

Providencia is one of the smaller islands of Colombia’s only oceanic and West Indies Department, the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina. Providencia has a total area of 17 square kilometers and a population of approximately 5,000 people (Mow, 2008). The Island is protected by a barrier reef and located 480 kilometers from the Colombian coast, 180 kilometers from Nicaragua, 400 kilometers from Jamaica, and is 70 kilometers north of the island of San Andrés (Parsons, 1964).
Providencia is of volcanic origins with fertile soils and natural sources of fresh water. Human settlements are located along the coastal area of the Island, and the higher terrain is densely covered by bushes and timber and fruit trees which are one reason that the Island is an earthly paradise (Mow, 2008).

Figure 1 The Caribbean

The islanders are descendants of enslaved Africans and European settlers. The formation of the sociocultural characteristics, the populations’ composition, the organization of their productive systems, and the construction of a culture based on English and Protestantism were consolidated until the 1920s. The location of the

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Archipelago, its first settlers and cultural exchanges with other territories (Central America and the Caribbean) shaped the differences that exist between the islanders and the rest of Colombia’s people (Guevara, 2007). From then and until the present-day, the broader island community (not just farmers) suffered from multiple drastic and negative changes that were a product of “Colombianization.” The ideology underlying the Colombian Political Constitution of 1886 was national unification, and the means used to meet this goal was national education policy (Clemente, 1989). The first group of Capuchin monks and nuns arrived to the Archipelago in 1926 and their main objective was to “civilize” the “savages” (Clemente, 1993, p. 38), which imposed Catholicism and education in Spanish on islanders who were Protestants and spoke English.

Furthermore, the entire Archipelago was declared by Colombia to have the status of a free port in 1953. This generated a dramatic shift in the local economy (Mow, 2008). With the increase in trade and tourism, especially on San Andrés, many farming activities were abandoned or downgraded to a secondary importance across the Archipelago (Velásquez Calderón and Santos Martínez, 2010; Mow, 2008). From this point on, agriculture and fishing became small-scale traditional activities performed individually and through self-employment. Food production declined and farming became more on the subsistence level. This contributed to the deterioration of prior organizational forms and practices of cooperation among all three islands’ families (Mow, 2008). The forced shift to Catholicism, the imposition of Spanish language, and deepening administrative and political dependence on Colombia were exacerbated by the arrival of newcomers from the mainland who were attracted to the free port. This contributed to a mix of
cultures and ethnicities. This led the islanders to claim the identity of “Raizal People” to distinguish themselves from outsiders.

Pópolo (2004, as cited in Velásquez Calderón and Santos Martínez, 2010, p. 10) states that despite changes in the models of development, agriculture has remained and ancestral knowledge continues to be important and includes some preventive activities against climate changes such as floods, rains, drought, and wind, among others. Agriculture continues to be an important link in the social and economic structure of the Island families, not only for the cultural and ancestral value in the construction of the history of the Archipelago, but because farmers combine agricultural and fishing practices with other sources of income. Even though farming on the Island has been downgraded in economic importance, it still plays an important role in the local culture and is part of the identity of the islanders. However, I strongly believe it can provide much more to the community both economically and culturally. To understand the social and economic importance of agriculture on Providencia, it is relevant to review its past and present.

A Historical Overview of Farming

Providencia was known for its abundance of natural resources, such as fine woods, fishery resources, sources of fresh water, and the fertility of its soils. For a long time, Providencia was attractive as a reservoir of natural resources for exploiters including lumberjacks, boat builders, fishermen, and farmers (Mow, 2009). As mentioned above, farming, once an important economic activity on the Island, has been relegated to a simple traditional subsistence activity.
Since the 17th century, subsistence farming based on smallholder agriculture was developing on the Island. From 1780 on, this subsistence farming was slowly replaced by an economy of plantations using slave labor whose main crop was cotton and which was a response to the development of textile manufacturing of the Industrial Revolution in England and its colonies (Velásquez Calderón and Santos Martínez, 2010). However, “when the production of cotton declined, perhaps due to the emancipation of the slaves in 1853, trade with Jamaica was lessened and the people of Providencia began to raise cattle, hogs, and horses for sale in San Andrés and Limón, Costa Rica” (Robinson, 1996, p. 34). However, Meisel Roca (2009) suggests that the economy of Providencia and San Andrés was much more diversified even before the emancipation of slaves and products like sugar cane had economic importance higher or similar to that of cotton (see Table 1).

In 1835, when Mr. C. F. Collett arrived to Providencia on the British survey vessel H. M. S. Thunder, he reported that 30,000 pounds of cotton and 170 pounds of tortoise shell were traded annually to Jamaica for English calicoes, cloths, etc. (Collett, 1837). Collett mentioned that:

Good stock is plentiful; in fact, the soil is exceedingly productive, and nature here appears in abundant luxuriance, affording to the animal creation the greatest profusion, with very little cultivation. Fruits of various kinds, such as sapodillas, mangoes, oranges, tamarinds, plums, limes, &c. [etc.], are plentiful. Wild pigeons, guanas [iguanas], and hiccatee or land-turtle abound; the latter are found in the mountains, and form a delicious article of food. Yams may be had at six shillings the cwt. [Hundred Weight, C for Centum, a hundred, and Wt. for weight]; likewise cocos, plantains, and pumpkins. The cattle are generally in good order; bullocks of 4 cwt. or 5 cwt. sell at from 3l. to 4l.
sterling⁵ [three to four pound sterling] a-head [per head]; pork 4½d. [four and a half pennies] a pound. Fowls in abundance at 12s. [twelve shillings] a dozen. Turkeys from 4s. to 6s. a piece [per piece]. Horses are a fine breed, rather small, and purchased at from 3l. to 4l. sterling a head. There are a few asses on the island. Fish, peculiar to these latitudes, abound in profusion on the banks; sharks are very numerous. Cotton is the staple export, and is cultivated more or less by everyone. This, with turtle-shell and a few hides, are the principal articles of trade, (Collet, 1837, p 207)

In a report prepared in 1873, Prefect Eduardo Mamby reported that Providencia was trading cotton, coconuts, leather, cedar wood, and turtles. In his report, Mamby stated that fruits and fish were in great abundance, and that the greatest form of prosperity was in cattle and horses, which were sold at good prices in San Andrés and Puerto Limón (Robinson, 1996, p. 34). By the end of the 19th century, fruits and vegetables were also important items for export on Providencia. Mangoes, oranges, avocados, and gungu beans were exported along the costal ports of Central America (Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama) “until the aggressively protectionist tariff legislation of the early nineteen-thirties shut off these outlets” (Parsons, 1956, p. 32).

Robinson (1996) states that in 1912, “Santiago Guerrero described Providencia as a fertile island where inhabitants were dedicated almost exclusively to agricultural pursuits and to the raising of cattle, horses, pigs, and chickens.” Guerrero also reported that, in a way, “Providencia was the storehouse for San Andrés and perhaps for Colón and Bocas Del Toro [Panamá] as well” ( p. 34).

⁵ These symbols seem to be based on the pre-decimal British coinage. The abbreviation for the old penny was d (from the Roman denarius), s for shilling (from the Roman solidus) and £ for pound (from the Latin word for pound, libra). Therefore, the l in this text may stand for pound.
Table 1 Annual Agricultural Production in the Archipelago 1845-1846

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avocados</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>Dozens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bean</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Arrobas*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassava</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>Cargas**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coconuts</td>
<td>20,100</td>
<td>Dozens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>Arrobas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>Arrobas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyewoods</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>Tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gungu peas</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Arrobas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>Large pitcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot pepper</td>
<td>10,300</td>
<td>Dozens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lime</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>Dozens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumber</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>Varas***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melons</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>Dozens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oranges</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>Dozens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papaya</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>Dozens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pineapple</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Dozens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantain</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>Cargas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumpkin</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Cargas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar cane</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>Dozens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet potato</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>Cargas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweetsop</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>Dozens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turtle-shell</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>Pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yam</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>Cargas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Arrobas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egg</td>
<td>21,000</td>
<td>Arrobas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leather</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Arrobas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>Arrobas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>Large pitcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork lard</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Arrobas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starch</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>Arrobas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Until the beginning of the 1900s, the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina had a strong economy based on agriculture and fishing. However, between
1926 and 1953, farming was affected by several factors: (1) hurricanes (especially the tropical storm of 1940 that severely affected Providencia), (2) pests on orange and coconut plantations, and (3) decreasing trends in international prices and protectionism (Clemente, 1994; Albuquerque and Stinner, 1978; Parsons, 1956). Moreover, Clemente (1994) claims that the Second World War brought about submarine operations in the area, affecting all trade even more. The deterioration of the local economy was one result along with forced emigration, particularly to the Canal Zone and Bocas Del Toro. The population on the islands declined between 1938 and 1951. San Andrés went from having 4,261 inhabitants to 3,705, and Providencia went from 2,267 to 1,970 inhabitants (Clemente, 1994, p. 349) (see Figure 2).

In 1953, President Rojas Pinilla declared San Andrés a free port, “turning it overnight from a sleepy island into a veritable vacation and shopper paradise for mainland Colombians” (Albuquerque and Stinner, 1978, p. 174). Velásquez Calderón and Santos Martínez (2010) claim that this shift was due to the impoverished economy that the islanders were living at the time. The commercial activity that developed thereafter became the axis of the entire local economy, employing the highest proportion of the active population (Clemente, 1994). But while the free port was producing a drastic change on San Andrés, on Providencia things were as described by Parsons:

Pastures of introduced Guinea grass (*Panicum maccum*) on Providencia today supply San Andrés with all its beef, some 500 head a year… A few oranges are shipped in season to Cartagena and after August, when they are not available in Panama, Island avocados are permitted to enter the Canal Zone. Otherwise, the formerly thriving fruit trade is dead… Today, although the fertile volcanic soil makes Providencia well able to
feed itself (except in the event of an occasional protracted drought), it is an impoverished Island in the sense of a money economy. (Parsons, 1956, pp. 31-32)

Today, very few farmers devote 100% of their time to farming. The vast majority alternate this activity with fishing, commercial activities, and income from other work such as with public entities. Farming on the Island is practiced on small plots of 1 to 5 acres with multi-cropping of food crops with fruit and other trees (Velásquez Calderón and Santos Martínez, 2010). The predominant crops are cassava, plantain, banana, “cuatrofilo” (a small variety of plantain), sweet potato, pumpkin, watermelon, cantaloupe, yam, “mafafa” (a starchy corm also known as malanga, bore or taro), sugar

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cane, papaya, corn, pineapple, gungu peas (pigeon pea or “guandul”), sorrel (hibiscus or “flor de Jamaica”), and hot peppers. Perennial fruit trees include soursop (fruit of *Annona muricata*), sweetsop (sugar-apple), citrus (lime, oranges, mandarin, bitter orange, etc.), guava, avocado, cherimoya (“chirimoya”), noni (great morinda, Indian mulberry or cheese fruit), plums (red mombin and hog plums), and cashew, among others. In 2004, twenty out of 150 farmers surveyed grew vegetables such as tomato, cucumber, green peppers, and cilantro to a smaller extent and without modernizations (Ecofondo and FINDEPAC, 2004).

The agricultural census of 1997 determined that there were 229 farmers on Providencia and Santa Catalina at that time, with the highest percentage in Rocky Point, Mountain, Old Town, Lazy Hill and Santa Catalina. However, production was focused in Bailey, Rocky Point, Smoothwater Bay, Bottom House, and Southwest Bay (CORALINA, 1997, as cited in Ecofondo and FINDEPAC, 2004). In 2004, Ecofondo and FINDEPAC estimated that there were 150 active farmers on the two islands (see Table 2), with an average age of thirty-six years. The highest percentage of producers at the time was on Providencia in the sections of Bottom House, Old Town, Lazy Hill, and Southwest Bay.

7 Unfortunately, today there are no reliable data on agricultural production on the Island. In 2015, the national government conducted a nationwide agricultural census, but due to low levels of production, processing, and agricultural services, the Archipelago appears in the last row of all the measurements with no measurable contribution to the national production of food.

8 Establishing the numbers of farmers on Providencia is complex. First, many farmers do not devote 100% of their time to farming. Therefore, many are excluded from these data because they list a different primary economic activity. Second, many women, livestock farmers, retirees from public jobs, among others, are excluded from projects and programs that recruit farmers and this means they are not included in censuses. And third, due to political factors, the time spent on other economic activities, lack of communication and dissemination of information, etc., many islanders who devote time to farming are excluded.
In 2004, Ecofondo and FINDEPAC reported that the commercialization of agricultural products on the two islands was low due to preference for imported goods and the high consumption of imported products. However, due to the growing demand for organic products, local products are more sought after and valued today. On the other hand, retailers claim that it is not profitable to buy local products because they are not consistent in production. Due to their reliance on rainy seasons, farmers are unable to guarantee production levels and, therefore, retailers prefer not to depend on their products. Moreover, all farmers on the islands plant and harvest quarterly crops generating surpluses which end up being used to feed animals (Ecofondo and FINDEPAC, 2004).

The prices of fruits and vegetables that farmers on the Island usually produce and market are very high compared with cities like Bogotá (the capital city of Colombia). While a kilo of cucumbers in Bogotá costs $0.50 USD, local farmers sell it at $1.98. A kilo of plantain in Bogotá costs $0.68 and local farmers sell it at $1.65. Supermarkets import these same products from Colombia and Central America, but due to transportation costs, these products are very expensive on the Island (see Table 3).
Table 2 Number of Farmers on Providencia and Santa Catalina 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sectors</th>
<th>Number of farmers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bottom House</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Town</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazy Hill</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest Bay</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Point</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Town</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoothwater Bay</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshwater Bay</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maracaibo</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comesee</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Caballote</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones Point</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boxon</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bluf</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Catalina</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>150</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Adapted from Ecofondo and FINDEPAC, 2004.*

Most farmers on the Island do not keep a book of costs of production. Therefore, farmers establish prices based on the prices of imported products. As seen in Table 3, prices of local farmers and those of local markets differ more or less between $0.50 and $1.00 USD. This difference is a competition strategy based on the price of the market and not on the actual cost of production plus profits. Therefore, farmers may be overpricing or underpricing locally produced fresh and organic products.
Figure 3 Providencia and Santa Catalina Islands\textsuperscript{9}

Table 3 Price Comparison in Three Markets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>COP</th>
<th>USD</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>COP</th>
<th>USD</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>COP</th>
<th>USD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watermelon</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$1.65</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>$1.98</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$900</td>
<td>$0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantaloupes</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>$1.98</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$7,000</td>
<td>$2.31</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
<td>$0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumpkins</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>$1.32</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$7,600</td>
<td>$2.51</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$900</td>
<td>$0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cucumbers</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>$1.98</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$12,600</td>
<td>$4.16</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>$0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>Dozen</td>
<td>$8,000</td>
<td>$2.64</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$3.30</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$1,400</td>
<td>$0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassava</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
<td>$1.32</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$8,400</td>
<td>$2.78</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$1,429</td>
<td>$0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantain</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$1.65</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$5,800</td>
<td>$1.92</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$2,045</td>
<td>$0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papaya</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>$1.98</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$7,200</td>
<td>$2.38</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$960</td>
<td>$0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$9,600</td>
<td>$3.17</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$2,955</td>
<td>$0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet peppers</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$10,400</td>
<td>$3.44</td>
<td>Kilo</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
<td>$0.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The management of spaces and spatial distribution of crops is flexible, but there is traditional knowledge on handling of spaces between crops. The influence of the moon and calendars and almanacs such as Bristol’s and MacDonald’s are commonly used for small-scale agriculture. There are also many traditional beliefs about the participation of women in agricultural production (Ecofondo and FINDEPAC, 2004). For instance, women are not allowed to climb fruit trees during their menstrual period. Farmers claim the tree will stop bearing fruit or the production in following seasons will be poor. Many of the Raizal people’s beliefs are religious in origin, and some beliefs are directly related to the following verse in the bible, for example:

When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean.

(Leviticus 15: 19-20 New International Version)
Issues currently affecting farming are the shortage of water, insecurity from theft, hurricanes, phytosanitary problems (plant diseases), lack of technological advances, scarce and expensive labor, lack of governmental incentives, almost non-existent marketing, limited access to loans, infrequent technical assistance, lack of roads and limited access to arable land, restricted access to tropicalized and certified seeds, etc. To these difficulties add the fact that young people are not interested in what has become an unprofitable activity (Velásquez Calderón and Santos Martínez, 2010; Ecofondo and FINDEPAC, 2004).

In sum, agriculture on Providencia certainly faces challenges. These include assessments that the some farming methods and practices (such as planting on slopes and nonselective logging) are unsustainable and could seriously affect the delicate marine ecosystems of the Island; the availability of land and water for farming are scarce; the marketing of local products is very limited and face competition from imported items; and younger generations show almost no interest in this traditional activity as a source of livelihood. So, why encourage farming on the Island if it faces so many issues? There are many reasons, but the most important are food security and nutrition; the generation of potentially profitable economic alternatives; and the preservation of ancestral knowledge and beneficial cultural practices (that will be discussed extensively in a later chapter).

Another reason is pragmatic. Providencia is far away from Colombia and in emergencies — such as hurricanes — the Island has been deprived of food for many days. Although fruits and vegetables are imported, they are scarce, of poor quality and with high prices. This situation increases the cost of living and reduces the quality of life of
the islanders. For instance, on the Island many families like to prepare the Colombian “trifásico” soup on Sundays. The ingredients for this soup are three meats (chicken, pork, and beef), a variety of “breadkind” (potato, cassava, yam, and plantain), corn, avocado, and season with fresh vegetables like onions, celery, garlic, cilantro, and green peppers. Unfortunately, people often complain of the unavailability of fresh ingredients. On Sundays and Mondays, fresh vegetables and fruits are scarce, because boats arrive with “fresh food” on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. To make things worse, boats that arrive to Providencia makes a first stop at San Andrés, and unfortunately, the best produce stays there.

At this time, tourism, fishing and public employment are the only stable sources of cash income. Therefore, the creation of new sources of employment is needed on the Island. Even though small-scale farming is considered unprofitable, with capital, the implementation of new and appropriate technologies and practices (such as hydroponics, drip irrigation, agroecology, etc.), supporting infrastructure, and networks for community engagement, this activity could once again recover economic importance on the Island.

Between January and April 2016, 38,364 foreign tourists visited San Andrés and Providencia. Besides the products in demand by the natives, the tourism industry also requires a large amount of agricultural items that could be produced on the islands. Products such as papaya, plantain, tomato, green peppers, cilantro, cucumbers, and fruits (such as mango, soursop, avocado, and guavas) could enter the market for restaurants and hotels on the islands.
Moreover, ancestral knowledge and social dynamics associated with agriculture and related Island culture are worth preserving. While farming on Providencia needs to be innovated, it also has elements that need protection and promotion. For instance, traditional knowledge of the influence of the moon, the medicinal use of plants, methods for sowing and harvesting under local conditions, the conservation and transformation of local products, the sense of community and cooperation in sugar cane season, watermelon and corn seasons, etc.

However, a question remains: how can islanders recover farming at this point in time? Some public and private entities have been working on the transformation of the “tradition” of farming back into a “profitable” activity that could contribute to the sustainable development of the Island. Unfortunately, success has escaped institutional attempts to help “the community” construct a better future. Although institutional actors see the big picture of the agricultural issue, local organizations keep working independently with individual farmers tackling “technical” issues that could be resolve jointly with other organizations and farmers. Preserving agriculture on the Island has been limited primarily to delivering supplies to farmers and their families so that they can have a few plantain trees and tomato bushes in their backyards for food security purposes. These are paternalistic actions that are not solving the food insecurity that exists due to shortages, high prices, and the poor quality of food that is now imported.

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10 The institutions that support farming on the Island are NGOs such as Trees and Reefs, FINDEPAC, Bowden, the mayor’s office, and public environmental entities such as CORALINA (Corporation for the Sustainable Development of the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina) and the Old Providence McBean Lagoon National Park.

11 “The community” in this thesis refers to all islanders (including fishermen, merchants, men, women and the young) who engage in agricultural activities as a means of primary or supplemental income or as a hobby.
weekly from Colombia and Central America; nor are they helping to improve local incomes. So, what is missing from the institutional attempts to help recover farming on Providencia? Why don’t farmers themselves take action and create change? I believe the answers lie in the loss of a sense of communityness and cultural practices that could promote collaboration to address shared problems as islanders did in the past.

**Collaboration on Providencia**

Ecofondo and FINDEPAC (2004) claim that “the challenge of producing food on the Island will be resolved when the society understands that the farmers are the drivers of development and not instruments of development. Agricultural expansion is not what transforms the farmer, it is the farmer who transforms agriculture” (p. 216). In other words, farmers’ awareness decides the direction of development. Their efficiency, productivity, creativity, and organizational capacities determine the level of their accomplishments. So, if the projects for the solution of technical issues and delivery of inputs have not contributed to the recovery of agriculture as an important economic activity on the Island, what is missing is a focus on the farmers themselves.

Islanders claim that farming in the past was possible not only because of the availability of fertile soils and water, but most of all because of “Brotherhood” and the “Groupal Soul.” Both “Brotherhood” and “Groupal soul” are terms that farmers and other members of the community use to refer to the cooperation and unity that existed in the past among the members of the community in the execution of livelihood activities such as farming and fishing. For instance, a local musician I spoke with claimed that islanders survived thanks to the “groupal soul” and that today we are lacking this important asset.
We have lost the groupal soul. The whole community used to go with my grandfather and work on his ground. They used to work from morning. I had to go and carry his tea [breakfast] in the morning, come back and carry his food [lunch] because they stay right there working, and they did it for several purposes. First, to keep the crab and the rocko [lizard] from eating up the melon [watermelon sprouts], so they will be there the whole day. And second, they did it to keep the groupal soul, because they could not survive without the groupal soul. (Conversation with a local musician, July 31, 2015)

Howard Newball (2016) claims that sense of belonging, sense of community, unity, and collaboration were aspects that characterized the Raizal people in the past and that these characteristics were the qualities that allowed the survival of the Raizal people over time. The extended family predominated and was distinguished by holding land tenure in common, mutual support, sharing of work and the food that came from farming and fishing, and survival activities such as house and boat construction. But, above all, were the honesty and love for work and family that were taught by the Protestant Christian culture. These qualities “characterized” the islander in both distant and recent past.

Today things are different. Collaboration has declined. When consulting the local leaders who work with farmers and fishermen through non-governmental organizations, their opinions about participation and engagement on the Island are:

Unfortunately, islanders are not the type of people who associate voluntarily or follow the rules of an association. They only move [work] when there is a group of people moving

\[12\] This is used to refer to a farm or piece of land.
[working] along with them. There is a lack of initiative. (Conversation with a fish and farm program coordinator, August 18, 2015)

When I think about community participation on the Island, I burst into laughter. In that sense we are screwed. I think that the people who should be involved are not involved. I really do not know why. People do not come to meetings. People do not participate in processes [projects and programs]. But when they see that things are functioning, it is when they want to take part in the processes. I think the ones who participate are always the same ones. (Conversation with a NGO staff person, August 18, 2015)

On the other hand, this is the view of a farmer and leader of a farmers’ association on the Island:

Personal interest. If you do not have something to give them, they will not participate in the projects. In past time, our great-grandparents used to exchange their products. For instance, people used to exchange labor or a cassava for a fish, people used to live like family, they used to help one another. Today, due to external influences, a different mentality, and monetary trade, things have changed. Everyone pulls for their side [everyone is focused on satisfying individual needs and interests] and they just think on me, me, me, and what I am going to get. While their needs are met, they do not think of others. (Conversation with a leader of an agricultural association, July 28, 2016)

From the perspective of the local leaders consulted, cooperation existed in the past, it declined, and it is obviously needed. But, why exactly did cooperation and unity among islanders decline? Can collaboration be restored on the Island? I believe the answers to these questions can help solve the difficulties that families and farming are having today on Providencia. The Raizal people are the ones who must be called on to determine the options of development, they are the ones who should make decisions and
take action to solve problems that they identify on the Island. It also is true that these actions are more effective when addressed by organized groups of people (Flora and Flora, 2008; Rubin and Rubin, 1992). Therefore, collaboration itself needs to be restored among islanders and to do this we need to understand what caused its decline in the first place.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore and understand the sense of communityness and collaboration that existed on Providencia, the causes of its decline, and whether it can be restored to help recover and support important economic and social activities such as farming on the Island and people collaborating to address shared problems. To do this, I have consulted historical materials in search of evidence, perceptions of local leaders and my neighbors and family on community participation and organization, and my own understanding of the Raizal culture. However, I also extend consideration to broader theoretical frameworks and sociological understandings of processes such as social capital and civic engagement. These point specifically to diversity in settings under which people are more or less likely to collaborate and join in efforts to solve common problems.

This thesis is divided into five chapters: (1) Introduction and background, already discussed here, (2) literature review, (3) research method, (4) analysis of slavery, mistrust and social capital, (5) and discussion and conclusions regarding the potential for renewed collaboration and steps that need to be taken.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Today, people on the island of Providencia are having difficulties joining forces to solve shared common problems. The execution of programs and projects that seek to benefit the community has been affected by the lack of participation and organization by the islanders. Therefore, social and economic development have also been hindered. The poor availability of nutritious and affordable food is a serious problem that public and private institutions are trying to solve by promoting farming on the Island. However, success in such institutional\textsuperscript{13} attempts to help the “community” construct a better future has been elusive.

In general, islanders claim that productive farming was once possible on the Island because they had a strong sense of community and they worked together to ensure their survival. However, local leaders and farmers themselves complain and claim that islanders have lost their sense of community and cooperation.

Some scholars claim that slavery and mistrust of the national government are directly associated with the lack of cooperation on the Island today. Regarding slavery, Ratter (2001, as cited in Velásquez Calderón and Santos Martínez, 2010) claims that the constant relocation, the separation of individuals from their families, the disruption of traditional marriage, and the low survival rates on slave plantations created a strong

\textsuperscript{13} As indicated in Chapter 1, the institutions that support farming on the Island are NGOs, public environmental entities, and the mayor’s office.
individualism among people and suppressed cooperative spirit. Mistrust is widespread and thought to be related to the historically tense relationship of the Archipelago with the Colombian national government, the negative consequences of the implementation of centralized policies, and the forced acculturation of islanders through Colombianization. But, legacies of mistrust and slavery cannot be the only explanations for the lack of collaboration and organization on Providencia. Islanders claim a remembered sense of community and cooperation that flourished in the recent past. How to explain and understand this past sense of community and cooperation and its decline? Sociological analysis of community and collaboration in diverse settings can be helpful.

In recent decades, social scientists in different fields have been debating over a perceived decline in civic engagement in the United States. Robert Putnam’s *Bowling Alone, The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000) provoked an interest in the “somewhat vague concept” of “social capital” as a possible justification for the claimed decline in civic engagement in the United States (Bell, 2009). The understanding of social capital, its components, and types (bonding and bridging social capital) help to explain the social dynamics that are occurring on Providencia regarding collaboration and organization. So, before discussing historical evidence of the impact of slavery and mistrust, I present key descriptions of social capital and its components, which will help with the discussion and analysis of this case study.

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14 Civic engagement or civic participation is the “individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern” (Delli, 2016). “Civic engagement and community collaboration are also important social norms, as they work toward the achievement of ‘coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit’ (Putnam, 1995, p.67)” (quoted in Bell, 2009, p. 636).
Meanings of Social Capital

Social capital is an interactive and intangible asset that can contribute to economic and social development (Flora and Flora, 2008; Grootaert and Van Bastelaer, 2002). The idea that social relations, trust, and norms are important to the functioning and development of society has been considered for a long time in diverse disciplines such as sociology, economics and political science (Kapucu, 2011; Grootaert and Van Bastelaer, 2002; Hyman, 2002; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 1995). For instance, Portes asserts that the notion that involvement and participation in groups can have positive consequences for the individual and the community is a basic notion that can be traced back to Durkheim’s emphasis on “group life as an antidote to anomie and self-destruction and to Marx’s distinction between an atomized class-in-itself and a mobilized and effective class-for-itself.” In this regard, the concept of social capital simply brings back an insight present since the very beginnings of sociology (Portes, 1998, p. 2).

The first systematic contemporary analysis of social capital is credited to Pierre Bourdieu, a European sociologist who studied social capital at the individual level (titles/names, friendship/association, memberships, citizenship). He believed that social capital was cultural capital that primarily benefited the elite through their use of social networks (Kapucu, 2011). Bourdieu defined the concept as the “aggregate of the actual or potential resources that derive from a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships in a group —which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital” (Booth and Richard, 2012, p. 35; Flora and Flora, 2008; Portes, 1998). This definition suggests that social capital is composed of two elements:
(1) social relationships that allow individuals access to resources possessed by their acquaintances and (2) the amount and quality of the resources themselves (Portes, 1998, pp. 3-4).

Bourdieu’s treatment of social capital is instrumental, focusing on the benefits gained by individuals when they participate in a group. He argued that connections and networks are not something naturally or socially given; these networks are intentionally constructed in order to produce and reproduce long-lasting, useful relationships that can secure real or symbolic benefits. In his own words, “network of relationships is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term” (Bourdieu, 1986, p.249). Bourdieu also claimed that these networks and the individual’s position in them must be continually reproduced through the exchange of favors and gifts that create feelings of appreciation, friendship, and respect—“a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 250). Flora and Flora (2008) explain that Bourdieu refers to this as “norms of reciprocity that foster commitment to the group and at the same time strengthen the group itself” (Flora and Flora, 2008, p. 119).

Bourdieu also states that the existence of a network of connections confirms that there are limits or boundaries, and each member of the group has the obligation to be a “custodian” of those limits. In other words, the group is formed by a specific type of people or a specific profile. Therefore, it is necessary to keep out those that do not belong and who can change the essential nature of the group (Flora and Flora, 2008). As
explained by Flora and Flora (2008), this is a negative aspect of social capital, which may have serious consequences for geographic communities, since residents are citizens of the community (or should be). So, if people are excluded from those community networks that offer credit or access to collective resources, they cannot be full community citizens. Flora and Flora, offer several reasons why groups are excluded from community networks:

- because of certain unconscious beliefs held by men regarding hierarchy of the sexes (women: “it’s the women who really run this place —through their husbands”), because a group is seen as being permanently “in training” for full community citizenship (young people: “We tried that before you were born; it didn’t work”), because they are undeserving (poor people: “They are too lazy to come to meetings; why else would they be poor?”), or because they are outsiders (newcomers and immigrants: “They don’t know how we do things here”). (Flora and Flora, 2008, p. 121)

In the United States, James Coleman defined social capital by its function as “a variety of different entities with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors, whether persons or corporate actors within the structure” (Coleman, 1988, p. S98). For Grootaer and Van Bastelar (2002) “this definition expands the concept to include vertical as well as horizontal associations and behavior within and among other entities, such as firms. Vertical associations are characterized by hierarchical relationships and an unequal power distribution among members” (p. 5). Coleman’s work represents an important change from Bourdieu’s individual focus to outcomes for groups, organizations or institutions (e.g. family, school, church). In other words, Coleman expanded the unit of observation
and introduced a vertical component to social capital, expanding the interpretation of the concept (Grootaert and Van Bastelar, 2002).

Coleman also added that, like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the attainment of certain goals that would not be achievable in its absence (Coleman 1988). In Coleman’s view, social capital can produce human capital (skills and knowledge). He explains that parents’ high levels of social capital (relationship between parents and children) can be more effective in the educational growth of their children, than parents with high levels of human capital that do not pay attention and devote time to their children. “If the human capital possessed by parents is not complemented by social capital embodied in family relations, it is irrelevant to the child’s educational growth that the parent has a great deal, or a small amount, of human capital” (Coleman, 1988, p.S110). For instance, single parent families with multiple children have adverse effects on graduation rates apparently because of lack of time and attention dedicated to the children and a lack of time for participation in the school community.

Families who move constantly also have adverse impacts on graduation rates due to a lack of strong community social capital and loss of norms (Kapucu, 2011; Coleman, 1988). In this last respect, Coleman’s discussion of closure is particularly interesting. “Closure means the existence of sufficient ties between a certain number of people to guarantee the observance of norms” (quoted in Portes, 1998, p. 6). Norms emerge as an effort to limit negative external effects or encourage positive ones. However, without closure, it is difficult to avoid the negative externalities generated by an individual or/and
collectively sanction his/her behavior due to lack of relationship between the members of the community. As an example, Coleman mentioned that gossiping is used as a collective sanction.

Kapucu (2011) mention that unlike Bourdieu, Coleman believed that social capital was a benefit available to and employed by all social classes. Coleman viewed social capital as a public good and an asset that contributes to the social structure for the public’s benefit. However, “people in general under-invest in social capital because they only perceive a small portion of the benefits” (Kapucu, 2011, p. 28).

Robert Putnam, an American political scientist, introduced the concept of social capital “into the mainstream of popular language, public discourse, and policy debate” (Hyman, 2002, p. 197). Ever since Alexis de Tocqueville\(^{15}\) highlighted the engagement and organization of a society as a central point for a “healthy democracy” (Ohmer and DeMasi, 2009; Flora and Flora, 2008; Putnam, 1995), a vast amount of empirical research has been performed to support this proposition (Gundelach, 2015; Schmitt, 2009; Ohmer and DeMasi, 2009; Putnam, 1995). However, Robert Putnam’s work on civic engagement has received special attention (Gundelach, 2015). In his article *Bowling Alone: Declining Social Capital*, published in the *Journal of Democracy* in 1995, Putnam used bowling as an example of how people get together and share family and community

\(^{15}\) “Alexis Toqueville was an aristocratic Frenchman who traveled at length in the United States and who in 1835 and 1840 published the two volumes of *Democracy in America*. He feared the ‘tyranny of the majority’ and was generally suspicious of the motives and lack of formal education of the lower and working classes. However, upon observing the working of communities of all sizes in the United States, he concluded that a fundamental bulwark against that tyranny was the degree to which Americans organized themselves into what we today would call civil society” (Flora and Flora, 2008, p. 121-122).
issues, this activity represents not only a recreational space but also a source of social interaction (Putnam, 1995). He claimed that participation in organizations creates social capital that helps develop and maintain democracy. Putnam asserts that:

> For variety of reasons, life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital. In the first place, networks of civic engagement foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust. Such networks facilitate coordination and communication, amplify reputations, and thus allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved. When economic and political negotiation is embedded in dense networks of social interaction, incentives for opportunism are reduced. At the same time, networks of civic engagement embody past success at collaboration, which can serve as a cultural template for future collaboration. Finally, dense networks of interaction probably broaden the participants' sense of self, developing the "I" into the "we," or (in the language of rational-choice theorists) enhancing the participants' "taste" for collective benefits. (Putnam, 1995, p. 67)

It is important that Putnam suggested that social capital emerges out of “networks of civic engagement” not just networks on one hand, and civic engagement on the other. This means that people need to actively participate and engage to produce social capital in a group. In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam cites voter turnout and reading the newspaper as examples of civic engagement. These examples seem to propose that to qualify as a citizen engaged in civil society it is not necessary to be involved with others, be

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16 Putnam originally envisioned social capital as an asset that only generates positive externalities, but he and others have since recognized that social capital can also manifest itself in negative ways. Organized crime, street gangs, and the Ku Klux Klan are examples. In such a scenario, social capital benefits members of the association, but not necessarily the community as a whole (Hyman, 2002; Grootaert and Van Bastelar, 2002; Portes, 1998).
organized in any specific form, nor be directed at any particular action, objective or result. These examples suggest that civic engagement is not by itself a form of social capital and that networks by themselves do not produce social capital (Hyman, 2002). For instance, there are many organizations such as churches and clubs where people gather once a week. However, there are individuals who do not interact with others, and they do not volunteer or participate actively in the organization. These individuals are part of a network, but they are not engaged, therefore they are not benefiting nor producing social capital. Engagement with others provides a forum for relationship building that enable access to social assets. Social capital involves and depends on individual civic engagement “as a vehicle for building relationships,” and while it relates to the well-being of the individual and the community as a whole, “the more the better” (Hyman, 2002, p. 198).

**Components of Social Capital**

Even though scholars consider social capital a poorly defined concept, it is often used to explain the decline in civic engagement and collaboration. Putnam’s definition will help us with this case study. He defined social capital as “the features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 1995, p. 67).

It is claimed that through social capital, people gain intangible and tangible resources through social interactions and connections, and that these benefits are acquired at both the individual and group levels. For instance, in a community with a great stock of social capital, in which the inhabitants know each other, trust one another, and interact
frequently, community members are able to rely on each other for emergencies, to take care of their children, and other favors (Bell, 2009). “The presence of social capital also imparts benefits to the community as a whole through increasing the group’s ability to initiate action and social change” (Paxton, 1999, as cited in Bell, 2009, p. 635).

Social trust, networks, and norms or social values are considered the most important dimensions of social capital (Bell, 2009; Paxton, 1999). Moreover, it is claimed that any acceptable measure of social capital should include these three components (Onyx and Bullen, 2000, as cited in Bell, 2009). Below, I briefly describe the three components of social capital emphasized in this thesis.

**Social trust.** Trust relates to the types of ties between individuals, where the presence of positive ties are essential (Paxton, 1999). Trust is defined as “socially learned and socially confirmed expectations that people have of each other, of the organizations and institutions in which they live, and of the natural and moral social orders that set the fundamental understanding for their lives” (Barber, 1983, as cited by Paxton, 1999, p. 98). “Trust is important to community because it promotes collaboration even without rewards or penalties (Onyx and Bullen, 2000), making collective action more probable” (Bell, 2009, p. 635).

Measuring trust requires inferring behaviors or asking individuals for expectations about and experiences with behavior requiring trust. Key information to identify trust relates to the extent to which individuals received or would receive assistance from members of their community or network in case of various emergencies (e.g. loss of income, accidents, illness, etc.) (Grootaert and Van Bastelar, 2002).
**Norms of reciprocity.** This component is essential for the concept of social capital. It refers to the expectation that people will respond favorably to each other by returning benefits for benefits. As noted by Michael Taylor:

Each individual act in a system of reciprocity is usually characterized by a combination of what one might call short-term altruism and long-term self-interest: I help you out now in the (possible, vague, uncertain, and uncalculating) expectation that you will help me out in the future. Reciprocity is made up of a series of acts each of which is short-run altruistic (benefiting others at a cost to the altruist), but which together typically make every participant better off. (Taylor, 1982, as cited in Putnam, 2000, pp. 134-135)

In communities with strong reciprocity, individuals are concerned with the well-being of others and act on those concerns (Onyx and Bullen, 2000, as cited in Bell, 2009) Reciprocity is identified by the exchanges of gifts or favors between individuals (Flora and Flora, 2008).

**Networks.** Social relations reflect the objective ties between individuals. Paxton (1999) explains that there are two types of networks. (1) Individuals can be informally related to others through friendships and other types of networks (e.g. fellow workers, neighbors, kinship, etc.). (2) Individuals can also be associated with others through formal group memberships (clubs, church, voluntary organizations, etc.).

Using membership in local associations as an indicator of social capital consists of counting the associations and their members and measuring various aspects of membership (such as internal heterogeneity) and institutional functioning (such as the extent of democratic decision-making). Other aspects such as communication,
information diffusion, and social support are also useful indicators in both formal and informal networks (Grootaert and Van Bastelar, 2002).

**Bonding and Bridging Social Capital**

Putnam makes an important distinction between two types of social capital: bonding and bridging (Putnam, 2000). Bonding social capital encompasses compact social networks between small groups of people that bring them closer together. It is “inward looking,” tends to strengthen special identities and homogeneous groups, and it builds up in the everyday life of families and people coexisting in communities throughout the course of informal interactions. Bridging social capital is made-up of loosely linked networks of large numbers of individuals usually connected by indirect ties. It is “outward-looking,” links communities and people to others, and incorporates people through wide-ranging social groups and/or localities. Bridging networks are “better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion” (Putnam, 2000, p. 22).

Temkin and Rohe (1998, as cited in Ohmer and DeMasi, 2009) states that both bonding and bridging social capital are needed to create positive community change. In other words, “bonding social capital is, as Xavier de Souza Briggs puts it, good for ‘getting by,’ but bridging social capital is crucial for ‘getting ahead’.” (Putnam, 2000, p.22) Flora and Flora (2008) state that bonding and bridging social capital can reinforce each other. They illustrate and predict levels of collective action when bonding and bridging social capital interact at the community level (see Figure 4). They explain that when both social capitals are high, we get effective community action, egalitarian forms
of reciprocity, and access to information from relations with the outside community. When both are low, extreme individualism dominates, which is reflected at the community level in social disorganization and poor capacity for change. Individuals in these communities can prosper exchanging social capital for financial capital, but those without the financial capital suffer the social consequences (e.g. gang activities, educational reforms, policies, etc.) (Flora and Flora, 2008).

When bridging social capital is high, but bonding social capital is low, there is clientelism,\textsuperscript{17} and the relationships formed within and outside the community are principally vertical. This situation does not prevent collective action from the community residents, but it only benefit outsiders or their local “bosses.” Those at the bottom of the ladder—who are evidently indebted with the few at the top—are the majority of the population in such communities (Flora and Flora, 2008). Consequently, receivers of favors owe loyalty to their patron when it is time to vote for public office. As a result, horizontal networks are aggressively discouraged, principally outside the circle of influence of the patron, capo, or elite clique. “Such systems create dependency” (Flora and Flora, 2008, pp. 126-129).

When bonding social capital is high but bridging social capital is low, communities resist change and conflict often occurs. The community may be organized against an outside entity or against itself. In the latter case, bonding social capital occurs

\textsuperscript{17} Here I refer to political clientelism. In practical terms, “political clientelism refers to an informal exchange relationship of a hierarchical nature, involving two subjects, a patron, and a client. The patron, having greater access to resources, agrees to provide material goods and different types of assistance to the client, who, in turn, responds to this assistance by giving the patron his loyalty, political support or vote” (Audelo Cruz, 2004 as cited in Landini, 2013, p. 116).
within homogeneous groups within the community. These groups oppose and distrust each other; therefore, they are reluctant to join forces and carry out action at the community level (Flora and Flora, 2008).

To build durable social capital, Flora and Flora (2008) state that “relationships and communication” need to be strengthened throughout the whole community to promote community “initiative, responsibility, and adaptability.” They emphasize that relationships and communications can be strengthened by encouraging interactions among unlikely groups within and outside of the community and increased accessibility of information and knowledge among community members. Community initiative,

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responsibility, and adaptability are improved by “developing a shared vision, building on internal resources, looking for alternative ways to respond to constant changes, and discarding the victim mentality, which only causes the community to focus on past wrongs rather than future possibilities” (Flora and Flora, 2008, p.118).

So far, I have referred to social capital as an important element for the well-being of individuals and communities whereas Putnam originally envisioned social capital as an asset that only generates positive externalities. However, he and others later recognized that social capital could also manifest itself in negative ways. For instance, political campaigns where community members are divided and pitted against each other in order to promote their respective candidates is an environment where social capital benefits the political candidates, but not necessarily the community as a whole.

Putnam states that social capital “can be directed toward malevolent, antisocial purposes, just like any other form of capital” (Putnam, 2000, p. 22) (e.g., scientists who know how to construct an atomic bomb have a great much human capital). He explains that, “Networks and the associated norms of reciprocity are generally good for those inside the network, but the external effects of social capital are by no means always positive.”

Even though social capital is considered a poorly defined and complex concept that has both negative and positive consequences in individuals and communities, it provides a framework to explore and understand the lack of cooperation that many local leaders claim exist today on Providencia. Before presenting my findings, in the following
chapter, I will present the methods used to collect and analyze the information for this thesis.
Chapter 3 Research Method

The three components of social capital — social trust, norms of reciprocity, and networks — are essential to cooperation and solidarity (Bell, 2009). Therefore, we could assume that a decline in or low levels of social capital could be a barrier to cooperation on Providencia today despite the fact that people live in close proximity and share a common history and culture.

Prior research suggests that islanders on Providencia today lack a spirit of cooperation due to the legacy of slavery and a generalized mistrust of others. However, local leaders claim to remember a time when people came together as a community to farm, fish and improve their island society. So, why don’t people collaborate today and can collaboration be rebuilt on Providencia? To answer these questions I considered: (1) researchers’ prior assumptions to explain the lack (or low level) of collaboration that we find today on Providencia, and (2) the concept of social capital and the evidences that some elements of its three components still survive today in activities such as political campaigns and elections.

In order to conduct research, identify, and analyze the components of social capital on Providencia, I used multiple qualitative research methods. Document research, participant observation, informal conversations, and my own experiences and knowledge of the Island were used to collect historical and contemporary examples and to identify and understand diverse forms of social capital on Providencia. Furthermore, to
understand scholars’ claims on slavery and mistrust as possible explanations for the lack of collaboration and organization, I used historical materials and other literature on the Island in search of evidence that could help reconfirm or reject these claims.

To measure social capital components, researchers have used both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method usually involves statistical analyses on various sources of data such as membership records, voter turnout rates, church attendance, etc. Ethnographic methods, on the other side, are used for both measuring social capital components and for the description of social capital processes (Bell, 2009). Both qualitative and quantitative methods and both description and measurement of the social capital components are important.

My initial intention for this study was to collect primary data implementing focus groups and interviews. However, due to limitations in time and economic resources and in the availability of and access to information, the measurement of social capital components, and the use of quantitative methods were not possible for this study. However, the identification and description of social capital components using qualitative methods was highly feasible and quickly became an optimal opportunity to learn and understand how social capital and cooperation operate on Providencia. Specifically, I employed document analysis, participant observation, and informal conversations with a broad range of social groups and my own family members. I explain below.

**Data Collection Methods**

**Document analysis.** Document analysis is a method often used to supplement other social science methods (i.e., survey research ethnographic research), but I
determined that it could provide good information because of the many projects and programs implemented on the Island (documented in reports), news outlets (i.e., newspapers, radio), and my own intimate familiarity with political processes and the local culture.

Once I arrived to the Island in May 2015, the first thing I did was find out about the accessibility of information, photocopying policies, and the existent formats (photography, public reports, documents produced by organizations, and internet sources) available at both public and private organizations. I was especially interested in written reports of previous studies, projects, and programs that could provide insights into farmers’ organizational and participatory involvement. Nonetheless, from the very beginning of my visit to the Island for fieldwork, I found myself struggling to access the document information that I hoped to use for my study.

Both public and private organizations on the Island do not have a systematic archival method, so access to information was difficult. The search for documentation was also limited by office hours, employees’ availability, and access to information on office computers that were often shared among several employees or were their personal computers. Therefore, my strategies for data collection had to be changed and diversified.

**Informal conversations and participant observation.** Although changing my data collection strategies were not planned, but change came in an unexpected and interesting way. While waiting for a public employee to look up information on a previous project in his computer, I found myself engaged in an informal conversation with a local leader. Like many of my conversations on the Island, this one started with a:
“long time no see! Where do you live now?” Then, I would explain that I am studying a Master’s in Rural Sociology in the United States with a Fulbright Afro-Colombian Leader scholarship, and that I was visiting the Island to gather information for my thesis. Afterwards, the leader asked about the topic of my thesis and, without realizing it, I ended up talking with this leader for more than an hour about farming and islanders’ participation in different types of organizations. At the end of my visit to this office, I did not get much information from the government employee. However, I had an enriching and exciting conversation with an important environmental and spiritual leader from the Island.

From that point on, I embraced every gathering and casual encounter to share the topic of my thesis with family members, friends and local leaders (in sports, religion, music, fishery, agriculture, environment, and politics). Conversations were long, ideas and perceptions were plentiful. So, after my second conversation I realized that I needed to record the information somehow. Written and recorded notes were my new methods of data collection, so at the end of each day I dedicated time to write down and record perceptions, ideas, opinions, and experiences that people shared with me during my visit.19

These informal conversations provided information that I could not find anywhere else—not even in any of the few reports provided by the public and private entities I visited. In my notes, I did not focus on gathering the technical vision of the implementation of a project, because these tended to ignore the social dynamics of the

19 To protect the identities of those who shared ideas and opinions, all recordings were deleted and no identifying information on individuals were included in written notes or transcriptions.
Island. Instead, I gathered the islanders’ perception of their difficulties getting ahead and what they believed can be the solutions.

Moreover, my notes on community members’ perceptions were also enriched by my daily interaction during observations at different meetings and events. At the time of my visit to the Island, the regional electoral campaigns were taking place and it was impossible to be on Providencia and avoid becoming involved in one of the most exciting elections that I can remember. My mother was running for city council and a cousin was running for governor. To make things even more complicated, for the first time my extended family was politically divided.

Political campaigns and elections are times of excitement and bring people together, but they are also times of divisions—an opportunity to study social capital in action and barriers to social capital. During campaigns, people argue and try to predict the results of elections for hours at neighbors’ houses, local stores, bus stops, etc. at any time of the day. During political campaigns, people talk and visit each other more than usual, even those who typically do not attend public events or meetings or do not leave their homes much. Things you did not know are revealed and people who were friends become enemies, and vice versa. Information circulates all day by many different means of communication (print, radio, in business meetings, and face-to-face casual meetings).

Although campaigns can be exciting for some islanders, they also are stressful. This is a time when individuals of different ages, genders, statuses, and political ideologies expose their opinions and assessments of local problems, and their visions of progress and well-being. This is a time when community organizing, civic engagement,
and the exercise of social capital are likely to be at their highest levels of expression but also at their most conflictive. Campaigns and elections are times that contradict the predicted generally low levels of participation and engagement of islanders that characterize other arenas. Therefore, this was a crucial moment for me to observe what was happening on Providencia and an excellent opportunity to apply the concepts of social capital and civic engagement to analyze and interpret the mobilization of people and conflicts among groups over political candidates. It also provided an opportunity to understand more fully the implementation of clientelism (in the name of civic engagement) as a mechanism in conflict with social capital.

*Setting and population.* Observation and contact with local leaders were made mainly in the northwestern areas of the Island (Mountain, Santa Isabel, Old Town, Freshwater Bay, and Southwest Bay). These are the sections where the offices of public and private entities are located and where meetings and political demonstrations were typically held, where community activities such as horse races and fairs are held, and where I normally worked and resided when on Providencia. So, after realizing that the informal conversations with local leaders provided valuable information, I made a list of people who were known to be influential on various topics on the Island. As I contacted and had conversation with them, I was able to build a more complete list of local leaders (through snowball sampling) and some even referred me to specific people they thought I should meet with.

I first contacted close friends with whom I had shared in activities or worked with in the past. I went to places of work, homes and even encountered them on the streets.
where we stopped to chat. Providing is well known for having a very relaxed environment where time passes very slowly and where people in general do not have specific daily agendas. Spontaneity is much appreciated on the Island.

The main means of transportation are motorcycles and helmets are not used. It is very normal to see motorcyclists shouting and nodding their heads to say hello to all who cross their paths or who are sitting alongside the roads. It is also normal to see two or more motorcyclists riding next to each other or parked while having formal or informal conversations. I am very familiar with these practices, so I was able to use them to make contact with and initiate conversations with local leaders.

I also met with people at their offices where they talked to other people, answered phone calls, and sent emails. I also contacted and had conversations with people at cafeterias, corner stores, and parks. I talked to them along the road while riding my motorbike or while participating in other activities such as political house-to-house visits and mobilizations. I also went to their houses and, while they did their chores, we had long conversations. For example, I had a conversation with a local farmer at his house while he and his family were “picking crabs” (cleaning and processing crabmeat). Conversations also took place at bus stops with local leaders and other community members; at my grandparent’s backyard where neighbors, grandparents, parents, cousins, aunties, and uncles conversed while eating mangos or oranges; in my mother’s kitchen where she welcomed other local leaders that visited her unexpectedly throughout the day.

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20 Most people on the Island walk or ride motorbikes to run errands.
21 This environment may be envied by city dwellers, but it is very inconvenient when it comes to carry out research with an established schedule.
In a spontaneous place like Providencia, conversations can take place anywhere, with anyone and at any time — so, I took advantage of that.

However, I did carry my list of important local leaders with me, and I made every effort to meet with those on my list. Of the 18 key leaders on the list, I was able to talk to 11 of them — including five women. The leaders included farmers, fishermen, musicians, sports players, religious pastors, environmental leaders, political leaders including government employees, and NGO directors and staff. At the end of my visit to the Island, I had notes on behaviors, perceptions, ideas, and opinions of progress, well-being, participation, and organizing that I gathered informally with local leaders and other community members at diverse and often unplanned places and times.

One unexpected place where I found interesting information was on Facebook. During campaigns and elections, I noticed that people posted many comments and reported a lot of what was happening in the Archipelago. Therefore, I decided to invite and add as many Islanders as I could to my Facebook account. (Before this exercise, I had 300 friends, and today I have more than 900.) “Friends” today include people I never talked to, people from all around the Island, people of my age, young and older people, people from different political affiliations, different occupations, and so on. By going through the postings on my islanders friends Facebook pages, I was able to learn about their perspectives, opinions, and discontent with specific things happening on the Island today. I also was able to find local newspaper articles that people pointed out as being interesting and I identified other websites with information related to the Island.

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22 Some anthropological and historical accounts of life on Providencia dismiss women’s importance in the public sphere, but it became clear during my research that women are very active in leadership positions.
(including YouTube videos on tourism and the rise in single mothers with absent fathers). On Facebook I connected with different types of people, who shared different types of information, which allowed me the opportunity to learn about what is happening today in the Archipelago through the comments and ideas of islanders with whom I may never have had the opportunity to meet. Each of these sources contributed relevant insights into a variety of local issues, helped me identify organizations unknown to me, and many shed light on issues under debate during the election campaign.

**Document research.** To find historical evidence of social capital and the legacies of slavery and Colombian governance, I searched for books, articles and other materials on the Internet, at The Ohio State University libraries, and through friends. To search for information in both libraries and web search engines, I used all names that are used to refer to the Island in both English and Spanish languages (“Providencia Isla,” Providence Island, Old Providence Island, and “La Vieja Providencia”). Furthermore, I linked these names to words such as history, Raizal people, participation, collaboration, social capital, cooperation, civic engagement, farming, community, organizing, mobilizations, etc.

At the book depository of The Ohio State University, I found books such as *Crab Antics: A Caribbean Case Study of the Conflict between Reputation and Respectability* by Peter J. Wilson (1973), which provided historical and organizational information of the Island. I also found *Providencia Island: Its History and its People* by J. Cordell Robinson (1996), which provided historical information on slavery, farming, and other interesting historical information about the Island. Another useful volume in the archives was *San Andrés y Providencia: “Una geografía histórica de las islas Colombianas del mar*
Caribe occidental” (English Version, San Andrés and Providencia: English-speaking Islands in the Western Caribbean (1956)) by James J. Parsons (1964), which provided much of the historical information of Archipelago that I include in this thesis.

Searching the Internet was also helpful to find published articles that were either available on the Internet or accessible through The Ohio States University. These included “Vulnerabilidad socioeconómica de los agricultores frente a huracanes en las islas de Providencia y Santa Catalina, Caribe Colombiano” (Socio-economic vulnerability of farmers against Hurricanes on the islands of Providencia and Santa Catalina, Colombian Caribbean) by Carolina Velásquez Calderón and Adriana Santos Martínez (2010), which supported the assumptions of the lack of participation and organization of islanders on Providencia. El Caribe Insular: San Andrés y Providencia (The Insular Caribbean: San Andrés and Providencia) by Isabel Clemente (1994) provided important historical information of the Island culture, farming, religion and education.

Non-published reports were acquired through friends who work in public and private entities. Project final reports —such as “Diagnóstico, Planificación Ambiental y Zonificación del Sector Productivo Agrícola: Providencia y Santa Catalina Islas, Reserva Internacional de la Biosfera ‘Seaflower’” (Diagnosis, Environmental Planning and Productive Agriculture Zoning: Providencia and Santa Catalina Islands, International Biosphere Reserve "Seaflower"), prepared by Ecofondo and FINDEPAC (2004), provided data on historical and contemporary conditions of farming on Providencia. Even though information on the general history of the Island is found in numerous articles,
books and reports, detailed historical and contemporary information on farming, community organization, participation, and social capital and cooperation is poor and disperse. Therefore, the use of mixed methods has been essential for this thesis.

**Data Analysis Strategy**

To organize and analyze the information collected during my visit to the Island, I used the open coding method to identify and organize evidence of the three components of social capital and bonding and bridging social capital on the Island. Also, during fieldwork and my conversations with local leaders and the community, I identified ideas and repetitive statements and developed a preliminary list of main ideas, evidence, and perception which I double checked when opportunities arose during and after fieldwork.

After fieldwork, I transcribed all recorded and written notes (without names or detailed identifiers), and then I read, coded, categorized the content, wrote additional notes or memos, and made a list of additional information that I had and was relevant to my research. Doing this helped me to connect the seemingly disparate information that I produced or gathered during the different stages of my research (collected historical materials, notes taken during fieldwork, ideas gathered from internet networking sites, and the information relevant to the indicators and sociological concepts such as social capital that were discussed in the literature review. All sources of information were carefully assessed and support the analysis in the following chapters.

There are some remaining issues (shortcomings to research) that could be solved through future research. Using mixed methods to identify the barriers to cooperation on Providencia and the possibilities to recover it provided information that I would not have
found if I consulted only private and public entities’ reports. Particularly important was information that came from conversations. However, the focus of individual conversations varied across different types of leaders talked with and their respective areas of expertise. For future research, organizing focus group discussion would be very helpful to organize and structure a more complete set of questions that could focus more directly on the three components of social capital on the Island, the possible influence of the legacy of slavery on contemporary cooperation, and more perceptions of the effects of the process of Colombianization. To arrange these focus groups would require more time and resources, but I believe that it will reveal more information and answers to explain the contemporary lack of cooperation and collective participation on Providencia.

Furthermore, the sites where I conducted interviews and the population with whom I interacted were mostly limited to local leaders and the central sections of the Island where both the majority of leaders and I lived and worked. In retrospect, community members from sections like Bottom House and Southwest Bay are critical for this type of research and they should be included in the future. These areas of the Island are where the former slaves were settled after the emancipation and still live today. They are where the majority of the Island’s black community lives. Therefore, their opinions on the legacy of slavery and likelihood of cooperation among islanders could enrich this discussion even more. However, because of the political campaigns taking place during fieldwork and the tense relations that existed at the time between the families of these sections and my own family (due to family members running for office), it was impossible for me to reach out to these communities at the time of fieldwork.
For now, I believe the information I have accessed will help initiate a conversation on social capital and cooperation on Providencia. I hope to advance this topic and continue research in the future so as to include more information and ideas regarding explanations for the lack of participation and cooperation on Providencia or to uncover information on examples and incidents of participation and cooperation (past or present) that have not been acknowledged or studied yet.
Chapter 4: An Analysis of Slavery, Colombianization, and Social Capital on Providencia

Introduction

This chapter is an analysis of slavery, mistrust, and social capital on Providencia that serves the purpose of identifying and understanding the variables and activities that in the past encouraged and facilitated social capital and cooperation on the Island, as well as the variables that have influenced its decline and the barriers that the Raizal community continues to confront today. Although the analysis is scholarly, it is also an opportunity to help identify and formulate ideas for how communityness and social capital might be reinserted into local culture.

The literature on collaboration and social capital on Providencia is scarce. Although scholars have considered collaboration and social capital important for the formation of healthy societies and democracies, on the Island this issue seems to have been overlooked by local leaders both in the past and in the present. To move forward on this topic, it is necessary to start by identifying possible explanations for the current apparent lack of collaboration and organization, and to identify strategies that could be implemented and help change the “status quo.”

After a review of the existing literature, two main propositions were identified that may help understand the lack of collaboration and organization on the Island. One of the propositions states that the experiences suffered by the majority of islanders under
slavery (constant relocation, separation of individuals from their families, etc.) have
generated a sense of individuality and little sense of community among the islanders. The
second proposition asserts that lack of collaboration and organization are due to the
process of “Colombianization,” which forced the community members\footnote{Here “community” and “community members” refer to both people who share a place and people who shared a history and experiences. Prior to Colombianization, most farmed, fished or hunted as the main source of livelihood. Following Colombianization, “the community” referred less to shared culture and to shared livelihood and more to shared space. Adoption of the identity “Raizal people” suggests a desire to emphasize what is shared and to defend shared interests in the face of outside pressures for change.} to adopt a new
religion and a different language and which coincided with Colombia’s declaration of a
free port on San Andrés that led both islands’ economies to abruptly shift from continued
subsistence and primary agricultural production to tourist services and commerce based
on imported goods. The Raizal people was excluded from the economic development that
the free port brought, the social structural of the Island community was impacted, and
mistrust grew between the community and the national government. I also will consider
three components of social capital to help understand the dynamics that surround the lack
of collaboration and organizing on Providencia.

In the following pages, I start by presenting historical evidence of slavery on
Providencia and define its relevance to understanding the contemporary lack of
collaboration and community organizing on the Island. Then, I discuss three components
of social capital. Two of these mistrust of others and the process of Colombianization
have weakened bonding social capital and made more difficult organizing to solve shared
problems. The third, which includes local norms of reciprocity and networking,
highlights positive cultural practices and values typical of bonding capital but also the
negative impact of party politics which creates competition to broader patterns of bonding capital to a narrower and disruptive focus on political parties and candidates. Party politics represents a type of civic engagement on Providencia that is less voluntary and responds more to economic incentives and expected personal gain. It pits community members and members of families against each other, which takes attention away from working to resolve shared problems. In other words, it divides “the Raizal people.”

**Historical Overview of Slavery on Providencia**

Lack of organization, collective action, and civic engagement on Providencia have been attributed, in part, to the social historical processes experienced by the ancestors of the Raizal people in times of slavery (Velásquez Calderón and Santos Martínez, 2010). Slavery led to the separation of family units and an end to traditional forms of family organization. The enslaved ones brought to the Island lost their ability to cooperate among themselves because of repression and the individualized nature of survival under slavery (Ratter, 2001 as cited in Velásquez Calderón and Santos Martínez, 2010). However, many among the Raizal people claim that the members of post-slavery families in the community used to work together, that the bonds of unity were strong, and that people used to rely on each other in both good and bad times. So, is slavery a scar hampering collaboration and organization on Providencia — as claimed by some scholars — or not? To help answer this question, it is necessary to review Providencia’s history for evidence that supports or rejects the islanders’ or scholars’ claims.
After going over the available historical documentation of the islands, I find three relevant moments of slavery on Providencia and Santa Catalina.\(^{24}\) The first moment I call the Puritan Era. This era goes from 1630 until 1641 when the English Puritans came to the Island and established the first known society on Providencia. The second moment I will call the Archbold Era. This era began in 1788 when Captain Francis Archbold arrived on the Island with a land grant from the Spanish empire, and ends in 1853 when slavery was officially abolished on the islands. The third era I call the Livingston Era and it goes from 1837, overlapping 16 years with the Archbold Era, until 1926 when the first group of Capuchin monks and nuns arrived in the Archipelago to “settle and civilize the savages” (Clemente, 1993, p. 38). In each of these eras, the enslaved and freed African population brought to inhabit the Island played a specific role in the establishment of “a new society.” The descendants of the enslaved in each era lived and contributed to social change under specific conditions that helped shape what we know today as the Raizal people.

**The Puritan Era.** The arrival of English Puritans from Bermuda and England to Providencia in 1630 was the starting point of the Puritan Era. Attracted by the strategic location of Providencia and Santa Catalina — situated in the heart of the Spanish empire in the New World — and by the fertility of the soils, affluent aristocrats and prominent members of the English nobility arrived on Providencia to establish the “Providence Island Company” (Kupperman, 1993; Parsons, 1964). This company, “the exact

\(^{24}\) However, the history of the Archipelago as a whole is very mixed. For some periods, the historical documentation and information is more complete for Providencia than San Andrés, and vice versa. This is related to the relative political and economic importance of each island in the different periods.
contemporary” of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the United States, “was envisioned to be the great Puritan colony” (Kupperman, 1993, p. 1). However, after ten years of confronting issues such as failure in agricultural production and attacks from the sea, the English Puritan colony on Providencia was wiped out by the Spanish invasion in 1641.

Although the initial intention of the company was to establish a godly society of white planters on the Island, in 1633 slaves were introduced from Tortuga and Jamaica (Albuquerque and Stinner, 1978; Parsons, 1964). As in other West Indian settlements, in the beginning, the English Puritans established a plantation economy on the Island. The principal crop was tobacco which failed to produce profits, and they never succeeded in developing a commodity of superior economic power (Kupperman, 1993). It is assumed by authors consulted that for ideological reasons that are not clear in the literature, the Providence Island Company investors denied planters the property rights to their lands; uncertainty of tenure then contributed to economic failure. Deprived of private property in land, the planters shifted to property in human beings. However, investors in London recommended that too many slaves would lower the price of white labor, so they implemented (without success) a policy that for every slave imported the planter should employ two white apprentices (Kupperman, 1993).

In 1638, a slave rebellion occurred on Providencia, and rebellion spread to San Andrés in 1799 and 1841. These rebellions were provoked by adverse living and working conditions. Although there is not much information on how these rebellions were started nor how they evolved, we could assume that there was some type of communication and organization among the enslaved which facilitated the rebellions.
Furthermore, the Providence Island Company confronted problems that the mainland English colonies such as the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the United States did not face. The ubiquitous danger of attacks from the sea is an example of this, and this threat became critical after Providencia adventurers received a patent for privateering in 1636 (Kupperman, 1993). The danger of attacks, the location of the Island, and closeness to the Spanish colonies in Central America made the presence of professional military men compulsory. “Many of these veterans were godly men, but were disruptive in their godliness” (Kupperman, 1993, p.2).

From the start, the Puritans tried to establish and maintain a community based on the principles of the bible as interpreted by them (Robinson, 1996), but gradually the directors of the Company were convinced that only through privateering could they be capable of balancing the books of the company. Because of this, more investments were made in organizing defensive activities and constructing forts, and less in agricultural and community activities. Providencia was slowly “converted into a fortified base from which privateering warfare could be waged against all comers” (Parsons, 1956).

Privateering was considered an obvious threat and a source of mortification to the Spaniards. On three occasions, the Spanish fought the privateers and tried to take over Providencia. On their third attack in 1641, General Francisco Diaz Pimienta came from Cartagena with a fleet of 12 boats and 600 men, and was able to achieve the surrender of the English Puritans in just two days (Robinson, 1996; Kupperman, 1993; Albuquerque

25 The term “adventurers” here refers to those who invested their money in colonial ventures for profit or religious freedom and not to those who actually emigrated in colonial enterprises.
26 A privateer was a private person or ship that engaged in maritime warfare under a commission of war, which is a government license authorizing to attack and capture ships of enemy nations.
and Stinner, 1978; Parsons, 1964). The Spanish counted 381 slaves among the captives, but there might have been others who escaped to seek shelter on San Andrés (Kupperman, 1993; Parsons, 1964). The captured prisoners were sent to Spain and women and children27 were shipped on an English boat to England, while slaves were taken by the invaders. When John Humphrey from Massachusetts, the last Puritan governor sent to Providencia, arrived weeks after with a group of immigrants, he found that the Spaniards were owners of the Island and he had to return to New England (Parsons, 1964).

Between 1641 and 1670, Providencia changed hands three more times before being recovered by the English in 1666. It was restored to Spanish rule 15 months later, and finally retaken by the pirate Morgan28 as a base of operation on his way to the sacking of Panamá (Albuquerque and Stinner, 1978). Morgan reached Providencia early on December 24, 1670 with 38 ships. He landed 1,000 men at Southwest Bay and by that afternoon had taken possession of Providencia without any confrontation with the Spaniards. Morgan stayed on Providencia for a short time to gather up slaves. He also destroyed the Island’s fortifications after deciding that he could not afford to leave men to garrison the Island, and every building except the church was burned and destroyed.

After his attacks against the Spanish forces in Panamá, Morgan never returned to Providencia. After the brief stay of Morgan on the Island, there are no records indicating that anyone lived on Providencia until 1788 (Robinson, 1996).

27 The bibliographical sources are not clear on whether these included enslaved women and children or not.
28 Sir Henry Morgan (Welsh, ca. 1635 – 25 August 1688) was a privateer, buccaneer, and admiral of the Royal Navy. He made himself famous during activities in the Caribbean, primarily raiding Spanish settlements.
The Archbold Era. Providencia’s historical records start up again in 1788 when Francis Archbold, a Scottish captain of a slave ship arrived to the Island with a land grant awarded by the crown of Spain (Robinson, 1996; Wilson, 1973). A year later, Captain Archbold, his three-year-old daughter Mary and four other planters together with their slaves arrived from Jamaica to the Island (Robinson, 1996; Wilson, 1973). The land grant to Captain Archbold was part of the 1786 treaty between Spain and England. In that treaty, England agreed to take all British loyals from the coast of Central America and neighboring islands, including Providencia, and transport them to an area to be called British Honduras, now Belize. Even though Captain Archbold had lived in Jamaica, a major English colonial center, and had contributed to the slave trade controlled by England, it was presumed by historians that in accepting the land grant he had sworn loyalty to Charles III, then King of Spain, and had professed himself a Catholic. However, the true loyalties of the Captain were shown when he appealed to the British governor of Jamaica, Sir George Nugent, for protection on the basis that while the Island of Providencia was claimed by Spain, he was in reality a British subject and that he always considered himself as such (Robinson, 1996, p.7).

In 1795, Tomás O’Neill29 was appointed Governor on San Andrés. Records of that time mention that San Andrés was thriving agriculturally and was largely devoted to cotton for export; but yams, oranges, corn, coconuts, sugar cane, and tobacco were also cultivated for local use and sale (Albuquerque and Stinner, 1978). Towards the end of the eighteenth century, slavery had become the backbone of the economy on San Andrés.

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29 O’Neill was Irish by birth. He was raised by his aunt in the Canary Islands, and he had come to the New World 15 years before he was appointed governor. He ruled the islands for 10 years (Parsons, 1964).
where there were about 800 slaves and 400 whites. The conditions under which the slaves worked produced extensive slave dissatisfaction, which led to the rebellion of 1799 (Albuquerque and Stinner, 1978; Parsons, 1964). This uprising was forcefully repressed by the fortuitous arrival of a Spanish naval vessel, and, by 1808, Governor O’Neill reported to the Viceroy of Spain that things were going well on San Andrés (Albuquerque and Stinner, 1978, p.173; Parsons, 1956, p.16).

Meanwhile, on Providencia there were fewer slaves and cotton was not as economically important as timber harvesting or livestock. Providencia also served as a commercial site for tortoiseshell collection and hunting of hawksbill (Parsons, 1964). A report from 1789 mentioned that on Providencia there were only 10 residents (Parsons, 1964). Four years later, there were 32 people, including 21 slaves who grew cotton on Captain Archbold’s farm (Robinson, 1996; Albuquerque and Stinner, 1978). By 1813, Providencia’s population had grown to 300, but this included many in transit to other sites. Some of the residents arrived from San Andrés, Bluefield, and Grand Cayman. However, the best relationships were with Kingston, Jamaica from where many white families came seeking better lands and greater freedom from English colonial control (Robinson, 1996, p.8; Parsons, 1964, p.47).

Suddenly on July 4, 1818, French Corsair Louis Aury, with 800 men and a fleet of 14 vessels, arrived to Providencia and Santa Catalina. Aury converted the two islands into a military base to support the revolutionary forces of Simon Bolivar

30 Simon Bolivar was a Venezuelan military and political leader who played a leading role in the establishment of Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Panamá, and Colombia as sovereign states, independent of Spanish rule.
Within two months, Aury, reinforced by 150 British soldiers from Jamaica who were attracted by the promise of privateering profits, began to refortify the Island. A year later in 1819, George Macgregor arrived from Liverpool with 394 men to join Aury. He also recruited other men to come to Providencia from New Orleans, Kingston, Port-au-Prince, and St. Thomas\(^{31}\) (Robinson, 1996, p.9; Parsons, 1956, p.20).

We know little about how much interaction there was between Aury’s occupation forces and the white inhabitants of Providencia, but it is assumed in scholarly sources that there was very little since Aury even brought along women from other Caribbean islands to cohabit with his men. With Aury in charge, Providencia and Santa Catalina experienced a strong commercial dynamism. Although on repeated occasions Aury provided direct assistance to Bolivar, he also waited for further orders from him that never came. Three years after his arrival to the Island, he fell off his horse and died on August 30, 1821. Most of his men then left the Island to seek their fortunes elsewhere, but some of them decided to stay on the Island to pursue a more peaceful life (Robinson, 1996; Albuquerque and Stinner, 1978; Parsons, 1964). “Although there is no recorded census, it is possible to speculate that the first McKeller, Hawkins, Howard, and Newball may have been among those who chose to stay.” (Robinson, 1996, p.10)

In a public meeting on Sunday morning, June 23, 1822 on Providencia, Coronel Juan Bautista Faiquere assembled the Island’s inhabitants to swear loyalty to the

\(^{31}\) Morgan, Aury and their men are an essential part of the history and identity of the Raizal people. Although they stayed for a short time on the Island, their reputation and qualities made them deserve an important place in the memory and history of Providencia. Morgan, an excellent sailor and English man, and Aury, a Frenchman who loved horses, were the perfect “founding ancestors” for the Raizal people to embrace.
Constitution of the Independent Republic of Gran Colombia. Along with Santa Catalina, San Andrés, and Mangles (Corn Island), Providencia became the Sixth Canton of the Province of Cartagena in 1822\textsuperscript{32} (Robinson, 1996; Parsons, 1964).

The Archbold Era of slavery on Providencia was relatively calm compared to the era of the Puritans and the situation that existed on San Andrés at the same time. There is no registration or detailed information on the conditions in which the slaves lived or their relationship with the elite. But scholars claim “on Providencia relations between master and slaves seem always to have been fairly amicable, unlike San Andrés, where there was a slave revolt in 1799” (Wilson, 1973, p. 38). The environment and isolation of the Island, the diverse economic activities, the low number of slaves, and the close relationship between masters and slaves seem to evidence a peaceful era on Providencia.

**The Livingston Era.** When stories of emancipation in the British West Indies reached San Andrés, excitement in the slave population escalated (Albuquerque and Stinner, 1978). In 1834, Mrs. Mary Livingston\textsuperscript{33} sent her eldest son, Philip Beekman Livingston Jr., to Providencia to emancipate their family’s slaves and assign them a piece of land (Robinson, 1996). This fact marked the beginning of a campaign of liberation and emancipation that gave a new purpose to Livingston’s spiritual leadership (Albuquerque and Stinner, 1978). Many of the freed slaves took on the name of Livingston and settled

\textsuperscript{32} The joining of the Islands to Colombia is an issue that scholars still argue today. Some claim that the islanders voluntarily joined the Republic of Colombia and others claim that such this was not voluntary. Local leaders supporting the self-determination of the Raizal people and separation of the Archipelago from the country have demanded the presentation of the documents that evidence the voluntary joining. However, the Colombian government claims that it has been unable to find and present such documents to the Raizal people and their leaders.

\textsuperscript{33} She was Francis Archbold’s daughter who married Phillip Livingston, an American sailor presumed to be a protestant.
on their plots of lands in the Bottom House and Southwest Bay sections of the Island (Robinson, 1996; Wilson, 1973).

On San Andrés, however, another slave revolt erupted in 1841. The rebellion was controlled, but 200 slaves were executed. Anti-slavery forces were led by Livingston (also known as “Pa-fader” which means Good Father) (Albuquerque and Stinner, 1978). Finding little support for his campaign, Livingston went to the United States. While in the United States, he studied for the ministry and later was ordained a Baptist Minister. In 1847, he returned to San Andrés and established the first Baptist Church on the Island. Livingston’s campaign paved the way for a true emancipation for the freed slaves by teaching them to read, write, and the principles of arithmetic (Albuquerque and Stinner, 1978).

Livingston founded the first school on San Andrés where he began his first work. He instructed the former slaves in the tasks of navigation and seamanship and he cured them of tropical diseases (he also had training in medicine) (Francis, 2011, as cited in Ortiz Roca, 2013). After they learned how to read and write, Livingston taught the bible to the former slaves and baptized them. Despite everything done by Livingston in the Archipelago and the existence of the Law on Freedom of the Enslaved in Colombian territory since 1851, on the islands it had not yet been implemented. It was initially through the British Consul in Bogotá and two agents sent directly from San Andrés that Livingston urged the Colombian government to implement the law, fulfilling total liberation of former slaves in the Archipelago in 1853 (Ortiz Roca, 2013).
Meanwhile, on Providencia with the first effort to establish the Baptist Church came “Miss Abel” in 1855. She came from San Andrés to Providencia to teach and preach to a few believers who had been converted to the Baptist faith by Livingston. Later, Livingston himself came to the Island and presided over the organization of the East Baptist Church. Their meetinghouse, constructed in 1861, was a thatched-roofed structure located in Bailey (Robinson, 1996).

Livingston, in addition to releasing and assigning small plots of land to his family’s former slaves, launched a campaign to liberate and emancipate all the slaves on the islands of San Andrés, Providencia, and Santa Catalina. And, as if that were not enough, he advanced evangelical and educational activities that contributed to individual and social development on the islands. Although these activities were concentrated on San Andrés, where the number of former slaves was greater and where living conditions were reported to have been worse, his campaign was extended to Providencia and Santa Catalina. The educational system developed under the norms and values of the Baptist religion helped create and increase levels of human capital.

Furthermore, the Livingston Era led to the consolidation of “the Raizal people’s” heritage and key aspects of their livelihoods (strongly tied to farming) and formation of communities whose members, though very focused on the extended family group, also engaged in place-based activities designed to create good relations and collaboration among people who lived close to each other in geographically-identified “neighborhoods.”
Even though I have framed the Livingston Era as a slavery era, this era is characterized more by emancipation and human capital growth than by slavery itself. The Livingston Era is a post-slavery era where rapid changes occurred and adaptation was necessary for all islanders.

**Post Slavery and its Effects on Cooperation**

Although scholars claim that slavery has had negative effects on the islanders’ capacity to cooperate (Ratter 2001, as cited in Velásquez Calderón and Santos Martínez, 2010), I did not find enough evidence in the history of Providencia to reject or confirm this assertion. Nonetheless, existing information of the post slavery era and the accounts of life on the Island seem to suggest that cooperation would be necessary for survival during both the Archbold and Livingston Eras. In addition, the egalitarian society that history shows was encouraged between whites and blacks by the Baptist Church after the abolition of slavery provides evidence of islanders’ potential capacity to cooperate.

After the official emancipation of slaves in 1853 in the Archipelago, two social classes rapidly emerged on Providencia and Santa Catalina, the “upper class” and the “lower class.” The “upper class” (the “haves”) was characterized by three features: first, the ownership of an important amount of land (more than five acres) obtained either through inheritance or by purchase. Second, the upper class was usually of lighter complexion, with facial features that tended more to the European. These islanders were referred to as “whites,” “clear,” or “fair” with “good hair” (not afro hair) (Robinson, 1996, p.8). However, using these characteristics to determine class became pointless, given the prevalent racial intermingling that had taken place since Captain Archbold
settled on Providencia in 1788 (Robinson, 1996; Wilson, 1973). For example, this intermingling was manifested in the widespread propensity of the “higher class” male who, whether married or not, was involved sexually with women\(^{34}\) of the “lower class,” producing a rather large number of children of mixed racial heritage (Robinson, 1996; Wilson, 1973).

The third factor was “respectability,” defined as obedience to a certain standard of behavior considered more fitting and which was encouraged by the teachings of the island’s Protestant churches—Baptist and Adventist. For example, speaking proper English; attending church appropriately dressed; rejecting drunkenness, dancing, and loose behavior; insuring that the children received the best education possible; having “manners” when dealing with relatives and elders of the community; etc.

The “lower class” or “have nots” were described by Robinson (1996) as the descendants of the original slaves brought to the Island. The dark-skinned islanders who spoke English-based Creole had little or no education and, although many were active members of the Baptist Church, were not particularly concerned with upholding the accepted standards of respectability. The people who were very poor eked out a living by laboring on lands owned by the “haves,” by growing basic foods on small plots of land

\(^{34}\) Robinson (1996) and Wilson (1973) mention that some lower class women welcomed sexual relationships with the higher-class men as a way to improve their children’s possibilities (a better economic situation, education, and respectability) as well as a way of acquiring some level of status and financial stability for themselves (Robinson, 1996; Wilson, 1973). Robinson (1996) states that “Captain Archbold himself, a widower when he first settled on Providencia with his daughter Mary, soon produced three sons and three daughters with women that were probably not as purely white as his Scottish wife had been” (p. 38).
acquired after emancipation, by petty trading, by working as sailors on schooners, or by working as housekeepers in homes of the “haves.”

Between the upper and lower classes, there were islanders that did not fit in either of those two divisions. In this third division, you would have the “middle class35;” comprised of schoolteachers, government bureaucrats, small shopkeepers, preachers, and sea captains. Despite the differentiation between the “haves” and “have nots,” their close and intimate relationships along with the egalitarian society encouraged by the Baptist Church created the sense of communiness that many islanders perceived existed on the Island in the Livingston Era (Robinson, 1996; Clemente, 1994; Wilson, 1973).

Furthermore, some accounts of life on the Island seem to suggest that cooperation was necessary for survival in both the Archbold and Livingston Eras. Rosberg (2005) explains that slaves in the Caribbean were “flexible and pragmatic” and they adopted behaviors that responded to their environment. He states that:

In the old spaghetti westerns, the villain shot bullets at the feet of the hero. The hero — logically danced. The culture of people subjected to the political and economic whims of colonial history and its ensuing events has become as lithe as the dance of the cowboy. At times, the culture evoked acts of friendship and solidarity; at others, it necessitated acts of betrayal and re-alliance with formers foes. Slaves seldom cried like heroes for “liberty or death!” because you could bet the choice would fall on death. When the situation called for it, the slaves danced in tune. Yet when united rebellion was possible, they seized upon that heroic opportunity just as readily as they chose to perform acts that protected family at the cost of class or to undertake desperate acts that only protected the individual. It is

35 The literature referring to the “middle class” does not specify its racial make-up.
impossible to reduce the cultural core of the oppressed slaves to valiant notions of constancy, loyalty, or dogged stubbornness. Instead, the circumstances of history necessarily evoked a cultural centre that was brilliantly flexible and pragmatic. In modern times, the former slaves [sic] have retained the qualities of flexibility and pragmatism in order to survive (Rosberg, 2005, p. 88).

Providencia is a very small and isolated island where no more than 2,500 people lived between 1788 and 1926. Therefore, acts of friendship and solidarity (aspects of bonding social capital) within and across classes and races seem to have been essential for their survival in such an environment. Furthermore, “power” shifted from the colonial master to the Baptist Church in both the eras of slavery and post-slavery. As mentioned before, after the abolition of slavery, the Baptist Church played a central role in the creation and consolidation of the Raizal people. It encouraged the formation of an egalitarian society and it contributed to the growth of social and human capital. However, the Baptist Church also emphasized the importance of the family unit which encouraged people to focus more on collaboration within the extended family (and perhaps a few nearby families and people who shared a livelihood such as farmers). But their religious emphasis on family probably inhibited the creation of bonding social capital across broader social categories of people. It may even have sowed seeds of “distrust” of “others” which were further exacerbated under Colombianization.

Later, power shifted from the Baptist Church to the Colombian government in the era of Colombianization. Consequently, these changes in power likely contributed to changes in behaviors that might help explain the decline of social capital and cooperation on Providencia. In the following section, I will explain a little more about the
circumstances that forced islanders to give up cooperation and self-sufficiency for
dependency on the Colombian government and the Catholic Church.

**The Process of “Colombianization”**

In this section, I am going to discuss the process of acculturation or nationalization imposed by the Colombian government, better known on the Island as “Colombianization.” The process of Colombianization is an important sociohistorical movement in the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia, and Santa Catalina because of its long-lasting impact on the Raizal people. This movement not only created distrust of the Colombian government, but that distrust continues to breed reluctance to engage in projects or programs sponsored by the Colombian government today.

Between the arrival of Francis Archbold in 1788 and until the arrival of the first group of Capuchin monks and nuns in 1926 was the time when the Raizal people and their culture were consolidated. During this period, consolidation included the sociocultural characteristics of the community, the composition of settlements, the organization of productive systems, and the affirmation of a cultural universe based on English and Protestantism. Although Colombianization began around 1926, it was in the mid-1950s that the national government advanced its goals with greater force: this was through the process of nationalization\(^{36}\) in the Archipelago of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina.

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\(^{36}\) Even though national unification began with the arrival of U.S. and British Catholic priests in 1902, it was not until 1926 that the government implemented drastic measures to achieve their goals. Historians mentioned that these missionaries’ educational activities did not initially interfere with those of the Baptist and Adventist churches due to their tolerance and respect towards other religions (Guevara, 2006).
As a result, the Colombianization of the Raizal people was promoted with great force during two periods. The first, which occurred in the decade of the 1920s, involved the implementation of a policy of national unification—an ideology of the Colombian Political Constitution of 1886, which supported the elimination of the cultural and spiritual essence of the Raizal people through the prohibition of the use of English and Creole languages and of Protestantism. The second involved an economic policy—establishment of a free port in 1953—that stimulated the trade of imported goods, especially on San Andrés, at a lower price than in the rest of the country. The economic model of this policy also promoted trade and tourism, and ignored important traditional livelihood activities such as fishing and agriculture. This process of acculturation also marked the beginning of the Raizal people’s fight, initially on San Andrés and then extending to the archipelago, in defense of their society and culture that linked them to the rest of the Western and English-speaking Caribbean.

The beginning of Colombianization was in 1926 when a group of Capuchin monks and nuns arrived to the Archipelago with a main objective: “civilize the savages” (Clemente, 1993, p. 38). The Capuchin monks entered and promoted their educational agenda in a forceful manner, similar to a colonial situation where the colonizer imposes their political, economic, and cultural preferences on a subjugated population. Upon being given control of all public schools (granted by the National Government), the Capuchins adopted a program of hispanization implemented through the submission and obedience of the Raizal children (Ortiz Roca, 2013). Thanks to the financial support received from the Colombian Government, the Capuchin Order had at their disposal a
considerable increase in funds compared with the funds the government had provided to support prior public education\textsuperscript{37} in the Archipelago.

The construction of new schools generated new jobs that were only given to Catholic islanders. From this situation, the term “job Catholics” originated, referring to those islanders who, due to necessity or convenience, had to change religion (Parsons, 1964). Parents who did not have the sufficient income to pay for the private Baptist schools after this national policy began had to convert to Catholicism to be able to send their children to the Catholic public schools. During this time, Spanish was imposed as the sole language and the use of English was suppressed for education, media, and in official acts and documents. The practices of Catholic devotion were required, such as the sign of the cross and the veneration of sacred images. The memorization and recitation of Colombian national anthems and the celebration of national holidays (e.g. Independence Day and the “Batalla de Boyaca”\textsuperscript{38}) were also enforced (Clemente, 1989). The celebration of Colombian national holidays is now accepted by most people as part of traditions on the islands. Although some islanders reject these celebrations due to their historical significance\textsuperscript{39} in the process of Colombianization, others embrace them and

\textsuperscript{37} After 1871 and thanks to the efforts of Perfecto Eduardo Mamby, organized public education began on Providencia. The first school was established in Bailey and, by 1873, there were 419 students enrolled. Before the arrival of the Capuchin Order in 1926, public education lacked adequate funding, although it did have trained English-speaking teachers. It welcomed the children from Catholic, Baptist, and the Seventh-Day Adventist churches (Robinson, 1996, pp. 50-54).

\textsuperscript{38} The Battle of Boyaca (August 7, 1819) was a major military confrontation and part of the war of independence of South American territories from Spain. It ensured the success of the campaign of liberation of “Nueva Granada,” now Colombia.

\textsuperscript{39} The goal behind the celebration of Colombian national holidays on the Island was to demonstrate and encourage the assimilation of national symbols, Spanish as the official language, and the Catholic religion.
claim them as local traditions that must be preserved (Robinson, 1996; Wilson, 1973; Parsons, 1964).

The Capuchins used the schools to launch a sectarian proselytizing campaign against the Baptist Church. They taught the children that the Baptist Church was the devil, that Catholicism was the only true religion, and that without it there would be no salvation. Baptists responded with a position of resistance; they revived their own schools to preserve their faith and the English language. However, the Baptist schools were private and could not compete without financial support against the free Capuchin public schools funded by the government (Clemente, 1989). The national and local authorities that supported the Capuchins applied a policy of discrimination against Baptist students. They were excluded from scholarship programs that would allow them to study on the mainland. To receive government benefits, people were told that it was necessary to convert to Catholicism (Clemente, 1989).\(^40\)

Guevara (2007) reports that, despite this disastrous situation for preservation of the history and culture of islanders, many members of the Raizal people did not remain passive when confronted with the threats posed by the process of Colombianization. According to her, Raizal resistance originated early in the process. The first supporters of this cause were the pastors of the Baptist Churches. From 1960 on, several secular movements have emerged with the goals of defending the culture and identity of the Raizal people and to claim their rights to participate in political decisions that affect economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects of life in their Archipelago. For

\(^{40}\) The author studied at Catholic schools and through which she was able to learn about and participate in these programs.
example, in 1984, with the slogan “Justice, respect, prosperity, and self-determination” the *Sons of the Soil S.O.S* movement was founded on San Andrés. Their main objectives are to strengthen the union of the Raizal people in defense of their rights as a distinct ethnic group, their rights to live with dignity in their territories, and their right to fight for self-determination (Ortiz Roca, 2013).

Furthermore, in 1999 the *Archipelago Movement for Ethnic Natives’ Self-determination*—*AMEN-SD* was established. This movement brings together multiple local organizations that fight for the self-determination of the Raizal people. They include SAISOL (San Andrés Isla Solution), Barrack New Face, SOS (Sons of the Soil), INFAUNAS (Independent Farmers United National Association), KETNA (The Ketleena National Association), Just Cause Foundation, and the Cove Alliance. These organizations demanded reparations for damages (loss of identity, territory, and autonomy) caused by national policies, support for sustainable local development, and preservation of culture and ancestral lands (Ortiz Roca, 2013; Guevara, 2007).

Unfortunately, they were based on San Andrés and Providencia’s distance made difficult involvement in the movements on San Andrés. As a result, these activities have not had much influence on the islanders of Providencia.

A second period of Colombianization was initiated with the declaration of a free port in 1953. A boost in trade and tourism, especially on San Andrés, followed and fishing and farming were abandoned by some who sought their main source of income in the new activities. Farming and fishing were downgraded to secondary importance on all three islands as cheaper, imported agricultural produce (to meet growing demand)
competed with and displaced local production (Velásquez Calderón and Santos Martínez, 2010; Mow, 2008). At the same time, the service industry was consolidated on San Andrés, site of the free port, but the Raizal people Archipelago were not included and most did not benefit from this transformation. Who did benefit from this transformation were national and foreign merchants (specifically Jews, Syrian-Lebanese, and Palestinians), and the skilled workers in occupations ranging from construction to public service who came from the Colombian mainland. The related sale of land for businesses on both San Andrés and Providencia also affected the displaced agriculture and eroded food security and traditional knowledge of this activity (Guevara, 2006). Agriculture quickly became a supplementary subsistence activity performed individually by only a few\(^4\) on the islands.

The well-stocked stores of the free port on San Andrés have created a demand for new goods among the islanders in the Archipelago, and their limited resources do not allow them to fulfill what quickly became perceived to be “needs” (Parsons, 1964). As a result, many islanders have become dependent on governmental jobs while others, who did not adjust to the economic shift, had to look for alternative forms of employment (e.g. work on cruise lines, illegal trading, etc.) elsewhere (Panamá, Grand Cayman or the Colombian coastal cities) (Parsons, 1964). From this point on, new social sectors —such as the government bureaucracy— were created and differentiation and internal fragmentation of society were produced with the rise of intermediate social classes and with the emergence of new practices and political identities. Therefore, the declaration of

\(^4\) Unfortunately, I was unable to find information on the number of farmers on the island before and after the establishment of the free port.
the free port in 1953 not only initiated a process of ethnocide, but a phase of economic diversification and a capitalist consumer culture (Charry Joya, 2002).

This process of Colombianization is considered by some community leaders to be a barrier to citizen organization and participation on Providencia. Scholars also claim that the forced process of acculturation created Raizal distrust of the Colombian government which leads people to resist the work of NGOs whose programs are funded by the government.

However, distrust of the Raizal people also exists on the part of the Colombian government and may have influenced a policy of neglect by the government toward the needs and demands of their citizens on the islands. The emergence of the Raizal separatist movement in the 1960s on San Andrés caused the Colombian government to consider the Raizal people as a “threat” to the national integrity of the country. As a result, the Colombian government refuses to acknowledge the claims of the Raizal people or even to acknowledge them as a legitimate group. Therefore, the government continues implementing policies intended to diversify the Archipelago and to ratify Colombia’s authority over the islands. These policies include: settlement policies to encourage mainland Colombians to move and live on the islands, operation of Colombian media in the Archipelago with transmissions exclusively in Spanish, an increasing military presence to guarantee sovereignty and control, the creation of school programs and educational institutes to expand knowledge of and adoption of the Colombian culture, and so on (Guevara, 2006).
Furthermore, the Colombian government distrust of the Raizal people is evidenced in the government’s exclusion and barring of the Raizal people from high-level and important positions where they could influence the social and cultural development of the islands. For instance, Ralph Newball and many other local leaders and politicians have been persecuted for defending their right to participate in political decisions that affect economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects of Raizal people’s life in the Archipelago. Harold Bush, a Raizal, was denied participation in the defense of the maritime dispute[^42] between Colombia and Nicaragua due to his interest in explaining and defending the Raizal people’s rights at the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

These are only two examples of respected local leaders and professionals from the islands who have been denied participation or representation in important legal processes based on governmental distrust of the Raizal people as a separate social group with their own history, culture, and demands on the islands. Today, of the two political representatives in the “Camara de Representantes,”[^43] one is not Raizal. The governor of the Archipelago is not Raizal. Those Raizal that seeks to pursue Raizal politically interests are forced into self-imposed exile due to harassment.

For most Raizal people on the Archipelago, the national government has broken whatever trust it may have had with the Raizal people because of its tactics to suppress the existence and teaching of the Raizal identity, heritage, institutions, and cultural

[^42]: The International Court of Justice in The Hague (the tribunal, which is made up of judges picked by the UN Security Council), decided on November 2012 to grant Nicaragua around 60 percent of a disputed area of the Caribbean that had been previously administered by Colombia, jeopardizing the future of fishermen from the Colombian islands of San Andrés and Providencia.

[^43]: The equivalent of the US House of Representatives.
worldview (including those related to the cultural importance of farming and fishing). Furthermore, because the Raizal people are a minority population in their own territory, they lack the political clout to effect Raizal interests, including their own culture at the national and regional level.

As a result, many leaders and concerned citizens argue that until those in the national government acknowledge the failure of their policies and accept their responsibility and roles in the problems that islanders currently face, the Raizal people as a group will resist trust for the national government and and will be unable to work (independently or with government agencies) to solve their problems (which require political will and funding). Islanders will be unable to move forward.

**Social Capital on Providencia**

In this section, I discuss three components of social capital on Providencia and will illustrate examples of each on the island. In order to do so, I will draw from historical information, shared anecdotes, and local leaders’ perspectives in order to describe expressions of social trust, examples of the norms of reciprocity, and examples of networking and cultural practices that represent bonding social capital in particular, including some from the past and others that are still practiced today.

**Trust.** As mentioned in Chapter 2, social scientists have identified trust as a necessary and critical component that can be used to measure and interpret social capital (Onyx and Bullen, 2000, as cited in Bell, 2009). A widely-accepted definition of social capital begins with the “socially learned and socially confirmed expectation that people have of each other, of the organizations and institutions in which they live, and of the
natural and moral social orders that set the fundamental understanding for their lives” (Barber, 1983, as cited by Paxton, 1999, p. 98). Trust is essential for the formation and consolidation of communities44 of people because it promotes cooperation even without incentives or negative consequences (Bell, 2009, p. 635).

The discussion above indicates that there is a lack of social trust that can be attributed to Colombianization; this can explain the reluctance that islanders have to participate in programs sponsored or imposed by the Colombian government and some islanders believe that this has contributed to a more generalized lack of social trust that interferes with peoples’ willingness and ability cooperate among themselves beyond with members of the extended family and very close friends. Many islanders also express the conviction that Colombianization (which included forced use of the Spanish language, imposition of a national religion —Catholicism— and culture are still key factors that have weakened historically local values and beliefs, led to a decline in communication among islanders, and reinforced distrust among the Raizal people as a group. As a result, what once was the relatively homogeneous fabric of the Raizal people pre-Colombianization started to unravel and the significance of differences among people were intensified and became more difficult to ignore. This profoundly changed the organization and social order of the Raizal people before and after 1926. These differences include, for example, differences in income levels between farmers and public employees, differences in educational attainment across classes and religions,

44 Communities are sometimes defined by place or shared space, sometimes based on a shared interest or need, and sometimes by both.
differences in access to opportunities based on language and religion, and differences in core beliefs and values related to Raizal history.

Putnam (2000) states that, “a society that relies on generalized reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society… Honesty and trust lubricate the inevitable frictions of social life” (p. 135). Although there are many areas of inter-personal trust in the daily lives of islanders today, in general islanders do not trust those who administer economic resources of both public and nonprofit organizations. This is illustrated by day-to-day expressions of trust and behavior when people are recruited into projects that are designed to “empower” them. For instance, people on Providencia typically leave their vehicles parked on the street with the keys in the ignition, and many leave their doors unlocked and their windows open during the day.

In contrast, islanders are reluctant to trust either public officials or both external and internal NGO managers. Not only is this related to their connections with governmental authority, but it also is related to a belief that these types of organizations are sites of corruption and that those who work in them seek personal gain through their employment in public or private entities. Many government and NGO projects require payment of “administrative fees” which islanders often view with distrust. This is an important reason given for their reluctance to cooperate with these social organizations.

A local leader of a nonprofit organization explained:

The problem of nonprofit organizations on the Island is that no one wants to pay for the maintenance fees. Nobody ever pays, not even in the cooperatives where what you pay is a saving. People are very jealous of their resources. There is no confidence in the people who manage resources and people expect the managers to work free of charge.
(Conversation with a Raizal employee of an NGO founded and located on Providencia for the benefit of the Raizal, August 18, 2015)

Distrust is an important barrier that hinders long-term organizational existence and collective action on the Island. Distrust in the Colombian government’s agents and of each other among islanders makes the administration of programs, projects, and nonprofit organizations difficult. However, it also is important to understand that many islanders live day-to-day and hand-to-mouth. The cost of living on the Island is very high and job opportunities are very scarce. Therefore, people tend to hoard their limited financial resources.

Additionally, islanders investing time and economic resources in social organizations both expect and may need to receive immediate benefits for their participation (which takes away from them time they could spend in an income-generating activity plus participation generate certain expenses such as transportation). There seems to be a lack of insight in the management of NGOs and other types of social organizations, which leads to misunderstandings between island members, and leaders, which in turn creates a distrustful environment, which then hampers the life of the organization and the success of even poverty-alleviation and empowerment projects. A local sport leader also shared her experience:

Our organization started out pretty good. However, it seems like the intentions of the association were misinterpreted because once there was a budget that need to be managed, the organization came to an end. The issues among members started with

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45 All goods and services consumed on the Island are imported and, due to transportation costs, food and services are very expensive.
arguments over monetary compensation and that led to misunderstandings within the group. There was a difference of opinions regarding the management of resources (granted through public contract). Some thought the profits of the project should be equally divided among the members of the organization while others like myself thought that we should create a fund to cover unexpected expenses [eventualities] and other project requirements. (Conversation with local sport leader, July 29, 2015)

While the above situation may also result from lack of prior organizational experience on the part of members, it also serves as an example of expressions of distrust/mistrust on the Island (and in other settings).

Overall, it would seem that efforts are needed to foster areas of trust between the Colombian government and the Raizal people in order to enable people’s participation in and cooperation with the implementation of programs and projects that could benefit participants and the broader Island community. On the other hand, the acquisition of business management skills by the people may also be necessary to help participants understanding routine management. Finding mechanisms to overcome the long and deeply held resentment of the Colombian government and its destructive policies will be critical to support (1) the creation of longstanding organizations, and (2) to recover trust among islanders so that they may benefit from participation in the management of social organizations designed to help them. However, the question remains “who will take the first step?” Earlier in this thesis, I discussed the distrust of the government toward the Raizal people and practices that exclude islanders from participating in important areas of decision-making and that deny them opportunities at all levels beginning in grade school and continuing through adulthood.
Social norms of reciprocity. As indicated above, social norms of reciprocity are another essential component of social capital. Reciprocity has been explained as a “combination of short-term altruism and long-term self-interest” (Taylor, 1982, as cited in Bell, 2009, p. 636) in which a person offers a service or supports others, under the supposition that the recipients will return a “similar kindness in the future if a need arises. In communities with strong reciprocity, individuals are concerned with the well-being of others and act on those concerns” (Bell, 2009, p. 636). As mentioned before, scholars suggest that reciprocity is identified by the exchanges of gifts or favors between and among individuals (Flora and Flora, 2008; Putnam, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986).

There are many examples that I have observed or heard of regarding practices that represent examples of culturally-implicit norms of reciprocity. These examples also illustrate more general expressions of social capital in general and the context within which bonding social capital in particular is enacted and cultivated. To illustrate some examples of reciprocity and bonding, both past and present, I share some anecdotes and experiences that are part of my own experiences living and growing up on the Island; others that are the experiences of family members, friends and neighbors who shared them with me; and some drawn from the comments from published works that I consulted.

Examples of Social Capital on Providencia. Bonding social capital and norms of reciprocity among family members, neighbors, and friends is likely to have always been important on this small and isolated island. They may have come from survival needs or also from values and practices encouraged by individuals and institutions that
participated in the transition from slavery to co-existence and friendly relations among
different social groups. The Baptist Church has been critical in this process since the mid
1980s (see discussion of the Livingston Era above). The Church introduced into the local
culture egalitarian treatment of others (important as slavery was abolished and former
slaves were “integrated” into free society). It also taught social values, such as respect for
your elders, good presentation, hygiene at school and church, it introduced compulsory
education for children and youth, and emphasized working hard to earn “the daily bread.”

Historical evidence for the above is found in a letter sent by Bender Archbold to
Cordell Robinson on December 17, 1995. Bender shared memories of his childhood
including the following:

During my early days on the Island, we enjoyed a beautiful family relationship.
Transportation was by foot, horseback, or boat. We walked about three miles each day
from Town to Rocky Point and back to attend Church school... We worked hard on our
little farms, planting the food that we ate. We went fishing for fish, etc. We came from
disciplined homes. We were taught respect for one another, especially [for] the older
people. Horseracing was a special holiday event, also boat racing.46 The parents of many
were education-minded and sent their sons and daughters abroad for higher education
(Robinson, 1996, p. 43).

Even though Bender does not specify if this is an upper or lower class way of
living on the Island, I would say that this description might be generalizable. This is the
type of life islanders usually describe when remembering how life was on Providencia.
Although there were class differences, individuals considered themselves to belong to

46 Boat racing continues to be a major social event on the island.
“one people.” Solidarity and sharing with your brothers and sisters and within your extended families was a way of thinking supported by the Baptist Church, which also taught egalitarianism after the abolition of slavery. However, the Baptist Church also introduced values that have interfered with community organizing. In their work with former slaves and owners alike, they emphasized self-sufficiency and focusing on defense of family life. This is expressed through an emphasis on the extended family as an individual’s social realm. It includes contemporary practices such as adult children building their homes close to those of their parents, close relations between parents, grandparents, and small children. For farmers it often includes working on plots that are located in close proximity and helping each other.

Emphasis on the family also precedes the Baptist Church. All families on Providencia have tended to live near each other in what they now call “family yards” and this has been the practice since the arrival of Captain Archbold in 1788 (Wilson, 1976). A family yard is an inherited or purchased piece of land that parents divide among their children for the construction of their houses. These pieces of land do not have fences to divide one property from the other. Therefore, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins lives near each other in different houses, but in the same “yard.” Islanders’ family yard is a space where solidarity and norms of reciprocity are a normative part of people’s daily interactions.

There are other social arenas where islanders’ norms of reciprocity beyond family and extending to friends and neighbors are in evidence. Moreover, funerals and farming are two traditional activities where this is the case.
Funerals. Although a time of sadness for family and friends, funerals have also been moments when collaboration was important and good memories and relations were fostered through sharing. When someone dies on the Island, the members of the immediate family are in charge of organizing everything (undertaker, funeral, burial), but neighbors and friends are always around to help with the many tasks involved (“circler,” food and drinks, coffin or casket, clothing for the deceased, etc.). For example, the bereaved family selects a “circler” who, in the past, rides around the Island on horseback, drinking rum and announcing (yelling out) the death of a person and information on plans for the funeral. This is still done nowadays, but in a pickup truck.  

That evening and before the burial the next day, close friends, neighbors and extended family would (and many still do) come together at the deceased’s house to “set up” all night long, mourn, eat (e.g., soda crackers, American yellow cheese, coffee and mint tea), sing hymns, and reminiscence about the deceased (in other words, a “wake”). At the same time, in the backyard a carpenter with several other men would build the coffin out of wood while they drank “bush rum” and told stories of good moments shared with the deceased when alive. The next day, people from all around the Island would go to the burial.

My grandmother always says, “If you want people to go to your funeral, you must go to [the funerals of] others. If you can’t go, send someone in representation of the family and pay your respect.” What I find especially interesting about my grandmother’s statement is that Putnam (2000) considers funerals a great example of social reciprocity.

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47 The following is an example of what they usually yell out: “Heeyyy… Funeral, Solinis Sjogreen. Eight o’clock tomorrow morning. District and dwelling, Old Town. Burial, Bailey cemetery.”
He stated “Yogi Berra offered the most succinct definition of reciprocity: ‘If you don’t go to somebody’s funeral, they won’t come to yours’” (Putnam, 2000, p.20). Furthermore, the number of people attending a funeral shows how important, appreciated, and respected this person was in the community; so attending is also a moral support and a show of respect for the family.

**Farming.** Farming and farming-related activities are another area and setting in which reciprocity is in evidence, again originating in family relations but extending beyond the family. After the abolition of slavery, the lack of sophisticated tools (“technification”) for farming the hilly terrain of the Island and the inability of a majority of farming households to hire labor led islanders to rely almost exclusively on family members for farming. Extended and immediate family members, including those with their own farms to tend, helped each other out for specific tasks and collaborated on certain tasks for mutual benefit. However, other members of the community also were involved in certain activities related to farming. There were multiple reasons to do so—comaradarie, to party, to have access to produce or products—but regardless of intent. Regardless of intent, these activities fomented solidarity and practices of mutual help. They could serve as a contemporary basis for community organizing among farmers and extended family members—even neighbors and friends. An excellent example is the process of sugar cane grinding.

Robinson (1996) describes the annual grinding of sugar cane as “the most anticipated social event” on the Island (p. 45). This season was [and still is for those who produce sugar cane] usually between February and May and in the past it revolved
around the horse mill and a “kappa” or cauldron. To grind cane in the old times, people used to: (1) cut the cane and bring it to the mill, (2) circle the mill with the horse(s) to get the mill running, (3) introduce the cane into the mill, pull out the bagasse (or trash) and make sure the juice is running into a bucket, (4) transport the juice to the kappa or fill gallon bottles with the juice. To do all of this requires more than five men. Therefore, the help of neighbors and friends were both appreciated and indispensable.

The process today is very close to that described by Robinson. Many times, I saw members of the community helping grind cane (for people not members of their family) in exchange for a gallon of cane juice. Receiving juice was one reason for helping: people enjoyed going back home with the “licka” (juice) or consuming it on site. But some were there to participate in the process for the camaraderie and just for the fun of the grinding activity itself (though it is hard work). Therefore, sugar cane grinding is an activity that goes beyond the immediate family and it provides evidence of social capital that links the well-being of both the individual or family and the broader community (neighbors and friends). I believe that sugar cane grinding is a traditional activity with a potential to help design processes and encourage participation in activities that can encourage the recovery of social capital in other social arenas and extend practices of collaboration beyond the extended family on Providencia.

Another example comes from when I was working in the buffer zone of the Old Providence McBean Lagoon National Park. One farmer I was working with commented on his memories of how —on the Island— farmers used to get together and help each other. For instance, he said, they used to form groups that they called “Brotherhoods.”
These groups used to exchange labor to clean and prepare each of their lands for the rainy and planting seasons. This mechanism of mutual help, the Brotherhood, is also known as “minga” in some Latin American communities.⁴⁸ The Quechua (Kichwa) dictionary published by the government of Cusco in Peru, defines minga:

Minga entails a collaborative work system that dates back to the Incas. It refers to the commitment, contract, or work agreement between two or more people. The word minga also stands for meeting or reunion (Peliks, 2012).

The above examples of funerals, grinding sugar cane, and brotherhoods provide evidence of islanders’ capacity for organizing and of cultural practices based on strong social bonds (that existed and may be recoverable) on Providencia and the islanders’ traditional norms of reciprocity and solidarity. These aspects of the Raizal culture also suggest a capacity for and experiences of trust and networking. Could these past experiences and norms be re-activated to promote contemporary forms of civic engagement? Can they serve as reminders from the past of the potential of the Raizal people for recovering or building new forms of social capital and collaboration on Providencia? What about current norms of reciprocity on Providencia and examples of distortions of what sociologists have held up as models of “civic engagement” and the importance of “bonding” social capital?

Today, the evidence for norms of reciprocity is more scarce or dubious. As mentioned before, the process of Colombianization in recent decades produced a shift in power. This shift in power contributed to many legal and cultural policies that function to

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⁴⁸ Whether or not brotherhoods were inspired by nearby indigenous cultures in Central or South America is not known.
divide community members (i.e., in order to avoid acknowledging that there is such a thing as a Raizal people with a shared culture and heritage that precedes Colombianization and that they have rights to be recognized as such).

The most obvious division, discussed above, is between English-speaking Protestants and Spanish-speaking Catholics who do not have equal access to the usual benefits accorded to Colombian citizens. This legal discrimination can function as a divide-and-conquer mechanism and some islanders have had to adopt new survival behaviors that emphasize individuality and even clientelism as a means to avoid group-identified discriminatory treatment and limitations. Even though some islanders still offer their services to others and may support each other, I cannot confirm that the norms of reciprocity of the past remain intact.

When farming, fishing, and other traditional activities were downgraded in importance (with establishment of the free port and lack of political support for those activities) and when the activities were effectively individualized (regardless of collaboration of family members and neighbors), the social capital of community members and families was affected. This coincided with a decline in interest among young people in farming as an occupation. Lack of political support for technical improvements, training, and for linking produce to markets and competition from imported agricultural products also were important factors in a setting where people increasingly needed cash income.

The decline in traditional activities and the exit of young people from the Island in search of livelihood and careers outside combined with the aging of the farming and
fishing population. As a result, certain norms of reciprocity have decline and even been lost. Many members of younger generations no longer attend even close family and friends’ funerals. Farmers no longer invite people to grind sugar cane and share the juice like before. And, importantly, brotherhoods have disappeared. Even though this decline is related in part to young islanders are leaving the island to study and work in other cities, there still is evidence that most young people return at least twice a year to celebrate the local festivals in June and Christmas in December and to share with their families. Some with whom I have interacted express a desire to live on Providencia but lack of good income opportunities is the major barrier.

In spite of the fact that the Island community has experienced and valued many forms of cooperation and collaborated in social norms of reciprocity that created a positive environment on the Island, unfortunately, individualism and politics have combined to contribute to a new problem —clientelism. Clientelism combined with individualism are creating a harmful environment that hampers contemporary islanders’ willingness to cooperate and help each other today. Ironically, clientelism is common in another process that characterizes social capital —networking. This means that something that can be a positive factor in collaboration also can become a mechanism to divide members of the Raizal community.

**The problem and potential of networks.** Networks —associations or social connections, linking both individuals and groups —are considered by sociologists to be an important component of social capital (Bell, 2009; Paxton, 1999). Networks can be (1) formal, such as membership in organizations or (2) informal, such as the social ties,
kinship networks, and friends with whom people normally associate (Bell, 2009; Putnam, 2000; Paxton 1999). Moreover, “cross-cutting group memberships can work to the benefit of a society through increasing flows of information and facilitating communication” (Bell, 2009, p. 636).

**Nonprofit Organizations.** Currently, nonprofit organizations are a common and formal form of association, networking, and collaboration on the Island. Between 1996 and 2014, fifty organizations were registered with the Chamber of Commerce of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina. Fourteen are foundations, four9 twenty-four are associations,50 three are corporations,51 four are cooperatives,52 and two are pre-cooperatives.53 The most common forms of social organization are associations with 54% of representation and foundations with 28%. Out of the fifty organizations registered54 in the Chamber of Commerce since 1996, sixteen (32%) had their commercial registration up to date, twenty-seven (54%) never renewed their commercial registration, and seven (14%) renewed their commercial only once. Therefore, out of fifty, there are only sixteen nonprofit organizations functioning today on the Island. This is a clear indication of how

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49 “A foundation is a non-governmental entity that is established as a nonprofit corporation or a charitable trust, with a principal purpose of making grants to unrelated organizations, institutions, or individuals for scientific, educational, cultural, religious, or other charitable purposes.” (n.d., Knowledge Base, 2016)

50 “An association is a group of individuals who enter into an agreement, usually as volunteers, to form a body (or organization) to accomplish a purpose.” (Dictionary, 2016)

51 “A corporation is a company or group of people authorized to act as a single entity (legally as a person) and recognized as such in law.” (Wikipedia, Corporation, 2016)

52 “A cooperative (also known as co-operative, or coop) is an autonomous association of people united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled business.” (Wikipedia, Cooperative, 2016)

53 “Pre-cooperatives are groups that under the guidance and assistance of a sponsor are organized to perform activities permitted to cooperatives and which due to their lack of economic, educational, administrative, or technical abilities; they are unable to organize as or be considered a cooperative.” (n.d., Precocoperativa, 2016)

54 A company or commercial registration is a “medium of identification of a merchant and of its establishment.” (Gerencie, 2016).
distrust, lack of business management skills, and the wrong motivations to engage in formal forms of organizations are affecting the long-term creation of networks of engagement.

About 68% of the formed organizations did not succeed in their long-term objectives. This low level of success of nonprofit organizations on Providencia is usually attributed (by local leaders) to the intentions that led islanders to the creation of organizations or to the lack of knowledge of how to manage them. Raizal leaders of locally established NGOS explained that nonprofit organizations are usually created on the Island to: (1) execute projects and participate in calls for proposals, agreements, and public contracting and (2) follow the requirements of public and private entities that compel the formalization of social groups for the implementation of projects and the allocation of resources, (e.g. fishermen, farmers, religious, artisans, etc.). Local leaders mentioned that on rare occasions, nonprofit organizations are created through the islanders’ own initiative and desire to organize in order to solve common problems and needs that arise or that are getting worse (e.g. environmental degradation, lack of educational and sports activities, loss of identity and culture, recovery of economic activities, etc.). Therefore, once a project or contract is completed, the organizations that were created simply stop working. Reasons for this include, the lack of sufficient resources to maintain a project, internal problems in areas such as agreements for decision-making, lack of knowledge on nonprofit organization management, and at times, governmental favoritism which depends on financial and or political support.

55 This information comes from local leaders.
A good example for discussion is the case of four associations that were established on July 23, 2010, for the implementation of the Seaflower Keepers Program on Providencia. The Seaflower Keepers project is an initiative of the Colombian Government (it is a program against illegal crops) and the United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which provides legal alternatives to income from drugs. Those alternatives include four areas of cash production for the Island (fishing, agriculture, handicrafts, and beekeeping). Newspaper articles and conversations with project coordinators indicate that the goal is to create conditions and opportunities for employment and for sustainable development of the communities that are affected or threatened by drug trafficking because of their geographical and social conditions (El Isleño, 2010).

At the time of the arrival of the project on the Island, there was only one cooperative of farmers and fishermen (Old Providence and Santa Catalina Fishing and Farming Cooperative Enterprise). This cooperative was only engaged in fishing and not all fisherman were associated with this organization. For this reason and to comply with the requirements of the project, three farmers’ associations and a new fishermen's association were established on the Island. All the organizing and the creation of the associations were carried out by the project’s coordinators—not the farmers or fishers. Therefore, from the very beginning of the project, decision-making was more under the control of the coordinators than in the hands of the farmers or the fishermen themselves. This was the first barrier to effective networking.
Local leaders complained about the creation of a second fishing association and the three farming organizations. They argued, correctly, that the creation of new associations would divide the community because it would split resources among too many groups and would generate more work instead of benefits and positive results. For example, the three farmers associations required three administrators. Taking into account the limited management capacity of local farmers, this seemed unrealistic. There was a proposal to join efforts by creating a single, large “Providencia Island Farming Association” but it failed. In the end, people were discouraged by a project that divided the community and that locals perceived as creating more difficulties than solutions to address local farming issues.

The project described above is not alone. It follows a pattern common to projects organized by and under the control of outsiders (who are paid and control the project funds). The project is an example of the enforced, systematic, and accelerated creation of organizations that does not provide conditions to assure consolidation or the formation of a long-term vision. At the same time, local leaders would be open to better manage and more democratic projects that would benefit people project coordinators want to recruit into the project. These leaders usually complain about the lack of engagement and lack of ownership of the islanders over these organizations.

Since I have experience working with leaders and farmers, I know that local leaders and farmers have knowledge and often make good suggestions on how to make things work. They would welcome opportunities for empowerment, ownership, leadership roles, education, and new spaces that are needed for personal and group
development. Islanders tend to be creative and hard workers, but they resist environments in which they are pressured to execute projects and programs in which they had no voice, must carry out work for which they are unpaid or underpaid, and that limit their potential. Other problems include the use of formal and closed rooms for meetings and workshops (not part of local culture), the use of Spanish instead of Creole or English, and the lack of a didactic pedagogy. (All these factors limited the concentration and interests of the Raizal people, which resulted in low levels of information retention and widespread failure to implement new ideas and practices.

These examples of local organizing and their decline suggest that the design and implementation of projects need to be in the hands of the Raizal people. The members of the Raizal community tend to be “flexible and pragmatic.” The Raizal people have learned to act individually to survive, instead of joining forces to demand a change for the good of the whole community. This may be because they have been taught individualism, are judged individually, or because the type of groups they are encouraged to join do not resemble traditional political, or economic, action groups. On the other hand, expressions of interest for genuine and voluntary organizing to address shared problems indicate there may be a basis for a new form of organizing that respects the Raizal culture and places control in the hands of farmers and other community members.

Failed experiences of attempts to organize Raizal people for the purpose of “using” them to complete projects imposed by others provide us with other lessons. Following procedures and requirements do not allow room for creativity, initiative, and self-effort. People need to be involved in what they choose to do and not forced to do
what others think is needed. Yet, when having conversations with local leaders from diverse backgrounds, institutions, and interests, they all assert that islanders lack organization and collaboration. They have not understood that the conditions under which people are required to organize and collaborate do not fit their cultural norms, traditional forms of organizing, and problem solving. It is outsiders who need to adapt to local knowledge regarding problems and who understand what solutions are likely to be lasting.

Political campaigns and elections are also forms of networking and they provide many examples of bonding capital work. They also present evidence of islanders’ capacity to organize and achieve goals when the intervention of outsiders is limited. But, they also provide evidence of other problems that interfere with genuine citizen organizing to solve local problems. The key is local leaders’ capacity (or failure) to draw out the positive and enhance it, and block the negative (i.e., competition) and help the Raizal people move forward rather than be in conflict for access to resources from yet another type of patron – political candidates and elected officials.

**Political campaigns and popular elections.** Politics are always contentious and resources are both used to entice voters and to reward them. Over time and particularly in recent years, political campaigns and elections have become day-to-day concerns of most Islanders. After the victory of Janet Archbold Howard in 2007, the first woman elected mayor on Providencia, there have been changes in the way political campaigns and elections are conducted on the Island. Archbold Howard and her followers conducted an early (discouraged by campaign law) and persuasive campaign on Providencia. Their
strategies included encountering people at any time of the day and place, visiting people door-to-door. They also placed clever graffiti in key gathering places that read “Adelante Janet” (“Go Janet”), and they constantly curried favor to win over voters. Details follow below.

During the mayoral elections of 2007, Janet Archbold Howard ran against three male candidates and she won with the support of 48% of voters. Following this election, strategies for future campaigns were inspired by this strategies used during this campaign. Since then, the Raizal people seem to participate, engage, and collaborate in politics more than before. And, yes, this reality contradicts local leaders’ complaints about lack of participation and political support on the Island.

The changes in campaigns include the announcement of new candidates for the next election right after the election of a mayor (that is, the day after an election is concluded). The irony is that there can be no publicity because campaigning for the next election so early is illegal. Archbold Howard’s success now means that every future candidate thinks it is necessary to do what Archbold Howard did starting four years before her election. Other strategies include candidates greeting people more often. They go house-to-house visiting potential voters with no warning. They participate in every local event, donate food to the elderly and school supplies to the children, and they sponsor all types of sport teams with uniforms and other items that display their names. Although these simple actions are considered a form of “civic engagement,” they also create an overly politicized environment on the Island and are a constant tension between

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56 Political campaigns in Colombia are allowed to run only three months before elections. For breaching this law, you could pay up to 110 million Colombian pesos or more or less $37,000 USD.
people. They divide extended family members who support opposing candidates and they promote clientelistic practices. Some candidates even may receive financial support from organizations and individuals whose activities are not entirely legal (i.e., drug trafficking) or who are not islanders.

The official campaigns, which start three months before the elections, add even more stress to the islanders—and much more now that only two candidates are running for mayor. The competition between the two candidates has also become a competition between two segments of the community; it divides members of the Raizal community and even recently divided a good number of families. This disrupts the normal function of social capital and patterns of family and neighborly support.

On the other hand, candidates and their followers can become a “strong network of civic engagement.” (Or two strong networks of civic engagement, one for each candidate.) Almost everyone on the Island is actively involved in the campaigns. People volunteer to set up stages, clean and organize events (sectional meeting, leaders meetings, concerts, mobilizations, etc.), to cook food for hundreds of people, and to hang publicity around the Island in support of their candidate. People, houses, cars, motorcycles, and public space are covered with political advertising material (tee shirts, hats, posters, stickers, wall murals, etc.).

While these practices of both community members and the candidates may be needed for political campaigns and elections, they actually are harming the Raizal people and local democracy. What appears to be civic engagement and voluntary participation may not be that at all. Many islanders struggle day-to-day to make ends meet;
participating in political campaigns helps them do so. For instance, during campaigns, candidates are asked to pay electric bills, to cover urgent medical expenses, to buy groceries, and to purchase construction materials that supporters need to repair their houses. Other supporters may ask for a job or a contract if their candidate wins the elections; others ask for college scholarships for their children, and still others ask to be the exclusive providers of campaign-related products and services (the case of restaurants and hotels). The most successful candidates are usually those who promise more to their supporters—the ones that have a strong enough financial backing to pay these campaign expenses and/or the ones people think will be corrupt enough to pay favors once elected.

Campaigns on Providencia provide a 50/50 chance of having a job (or not if your candidate loses) for the four-year period of a mayor’s administration. So, for those who win elections, they hope to have a job and receive favors, but those who did not may wind up being persecuted by the administration and forced to look for alternative, usually low-paying work. This is not healthy for the local democracy and it is not healthy for the Raizal people. It divides the community and families.

This form of campaigning and “buying” votes border on coercion and vote buying. Votes are used to ensure or retain employment, win a contract, or to have access to other benefits through connections with a successful candidate. It requires that people “show their faces” at organized political events, “put on the t-shirt” and “hang the poster of a candidate on their houses” How much of this qualifies as civic engagement another important concept identified by political scientists and sociologists for the functioning of a democracy? And how much is merely clientelism?
Civic engagement is defined as:

Individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem, or interact with the institutions of representative democracy. Civic engagement encompasses a range of specific activities such as working in a soup kitchen, serving on a neighborhood association, writing a letter to an elected official or voting. (Delli, 2016, p. n.d)

Considering this definition and what I have described above, I would say that islanders on Providencia are politically engaged, that they have the capacity to organize to achieve goals such as winning elections, and they participate to solve common needs such as employment. Unfortunately, however, the fact that islanders may be engaging in campaigns to earn money or a future job and benefits is not genuine civic engagement. More than civic engagement to solve common issues, the participation of islanders in campaigns and elections on Providencia is typical of political clientelism. This signifies that the Raizal people may be going backward instead of forward. Once again they have a new patron who both supports and exploits them—the political candidate and elected officials. Landini (2013) states that:

In practical terms, political clientelism refers to an informal exchange relationship of a hierarchical nature, involving two subjects, a patron and a client. The patron, having greater access to resources, agrees to provide material goods and different types of assistance to the client, who, in turn, responds to this assistance by giving the patron his [sic] loyalty, political support, or vote (Landini, 2013, p.116).
Landini (2013) states that there are authors who consider clientelism a way of bridging “marginalized populations with a decision-making center.” However, clientelism is a “type of unequal relationship… that implies the dependency of one actor on the other” (p. 116). He explains:

This unequal relationship is able to sustain itself over time [only] because the actor that is in the position of dependency perceives it as being legitimate, a perception based on the existence of a group of personal agreements between patrons and clients as well as on a system grounded on the exchange of favors. (Landini, 2013, p. 116)

The result is that campaigns and elections are the new process through which islanders are attempting to adapt in order to survive.

Today, many islanders depend on political jobs and they will engage in all types of strategies and practices to win elections in order to keep their sources of income and benefits (or merely to survive). Farming, fishing and independent work with tourism are the other activities that some people engage in either on a permanent basis or when there is nothing they can achieve through the local government. Political clientelism on Providencia represents a new form for patron-client relations. It may have roots in the process of Colombianization when islanders depended on Catholic jobs and had to change their religion to get access to work and education. Now they go directly to those who will be in positions of political power. Clientelism is supported by the lack of good job opportunities, options for financial security, and the poor prospects for traditional occupations such as farming.

Although the idea is extremely contentious, some scholars, NGO staff, Colombian politicians, and even members of the Raizal community themselves believe that political
clientelism is further evidence to support that some islanders did inherit a culture of dependence that goes back to the time of slavery. To reiterate, the colonial masters were the first “patrons” on Providencia and slaves depended on them for food and survival. (This idea does not deny that atrocities took place also.) Then, with the emancipation of the slaves, the Baptist Church and their collaborators became another form of new patrons—the people on whom the former slaves had to depend for access to education, medical services, training, work, and other benefits. These “benefactors” and Protestantism also emphasized individual efforts and a focus on the family, not community organizing for mutual support. However, they also did not humiliate local people, they focused on providing training and opportunities, and their support was not intended to be long term. It was intended to support the creation of human capital for self-sufficiency and to help create a new culture for family life that would replace the destruction of families under slavery.

With the process of Colombianization, the Catholic Church and the national government became the new patrons (even though they attended only to the needs of people who joined the church and excluded those who do not). Today the local politicians play the role of patron. With change in patrons, the “clients” are forced to once again adjust their behaviors to continue to receive assistance and “favors.” And in some cases, just to survive.

Whether or not we accept the idea of a culture of dependence, a logical question is “Is it inevitable?” Most social scientists (anthropologists, sociologists, geographers) look to structural factors, not personality traits, to answer this. And, as has been shown above,
the structural characteristics of specific historical moments can explain patterns of
dependence and clientelism. There is more evidence of clientelism as a social tool to
control people than a search for patronage on the part of the Raizal people. If patterns of
clientelism can change and there are historical records regarding the changes that
Providencia and its inhabitants have experienced over time, then there is every reason to
believe that there are possibilities to introduce change into the current situation.

Conclusions

So, what are the prospects for renewing social capital on Providencia? Can the
obstacles—past and present, economic and political—be overcome? Certainly,
contemporary examples of solidarity (i.e., organizations that defend and promote the
Raizal identity, culture, and rights; anecdotal accounts of neighbors getting together to
hold dances and share food; the traditions of Brotherhods and funerals and shared
activities like sugar cane grinding) suggest possibilities. Because of this, I believe there is
some hope for the recovery of collaboration for promotion of alternative and
nonexploitive sources of income on Providencia. The claim that islanders do not
cooperate and participate in-group activities is not true; politics and the cultural practices
described above are clear examples of that. Unfortunately, politics disguises civic
engagement with clientelism, and more than benefits, it creates conflicts among the
islanders in their communities and even in their families. I believe that one path to
organizing in support of a more secure livelihood would be to focus on recovering
farming but in the future through activities with the potential to become opportunities and
through spaces and strategies for the production and exercise of social capital. Sugar cane
grinding and the family yard form of associations are elements of the Raizal culture that should be recovered in order to provide a foundation for social capital and reconstruction of farming for the Raizal people today.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Even though people on Providencia Island, Colombia, enjoy a beautiful island surrounded by a sea of seven colors, access to fresh and affordable food is a problem on the Island. In the past, Providencia’s farmers produced enough food to feed the islanders and to export surpluses to other nearby islands. But today farmers are having difficulty organizing to revive an important traditional livelihood activity and provide enough food for their small Island community.

In previous studies, authors pointed to the legacy of slavery (and an assumed “culture of dependence”) and Islanders’ mistrust towards Colombian governments as possible explanations for the contemporary lack of cooperation and organizing on the Island to recover economic activities such as farming. However, I doubted that legacies of mistrust and slavery could be the only explanations for the lack of collaboration and organizing on Providencia. And, motivated by islanders’ claims of the existence of a sense of community and cooperation in the past, and supported by social science research and theorizing on the importance of a community’s social capital as a factor influencing citizens’ abilities to cooperatively solve common problems, I set out to conduct qualitative multi-method research that would help me to answer the central questions that inspired this thesis: Why don’t people collaborate today? How can collaboration be rebuilt on Providencia?
Other researchers, including historians, have pointed to the past for answers to the first question. They blame the legacy of slavery and the process of Colombianization. After analyzing the three eras of slavery in the history of Providencia and the process of Colombianization and its outcomes (which included division of the Raizal people into two groups based on language and religion that have been given unequal opportunities), I found the history argument unconvincing. They influenced the history, culture, and opportunities of the Raizal people but alone they do not explain current problems satisfactorily. What was more helpful was my analysis of the changing opportunities and obstacles to community organizing and governance through the lens of the concepts of “social capital” and “civic engagement.” I was able to identify evidence of the existence of processes of social capital in both the past and present, and my findings suggest that islanders do not lack the ability to cooperate—they lack the incentive and the political opportunity to cooperate in support of farming as a livelihood and an important part of the Raizal culture. That is, presently and in the recent past they have confronted more barriers than opportunities and support both for organizing to solve their problems and for organizing to support farming.

Nonetheless, the Raizal people collaborated in the past and there are examples of collaboration today, including organizing to support political candidates for mayor. However, islanders are not active participants in nonprofit organizations despite efforts to recruit them because they were not involved in the decision making regarding how to best meet their needs. Nor do they participate in projects or programs that do not provide short-term benefits. Islanders are selective because of their constant necessity to make
ends meet. Therefore, they avoid engaging in networks and activities that cannot provide monetary or material compensation; their first priority is to support their families. This is, in fact, the reason that so many islanders organize to support political candidates. It is a clientelistic system that offers monetary and other rewards, especially jobs, both during campaigns and following the election of the candidate they supported. Below, I will conclude my analysis by discussing two important findings: the barriers to organizing and opportunities that support organizing. I will conclude with some ideas regarding how to support the recovery of community-based organizing on Providencia with a goal of stimulating the recovery of farming.

**Barriers to Collaboration on Providencia**

My research and analyses revealed a shift of powers and behaviors that help explain the current lack of community-based cooperation and that link it to the decline in social capital on the Island. In the eras of slavery and emancipation, the islanders lived in a society where unity and cooperation were needed for survival. Farming, fishing, and the constructions of boats and houses were basic activities that required the cooperation of family, friends, and neighbors. People relied on each other to meet their basic needs. During the process of Colombianization, the social and economic dynamics of the Island were deliberately changed. Not only were islanders split into two groups based on language (English versus Spanish) and religion (Protestant versus Catholic), but people were pressured to rely less on each other and to depend more on the national government and the Catholic Church. The Colombian government’s efforts to control the islanders has been ongoing. Its economic policy (the free port that was a part of Colombianization)
led to farming and fishing being displaced as economic priorities, forcing many people to
depend increasingly on government programs and “Catholic jobs.” The Raizal people
were divided ideologically and individualism and clientelism emerged as survival
mechanisms. Unfortunately, farmers were caught up in these changes as discussed in
Chapter 4.

Today, islanders are living an era of severe corruption and perverse politics. The
daily struggle to meet basic needs and survive on the Island is the engine that moves
islanders and politicians are taking advantage of this reality to achieve personal power.
From the outside, the Raizal people could be seen as a civicly engaged. However, the
reality is different. Islanders today rely heavily on public work or political jobs and,
unfortunately, this encourages clientelistic relationships between politicians and members
of the community. This is a situation where campaigns and political work are clientelism
disguised as civic engagement. Clientelism on the Island is severely affecting islanders’
social capital (their ability to network, levels of social trust, and adherence to norms of
reciprocity). This situation threatens the survival of the Raizal culture and traditional
activities such as food production and community activities.

When analyzing the three components of social capital in the past and present on
the Island, I identified three important barriers: the increasing importance of (1)
individualism, (2) distrust, and (3) clientelism. Individualism (or strategies to divide the
community) has been encouraged at different points in the history of Providencia,
including the era of emancipation, the process of Colombianization, and contemporary
political campaigns.
The concept of social capital, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of collective action through networks of civic engagement. Its principles and processes apply to a situation such as that on Providencia and offer mechanisms for social change. As was discussed in Chapter 2, social capital involves and depends on individual civic engagement “as a vehicle for building relationships,” and it is critical to the well-being of both the individual and the community as a whole (Hyman, 2002, p. 198). Putnam (1995) added that engagement in social relationships and networks can provide important social assets for the well-being of a community. The resolutions of dilemmas, a reduction in opportunism, the encouragement of collaboration and collective benefits are these important social assets. However, the absence of healthy community-based organizations on Providencia has placed the Raizal community in a vulnerable situation with every change of power through the election of a new mayor.

I did not find enough evidence to support the claim that slavery and a culture of dependence are to blame for the current lack of community-based organizing on Providencia, including the decline in organizing by farmers. However, there was ample evidence from the post slavery era of emancipation (the Livingston Era) to identify this as the period at which an individualistic society centered on familism rather than the broader community emerged. The efforts to support family life for former slaves resulted in the suppression of activities aimed at mutual support and solidarity. Similarly, the division of land and agricultural production empowered former slaves, but it did not consolidate or strengthen the Raizal people as a whole. Even though growth in human capital and equality were encouraged, there was no attention to the creation of effective forms of
community organization and development. Due to the proximity in which islanders lived and the influence asserted by the teachings of the Baptist church, strong family and kindship relationships were needed and were created. However, any need for strong networks of engagement within and outside the community was ignored. In other words, neither bonding nor bridging social capital were fostered. Therefore, these characteristic of the island community and culture left members and their livelihoods, especially farming, vulnerable to constant changes of power and economic policies in the Archipelago.

Another important finding of research was that during the process of Colombianization, the community was so easily divided with many convinced to change religion and culture from English-speaking and Baptist to Spanish speaking and Catholic because of the many incentives (and penalties) offered by the Colombian government to do so. Even much later on because on Providencia there were very weak networks of engagement with formal forms of organizations or community-based networks.

Today, it is not religion nor the national government that have the greatest impact of organizing and activism. It is local politicians who engage in personal exchanges with voters and offer individual benefits to obtain their votes. During campaigns and elections people do create networks of engagement to back the candidates who offer them the most benefits. People show a great capacity for organizing when they participate actively in campaigns by volunteering, donating, and assisting every event organized by their candidates. Yet, these behaviors are not evident in other forms of organization such as farmers’ associations, religious groups, parent associations, sport clubs, etc. Perhaps it is
possible to harness this energy these other activities. The key would be to find a way for people to embrace the importance of community organizing and the revival of food production on the Island.

The lack of strong and long-term forms of community organization and active civic engagement outside of campaigns is affecting the islanders’ access to needed social assets and harming the well-being of the community. Lack of organizations and networking also negatively affect the survival of farming as a livelihood and as an important aspect of Raizal culture. Although there are three farmers’ organizations registered, members are not actively engaged. This is a serious problem because, as discussed in Chapter 2, neither civic engagement nor networks can produce social capital by themselves. Engagement with others provides a forum for relationship building that enable access to social assets. Bonding and bridging social capital and networks of civic engagement are both needed to promote and work towards positive changes for farming and farm families on Providencia. Farmers can engage either formally or informally to share and find solutions to their issues, but they need a space to achieve this. Local leaders need to be creative and find spaces where farmers will feel comfortable and either create their own or join the efforts of others for the well-being of Providencia.

Both electoral politics and the relative power of individuals and organizations in positions of power (including control over money or resources) also negatively affect norms of reciprocity and trust among islanders. Even though these norms are still evident in certain aspects of the Islanders’ life —such as family and friend relationships— these components of social capital are impacted by other types of organizations on the Island.
Islanders distrust those NGOs and other entities that control economic resources, especially those linked to the Colombian government. This lack of trust extends to organizations that pressure islanders to participate in programs and projects but do not compensate the time they invest. Islanders’ resistance to added pressures on their time and labor makes their unwillingness to engage in groups and activities that do not assure benefits in the short-term seem reasonable and normal.

**Opportunities to Collaborate on Providencia**

Flora and Flora (2008) state that to build durable social capital, relationships, and communication” need to be strengthened throughout the whole community to promote community “initiative, responsibility, and adaptability.” They emphasize that relationships and communications can be strengthened by encouraging interactions among unlikely groups within and outside of the community and increased accessibility of information and knowledge among community members. Community initiative, responsibility, and adaptability are improved by “developing a shared vision, building on internal resources, looking for alternative ways to respond to constant changes, and discarding a victim mentality, which only causes the community to focus on past wrongs rather than future possibilities (Flora and Flora, 2008, p.118).

In the following sections, I focus on the internal resources or opportunities that I have identified through research and which I think will help build durable social capital on Providencia. Following, I briefly present three simple ideas that will provide (1) a methodology for communication for the community of farmers on Providencia and which could help initiate conversations to build shared visions and discard the victim mentality:
(2) an example of an activity that could help build internal resources; and (3) a project that could help respond to the constant changes in the community and especially in farming. I will end with suggestions for simple strategies that can assist in the recovery of community identity and encourage renewed interest in farming.

Even though I have been somewhat negative about finding solutions to the loss of community and the overwhelming importance taken on by a corrupt political process, I do believe there is hope and there are opportunities to recover collaboration and social capital on Providencia. A lack of engagement with the Raizal community, inefficiencies in NGOs and government offices, and incessant complaining about each other only help to keep us focused on past wrongs rather than on opportunities. Citizens and authorities should collaborate to restored trust in the Raizal community and with the national government. Both the Raizal people and the Colombian government need to work in this aspect and set aside past wrongs and distrust.

Even though trust is urgently needed between stakeholders, there are traditions and practices that existed in the culture which are worth recovering in order to strengthen social capital and collaboration on Providencia for the well-being of the community. Brotherhoods, family yards, and sugar cane grinding are activities with potential to recover or strengthen social capital and collaboration on Providencia. These were discussed in Chapter 4, so I will just highlight why I believe they could be opportunities to support the Raizal people and farming on Providencia.

**Brotherhoods.** Brotherhoods were a traditional and successful form of organization that has been lost. Even though brotherhoods seem to be related only to
farmers and are an informal form of organization focused on men’s needs, today islanders create other forms of “brotherhoods” through organizing crews to play sports, sail catboats, and raise horses and roosters, etc. Women, on the other hand, also organize and get together to prepare traditional food which they share or sell at events. They also organize to make crafts and to organize get together for family, friends, and neighbors, among other things. These forms of organization resemble the farmers’ brotherhoods, and involve mutual help and trust between members. Furthermore, these —along with brotherhoods— are examples of islanders’ capacity to engage and participate, and they deserve recognition and incorporation in processes involving Raizal people and farmers. They are sources of pride for community members and strengthen the Raizal identity. An additional important aspect here is the absence of external agents in the creation and development of these informal forms of associations. Thus, islanders show their capacity to organize and collaborate autonomously.

**Family yard.** A family yard is an extended family form of association that still exists today. Extended family members build their houses on shared land. It could be possible to recover and strengthen cultural or family activities that used to take place in family yards but have been lost in recent decades. This could help support the recovery of norms of reciprocity and trust on the Island. Examples include preparing Christmas food and drinks with extended families, neighbors and friends; preparing papaya sweets, coconut balls and other sweets and stews in the sugar cane seasons; and collaborating in painting and repairing parents’ and grandparents’ houses. All of these activities are potential opportunities to get members of the extended family and their friends and
neighbors together to collaborate, share visions of the future, and strengthen bonds of community.

On the other hand, sugar cane grinding also is an activity that involves the community. Recovering the real meaning and the form in which this activity was performed in the past could be a way to recover social networks, norms of reciprocity, and reinforce or create bridging and bounding social capital. For instance, sugar cane grinding could be developed into an economic and tourist activity. Due to the high price of imported sugar, islanders used to cultivate cane and produce syrups to preserves fruits, sweeten drinks and pastry, and the island traditional “bush rum.” However, due to the low prices of imported sugar today, this activity has been discourage or downgraded. Just like the way people in the United States visit the Amish Country to see the way they live, sugar cane grinding has several features that could be offered as a tourist attraction on the Island. Examples of features to recover are: the old mill model with horses; the syrup boiling; the Anancy story telling; the traditional rum distillation; the elaboration of cakes, stews, sweet, breads and other pastry are a few elements of sugar cane grinding that could be shared with tourist and residents to preserve tradition, create new sources of income and restore networks of civic engagement and norms of reciprocity.

**Suggestions for Encouraging the Recovery of Collaboration on Providencia**

I insist on the importance of collaboration and organizing because it worked on the Islands in the past and because it has been demonstrated that if strong networks of civic engagement are created, the islanders could take control of their society. But, how can this help farmers recover farming? If farmers joined collaborative community efforts
or they organized in farmer organizations, they would have access to loans, could collaborate to build irrigation systems and to prepare their soils before the rainy seasons. Some could choose to join their lands and farm together to produce more food for Providencia. Land, workforce, and financial capital are needed to farm. Unfortunately, individual farmers on the Island do not have access to all of these assets. By joining forces, financial entities could finance projects presented by an association of farmers, or labor expenses could be reduced by working in brotherhoods.

It is time for the people to take back control and invest in their social capital for the well-being of the community and their own benefit. If farmers focus on creating strong networks of civic engagement, strengthen their individual, and group social capital, the resulting organizations could contribute to overcoming some farming issues, implement community-focused projects and programs more effectively, and produce food for Providencia and for the well-being for their families. Farmers’ needs, the Island community’s needs, and the prospect of generating incomes should be enough motivation to change behaviors and recover farming as an important economic activity on Providencia.

However, power also needs to be shifted to the people. Once farmers are empowered, their behaviors could also change to benefit both the individual and the community. But, how farmers can be empowered? And how can future generations be encouraged to love farming and to see it as a livelihood option that will allow them to remain on the island with their families. There are three suggestions that I would like to
share here: (1) Paulo Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed, (2) a farming day celebration, and (3) a farming program in local schools.

**Paulo Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed.** Pedagogy of the Oppressed is an approach developed in Latin America by Paulo Freire, a priest and educator. This approach emphasizes dialogue as a way to help people become aware of their reality and discover how to deal with it. Freire’s model inserts community organizing into an educational model, affirming that the purpose of education is to form an ethic of democracy through literacy (where people are illiterate) and the development of critical consciousness (Lundquist, Tulpule, Vang, and Pi, 2012). He was convinced that the oppressed were capable of looking critically at their world through a dialogical encounter with others (with help of a facilitator) and that, provided with the proper tools for such an encounter, they could gradually perceive their personal and social reality and would be able to imagine alternatives. For example, when an illiterate peasant participates in this type of educational experience, he or she comes to a new awareness of self and a sense of dignity (Freire, 1999). In other words, consciousness and freedom cannot be taught. They must be done *with* the people, not *for* the people. Therefore, “facilitators” are only needed to offer ideas through “dialogue” and to stimulate discussion. Decision-making must be in people’s hands and they must develop the capacity to learn and change their reality (Freire, 1999). This approach definitely could change the form of interaction between members of the community and the government and NGO actors who attempt to “give” them handouts or try to convince them to provide labor for projects that they were not involved in designing to meet their own needs.
Spaces for discussion and organizing are needed that would be free participants from possible persecution from local, regional or the national government. Farmers need to mingle, to learn what is happening on the Island and how it will affect them, share experiences and problems, and find solutions collectively without the intervention of outsiders (who may manipulate them and their decisions). Facilitators may be involved, but people should be in charge, have control over their space, over the language in which they prefer to communicate, and how they choose to handle issues. As mentioned by Flora and Flora (2008), communication and relationships are needed to strengthen social capital and I think Freire’s methodology could help with this.

**Farmers’ day celebrations.** My grandfather once told me that on the Island, the mayor’s office used to organize and celebrate farmers’ day once a year. On this day, farmers had the opportunity to sell their products, to exchange knowledge and practices, and to exhibit their best animals and produce (similar to the county fairs in the United States). However, this activity was not exclusive to farmers. The whole community of individuals and families used to participate and share the day with each other, creating and strengthening relations. Today, this activity could serve to create both bonding and bridging social capital, share information, involve the community in different activities, and disseminate information on the importance of farming for the well-being of the community and for income. Celebrating farmers would be a way of showing appreciation and a space for community members to come together as “one people.”

**Farming programs in local schools.** Local schools are important spaces for dissemination of information and practices. Most islanders are involved in important
aspects of community life from the very beginning of their lives. However, this has declined in recent decades. Establishing a school garden and teaching about farming would not only benefit children/students. The farmers themselves could teach techniques and share stories about the history of farming and farm life on Providencia. Parents, school directors, and teachers would also be involved and benefited from farming activities at school. (Anecdotal evidence from diverse settings shows that parents often learn about new vegetables to cultivate and new techniques for cultivation through their visits to their children’s school gardens.) However, farming activities at school do not have to be limited to planting vegetables. Instead, activities can range from talks, fieldtrips to farms, planting trees, etc. To learn about farming, people do not have to farm. They can engage in other activities that can provide alternative information and experiences. For example, they can participate in farmers’ markets.

These examples of potential sources of encouragement and empowerment, celebrations, and community involvement are widespread in Latin America and the Caribbean and even in many rural schools in the US. They are most successful when people are empowered and have the autonomy to take decisions and transform processes on their own with minimal intervention by others. Examples include Don José Elías Sánchez and his “Granja Loma Linda” in Honduras, Hugo Aceros and his “Centro de Alfabetización Temática” in Cartagena, Colombia, and many other examples that Albert


**Concluding Comments**

I strongly believe that farming on Providencia needs to be revolutionized and can be recovered. But to recover farming and to create changes that will support its importance and survival, we need to renew and empower farmers and their communities. Social capital needs to be strengthened. Farmers need the opportunity to understand that they can make changes without having to turn to clientelism. They need to understand that it is possible to join forces and gain power to change policies or to solve their community issues. The forces that have beaten down their initiative and enticed them into relations of dependency and clientelism can be overturned. Civic engagement and social capital will generate more sustainable benefits to the farmers community and under the control of farmers. But to reach this point, concientization may be needed to help people understand the forces that have kept them dependent — their historical context, the political and economic systems, lack of technical training to improve farming, and information on how they can create changes by assuming leadership in interactions with NGOs, government agents, and others who may want to take charge. Knowing is not enough, action is also needed. Therefore, local leaders need to be encouraged and given information on how to help with the creation of spaces of engagement and concientization where people can understand their reality, identify problems, possible solutions and take actions for a change.
I firmly believe that collaboration can be reclaimed on Providencia for the well-being of the community if we focus on what is important for the community, create a collective long-term vision of the community, and constantly look for alternatives to address the rapid changes that our society is experimenting. Local leaders, institutions, the young people, and the community in general are needed for this endeavor.
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