

ABSTRACT

MAJEKODUNMI, AJIMADEKE. Examining the Role of Rural Community Libraries: Social Connectedness and Adult Learning. (Under the direction of Dr. Julia Storberg-Walker.)

This multi-site case study examined the role of two rural community libraries in the education of adults and in promoting social connectedness. This study also examined the role of the rural librarian as a community leader. The findings suggested that the two libraries were more than repositories of information but gave access to resources that facilitated their patrons and their communities' growth and development; and gave both patrons and library workers a sense of identity and belonging. This key finding of the study suggests that rural libraries may be an engine for building important social capital in rural communities. The social capital is likely to be generated by the library staff and programs; the study suggested that rural librarians may be community leaders, facilitators, resources, and educators—in addition to their typical role of librarian.

The rate of change in rural America has significant negative implications for the development of rural community social capital. Rural America has been undergoing a gradual but steady change (Jean 2006), and with the rural rebound and the back to rural migrations, rural communities are becoming more heterogeneous. This type of change—population growth, increased diversity, and development—has typically challenged the development of social cohesion and a sense of community. Social capital, the important glue that holds people together, is threatened. In addition, the economic conditions of the country have created a challenge for public services, educational institutions, and social service agencies. Typically, rural communities receive less attention and resources than their bustling counterparts (USDA, 2010). To understand part of these challenges to rural communities,

this study sought to focus on one resource—the community library—to examine how the library facilitated adult learning and social connectedness. Using the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy, with an emphasis on Freire (1970, 1985) this study examined the role of the community library in two southeastern rural communities.

The findings highlight the need for continued resource allocations to rural libraries, and justify the investment in terms of increased social capital, social connectedness, and community vitality. Further, the study raises important questions about the differences between urban and rural libraries. Future studies can examine specific differences as one way to understand the connections between library, social connectedness, and social capital. Finally, there are implications for library science curriculum and practice, as well as the discipline of adult education.

Examining the Role of Rural Community Libraries:
Social Connectedness and Adult Learning

by
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DEDICATION

I am dedicated, and therefore this study also is dedicated:

To God Almighty, my creator, my father

To Lord Jesus, my redeemer, my friend

To the Holy Spirit, my helper, my enabler.

BIOGRAPHY

Ajimadeke Majekodunmi was born in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, into the family of a travelling Ports Authority government employee and so grew up speaking several Nigerian dialects, the pidgin English – the local patois used by all, and the Queens English which was the formal language for schools and government. This background informs her flair for languages and love of travel and adventure. Deke is married to Olufemi and they are proud parents and grandparents of several children and grandchildren.

Deke got her first degree, Bachelor of Arts in English, from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria; then Masters in Communication Arts (MCA) from the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria; and Masters in Library Science (MLS) from North Carolina Central University, Durham, North Carolina.

Deke's years of work and experience in the fields of education and information have fueled her interests and passion for creating opportunities for learning and education for the underprivileged. This had inspired her conception and the establishment of a community library, an NGO, in her home town before her immigration to the US, and induced further training in the fields of library science and adult education.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Background and Statement of the Problem.....	1
Statement of Purpose.....	5
Research Questions	6
Conceptual Framework	6
Significance of the Study.....	7
Definitions and Linkages.....	9
Rural communities; rural realities	9
Community libraries.....	11
Social capital	12
Adult education	13
Critical pedagogy	14
Community development.....	14
Scope of the Study	15
Subjectivity Statement.....	15
Summary.....	17
Chapter Two: Literature Review	18
Rural Communities and the Realities of Rural Life.....	20
Perceptions of rural communities.....	22
Back-to-rural migrations and the rural rebound.....	26
Adult Education, Life-long Learning and the Library	27
What is both wide and narrow? Dimensions of learning in adult education	29
From pedagogy to andragogy.....	30
Adult learning principles	31
The context: Who participates in adult education?	32
The context: What motivates adults to learn?	33

The context: How do adults learn?.....	35
Role of the public library in adult education	39
Learning in community.....	40
Avenues of learning.....	42
Individual inquiry: Self development through self-directed learning	42
Organized educational programs.....	43
Formal social networks and informal group dynamics.....	44
History of Public Libraries	45
Beginnings of the public library in the U. S.	48
Public libraries.....	49
The mission of the American public library	51
The changing role of public libraries	56
Present challenges: Future prospects.....	59
Organ of social democracy	60
The digital divide: Computer literacy.....	62
Information literacy	62
Space and place	63
A place @ the library.....	63
Sustaining the public sphere.....	64
Rural Libraries, Social Capital and Community Development.....	65
Building social capital for community development	68
The context.....	69
Social capital, social change	70
Definitions of social capital	70
Difference from other forms of capital.....	74
Dimensions of social capital	75
Summary.....	81
Chapter Three: Methodology.....	82
Design of the Study.....	83
Case Study Design	85
Sample Selection.....	87
Site selection	88
Participant selection	90
Data Collection	93
Interviews.....	93
Field observations	95

Document review	95
Artifact review	96
Data Analysis.....	98
Trustworthiness.....	100
Data credibility and researcher bias	101
Subjectivity statement	102
Limitations.....	104
Summary.....	105
Chapter Four: Findings.....	106
Context of the Study.....	107
Michael T. Booker Library	107
Harriet Tubman Library.....	110
Similarities and dissimilarities	112
Participants in the Study.....	113
Overview of participants.....	114
Participant profiles.....	116
Findings	120
How do rural community libraries impact adult learners?	122
Affording access to information.....	122
Providing resources for self development.....	123
Fostering career and professional development opportunities.....	128
Providing engagement opportunities.....	131
Direct interaction with others.....	132
Volunteer opportunities	134
Granting access to sacred space	136
Personal quiet space.....	137
Collective group gatherings	138
How do rural community libraries work in collaboration with community agencies and institutions?	140
Functioning as multipurpose facilities.....	140
Training site	141
Government repository	143
Venue for mediation	144
Supporting organized special events	145
Artistic exhibitions	146
Organizing community outreaches.....	148

Outreach to senior centers.....	148
Outreach to schools	149
Outreach to homebound.....	149
How does the rural librarian enact the roles of an adult educator and community leader?.....	150
Nurturing an environment for learning.....	151
Facilitating learning efficacy.....	152
Personal service orientation	154
Need based resource collection	156
Building bridges of inclusion.....	159
Promoting community awareness.....	160
Creating a sense of belonging	165
Generating social capital.....	171
Emerging theme: Rural community development	174
Changing the landscape of rurality.....	174
Back to rural migrations	179
Factoring in the library	182
Summary.....	184
Chapter Five: Conclusions, Discussion, Implications.....	187
Conclusions and Discussion	189
Community libraries are a lifeline for rural communities	190
Libraries enhance overall growth and development of rural communities	196
Sense of identity and belonging	200
Rural librarian both an educator and a community leader.....	203
Implications and Concluding Statement.....	209
Implications and recommendations.....	210
Implications for theory	211
Implications for practice	214
Recommendations for future research.....	218
Concluding statement	222
References	226
Appendices	266
Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire - Information Guide on Library Users	267
Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview- Librarian.....	268
Appendix C: Semi-structured Interview – Library Patron	270
Appendix D: IRB Application	272

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form.....278

Appendix F: Participant Observation Guide for Research.....280

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Libraries Selection Criteria 89

Table 2. Summary of Documents and Artifacts Reviewed..... 97

Table 3. Demographic Information on Participants in Michael T. Booker Library. 115

Table 4. Demographic Information on Participants in Harriet Tubman Library..... 115

Table 5. Summary of Findings. 121

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Conceptual Overview of Literature.....	19
Figure 2. The Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) Model of Building and Using Social Capital.....	73
Figure 3. Illustration of Aspects of Study.	84

Chapter One: Introduction

It is not about cultural sustainability of libraries but the role of libraries in sustaining cultural vitality, which is about providing a sense of belonging, shared meaning, recognition of identity, respect for society, creativity and education. It is about ways of seeing, thinking, creating, learning and relating to each other. Libraries are uniquely placed to contribute to this development as a location where people can come together in a “third place” after home, school or work (Amberg, 2010, p. 28).

Background and Statement of the Problem

Rural America has been undergoing a gradual but steady change. According to Jean (2006), “contrary to what was expected by some sociological theorists, rurality is not disappearing in modern society”, rather “something ‘new’ is happening, ... something that warrants the attention of social scientists” (p. 68). With the increase in manufacturing and industrial growth in rural regions there has been an expansion of employment opportunities and the consequent influx of migrant populations (Henderson & Akers, 2010; Rosser-Hogben, 2004; U. S. Dept. of Agric., 2006). Immigration is a complex social issue and dealing with it has become one of the greatest civil challenges of this decade (Quesada, 2007). This population consists predominantly of racial and ethnic immigrants that find it easier to get jobs in the rural areas, and more recently retirees seeking respite from exorbitant property taxes, and city commuters who find housing costs to be cheaper and more amenable to their earnings ((Brown & Glasgow, 2008; Johnson & Fuguitt, 2000). Rural communities therefore are becoming more and more heterogeneous, with a diversification that includes differences in occupation, age, education, race, ethnicity and ability (Lindsey, Shields, &

Stajduhar, 1999; McCook, 2004; Oldenburg, 2001; Rosser-Hogben, 2004; U. S. Dept. of Agric., 2006). This change has created a challenge for public services, educational institutions, social service agencies, and small businesses; and has further been compounded by the fiscal policies that make rural communities receive less attention and resources than their bustling counterparts (USDA, 2010). This situation does not augur well for social interactions that may build social capital with potential to enhance the development of the communities.

With the changes in rural landscape and demography, there has been a new surge of interest and a spate of research studies in rural settings. There have been studies on adult education in the rural context (Ritchey, 2008); self-directed learning among older adults in the rural areas (Roberson & Merriam, 2005); about adult literacy learners and the struggle for power (Ozanne, Adkins, & Sandlin, 2005; Rachal, 2000; Zeigler & Davis, 2008); rural library services to minorities, tribes and immigrants (Burke, 2007; Dunn, 2004; Snyder, 2004); information needs in rural America (Page & Hill, 2008; Sanchuk, 2004; Vavrek, 1989); and also as providers of lifelong learning and meeting the developmental needs of adults (Prentice, 2004; Vavrek, 1995a). However there is a dearth of research on how rural libraries may have impacted the lives of patrons in rural communities. Bernard Vavrek a veteran researcher and prolific writer whose research on rural libraries spanned three decades, concluded one of his papers (Vavrek, 1995b) with the challenge that there is still a need to measure the impact of the community library on the people, and also to assess the role of the rural librarian as a community leader. Zeigler and Davis (2008) discuss partnerships and relationships as keys to effective community development but do not

recognize libraries as potential collaborators, as providing the structure necessary to harness the social cohesion that is required for development. There have been many studies that acknowledge the role of the library in fulfilling the information needs of adults (Mott, 2008; Ozanne, Adkins, & Sandlin, 2005; Rachal, 2000; Sanchuk, 2004; Vavrek, 1989), and some that refer to the library as the place for lifelong learning (Galbraith, 1992, 1995; Mott, 2008), nonformal education, (Galbraith, 1992, 1995; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007; Mott, 2008); and more recently, a paper that examines the sustainability of rural libraries, (Amberg, 2010); and another study report on the role of the rural library in community economic sustainability (Hancks, 2011); but there is still a need to appraise the impact of the rural library on the learning and education of the people, and how this might consequently affect their lives and the community.

In recent years there has been a call to public librarians to step beyond library buildings to reach out to the communities they serve and to become a part of them; not only as information retrievers or readers' advisories, but also as collaborators in community development (Kranick, 2001; McCook, 2000a, 2000b). McCook believes that librarians can make substantial contributions towards the development of effective collaborative partnerships amongst stakeholders in rural communities (Kranick, 2001; McCook, 2000a, 2000b).

Libraries have played a significant role in the history of education in the U. S. (Gates, 1990; Harris, 1973). In fact, libraries have been described as gateways to the world (Brown, 1998). Information is recognized and acknowledged as the most strategic resource in contemporary society, and this recognition has spurred the quest for universal access to

national and global information infrastructures (Borgman, 2000). As defined by the U. S. National Research Council (1994), an information infrastructure is:

A framework in which communications networks support higher-level services for human communication and access to information. Such an infrastructure has an architectural aspect — a structure and design — that is manifested in standard interfaces and in standard objects (voice, video, files, email, and so on) transmitted over the interfaces. (U.S.NRC, 1994, p. 22)

With the advent of information technology and globalization, there is a widening gap along socio-economic lines, and libraries may be the bridge to span the gap (Amberg, 2010; Levinson, 1995; Winner, 1991); especially as there are over 16,600 public libraries in communities all over the U. S. (American Library Association [ALA], 2010). Most rural communities do not have enough of a tax base to provide comprehensive access to the various facilities and opportunities that are available in urban areas for self improvement and adult education (Amberg, 2010; Clark, 2007). More advantaged adults in society have more resources and greater access, through personal computers, and are situated at the locations and vantage positions, socially and economically to be able to participate in higher education through institutions.

There is, therefore, a need to prioritize rural libraries as a resource for educational development and economic sustainability. The basis of the founding of libraries was to assist in finding, using and interpreting information that open up opportunities for learning, literacy enhancement, entertainment, individual research, critical thinking and ultimately economic empowerment in an increasingly complex world (Adams et al, 2002). The concern however,

is whether libraries in their modern state, and especially in rural communities, are still able to provide services that meet the needs of adults in their communities.

There also has been a question of the differences that exist between the rural north and the rural south in the integration of minorities, and the challenges posed in the development of the rural communities in the south (Gibbs, 2001; Sanchuk, 2004). The focus of this study is therefore to study the impact of the community library in the rural communities in the south through a case study.

This study will not take upon itself to fill this gap, but it is designed to increase the awareness of the need for further research and overall visibility of the potential of rural libraries as a site of informal and formal adult learning and community capacity building.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to appraise the role of the community library in the education of adults in rural communities. The study examined how the community libraries were used by adults, and what services were provided to enhance self improvement and community development. It is hoped that this study will make a contribution towards whatever gaps may exist currently in the research on rural libraries that encompass the fields of adult education and library research. The literature is currently visibly lacking in current research that is focused on rural libraries and their role in the education of adults, and consequently on the contribution to rural community sustainability. It is also hoped that the study will engender some new interest in this area, vis-à-vis the back to rural migrations explosion that is currently being experienced, and thus create additional gaps, therefore opening up a focus for further research.

Research Questions

The thoughts that undergirded this study were how community libraries enhanced awareness and influenced community development in rural areas, and what roles libraries and librarians played in effecting a change in the rural community. The research therefore looked at the questions from the perspective of library patrons and librarians only. The questions that guided this study included:

1. What, if any, are the impacts of the community library on adult learners in a rural community?
2. How do rural libraries work in collaboration with community agencies and institutions?
3. How does the rural librarian perceive and enact the roles of adult educator and community leader?

Conceptual Framework

The focus of this study was in examining the potential of the community library in the education of adults in rural communities, and the subsequent potential of enhancing community development and social equity. The theoretical framework for this study is therefore embedded in critical pedagogy with an emphasis on the work of Freire.

Critical pedagogy, which Freire (1970) termed “problem-posing education” is also described as social change education. Learning, as a result of its liberating influence, leads to critical consciousness or conscientization which then becomes a catalyst that prompts social and political change (Brookfield, 1995, 2005; Freire, 1970, 1973; Giroux, 2004; Lather, 1998; McLaren, 1989). Freire (1970, 1985) contends that learning is liberating, and that

personal empowerment and social transformation are inseparable processes (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Knowledge increases usefulness and productivity, and an increase in knowledge increases the individual's capacity for social associations and ultimately community awareness and development. It is believed that through knowledge there can be conscientization, consciousness raising (Freire, 1970, 2000; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007; Wiessner, 2001), and empowerment. While Mezirow (1995), focuses on personal transformation to bring about social emancipation, Freire (1970, 2000) believes that the process of social transformation and personal empowerment are inseparable, social action is inherent in critical reflection and emancipation. According to Freire (1998), there is a need for contextualizing and developing our approaches in response to the needs of different learners; and Brookfield declares that "a refusal by theorists to dirty their hands with the specifics of practice is epistemologically untenable" (2005, p.10).

I have chosen this perspective for this research because of its inherent capacity of not separating the researcher from the focus of study—therefore I am able to become a part of my research without losing the validity (Horkheimer, 1995). Horkheimer posits that a crucial difference between critical theory and other traditional theories is that it breaks down the separation of researcher and the object of research; critical pedagogy is often linked with critical theory.

Significance of the Study

Librarians have been described as gatekeepers. If librarians are gatekeepers, then libraries must be the gates to the world (Brown 1998). Where there are no libraries the gates are shut, the people are allowed a limited and narrow perspective, and are deprived of the

resources and opportunities that abound to other people in the urban areas. Community libraries are a necessity in any community. They have been known to be local repositories of history, literature, and arts, and can be the community focal point for meetings, for child development, for group readings and literary outings, and for picking up the odd information and leisure readings. The library is a resource for a global awareness and development, through which the people were presented with different perspectives from which to make their choices (Amadi, 1981; Banjo, 1990). Community libraries may be avenues to building successful models of innovative and transformative services that will help close the information gap between urban and rural populations (Carnegie, 2003; Whitson & Amstutz, 1997). They could also play a crucial role in the structure and form of social relationships towards increasing social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Balatti & Falk, 2002; Coleman, 1990; Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; Naphapiet, & Ghosal, 1998; Paxton, 2002; Putman, 1995).

With the advent of information technology, the Internet, global access and personal PCs, the role of the library as an all round educational resource is being downplayed, and libraries and librarians are identified more as information experts rather than the traditional role of information and learning resource places and persons (Eisenstadter, 1997). There have been dire predictions about the future of the library, one for example claims that “the library as an institution housing a physical collection” may become obsolete (Lancaster, 1985, p. 554). Before this happens however, conventional wisdom dictates that librarianship must be practiced very diligently in different types of libraries, especially as rural, suburban, and urban library operations are very different from one another (Oder, 2004).

This study is significant in the attempt to appraise library services in rural communities, in view of the digital divide, and to help develop tools that may effectively tell the story. There have been calls for more research on adult education in rural areas (Ritchey, 2008) and particularly for more specific and comprehensive connections to rural community frameworks (Bracken, 2008). Also Vavrek, (1995) declared that there is still a need to measure the impact of the community library on the people and also to assess the role of the rural librarian as a community leader. Whether libraries are still able to continue to play their role in the community as educational resource centers in communities far removed from the technological advancements is a challenge for library and education research, and the focus of this study. There is at least one community library in every community, and those libraries may play a prominent role in the education of adults in those communities (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner 2007).

Definitions and Linkages

Rural communities; rural realities. The community has been described variously as a group of people with a common sense of identity and purpose, which could be a family, a trade or a profession (Pratt, 1998); or the first social grouping outside the family, to which each individual is exposed (Konig, 1968). And again, community is where people interact with others to find mutual support, collective experience, and above all, self definition (Mead, 1934). In adult education literature, Wenger (1998) refers to communities of practice as sites of adult learning, organized around the principles of shared ongoing activities, structures, and relationships within a group of people.

It is easy enough to define community, but what is a rural community? The word 'rural' is not so easily definable. There are three differing definitions in use for rural communities: the official U. S. Bureau of census definition used by policy makers, the descriptive terms used by qualitative researchers, and those derived from the perspectives of rural dwellers. The U. S. Bureau of census currently does not have a specific definition for rural, but defines the urban population as all territory with a condensed population of 50,000, and urban clusters with population of at least 2,500 (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1983), then designates all other areas outside of these as rural. Qualitative researchers and sociologists used descriptive terms that define rural from demographic and socio-economic contexts. Such terms included measures like agriculture, mining, manufacturing, poverty, growth of retirement population, cultural values, religion, income, number of persons per household, and ecological factors (Cordes, 1987; Croft, 1984; 1985; Deavers & David, 1985; Horn, 1985; Miller & Luloff, 1981; Rosser-Hogben, 2004; Whitaker, 1982). People who live in rural areas know they are rural, but their perception does not satisfy the needs of demographers, policymakers, or educational researchers. From whichever perspective however, the uneven social and economic development of rural communities show that diverse configurations of geography, economy, population, and history must be taken into account (Falk, Schulman & Tickamyer, 2003).

Further discussions on different perspectives of rurality and what it means to be rural will be discussed in the literature review. But for the purposes of this preliminary introduction, from an understanding garnered from the several and diverse definitions of rural communities and available literature, in simple terms, a rural community is that which

is populated by a heterogeneous people in small clusters of 2,500 people. It could be very far, or as little as half an hour journey from the nearest urban city, but sometimes with no direct interaction, communication, or viable and easily accessible links to the urban center.

Community libraries. The term community library may be interchangeably used with public library, because it is just a public library tailored to the specific needs of the community it serves. It was described as an organ of social democracy and an instrument of personal self-realization (Gates, 1990; McCook, 2004). The community library was characterized from its inception, by its commitment to the goals of promoting an enlightened citizenry; providing the opportunity, materials, encouragement, and stimulation for continuing self-education; and serving the community inside and outside the library walls (Gates, 1990).

There is however no typical public library in the U. S. and no general characterization except in the provision of free and easy access to all patrons who come through its portals. This service is made possible through tax support and sometimes public generosity. There are great urban libraries like in New York and Chicago that serve millions of people from dozens of branches, and there are rural libraries which only stay open a few hours a week based on volunteer availability (McCook, 2004).

In reiteration of the first definition, an effective public library program develops from an understanding of the community it serves: the educational and cultural level of the people; their occupational, vocational, and recreational interests; the governmental organization; the economic social, and geographical characteristics of the area involved; and the nature and

number of educational, social, and cultural institutions supported by the community (Gates, 1990; McCook, 2004).

Social capital. The origins of the term social capital have been traced back to Hanifan (1916). The concept has been the subject of great debate but no single definition has won consensus (Balatti & Falk, 2002). It was made popular by Robert Putnam's writings in Italy and the U. S. (Hooghie & Stolle, 2003). Putnam defined social capital as "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (1995, p.67). It was also viewed as a good or asset owned by an individual or group and which is beneficial to members of the group (Leana & Van Buren, 1999; Portes, 1998). As rightly diagnosed by Balatti and Falk (2002), differences in definitions, characteristics, and outcomes are due in part to the contextual factors and the analytic purview adopted by the factions of researchers. While these researchers debate questions as to whether social capital can only be positive (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000), or have negative impacts (Leana & Van Buren, 1999; Portes, 1988); include bonding or bridging ties (Gittel & Vidal, 1998); or whether this capital can be measured or not, these issues and debates are outside the scope of this study.

The model developed by Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) helps accentuate the different components that make up the paradigm for this section of the study. The model identifies the components as the interaction between participants, the available resources, and the desired outcome of the interaction. The available resources are in two parts: a) knowledge resources which consist of knowledge of community networks, skills, procedures and rules, communication media, and value or attitudinal attributes of the community; and b) identity

resources – cognitive and affective attributes, which include self confidence, norms, values and attitudes, vision, trust and commitment to community. These resources represent individual goodwill and collective goods which when brought together in interaction generate social capital for the benefit of members and the community. This understanding of social capital best serves the purpose and intent of the study and forms the basis for the discussion of the library as a purveyor of social capital. This will be discussed more fully later in the review of related literature.

Adult education. Adult education is considered a lifelong process, because people continue to learn as they go through various stages of life. It has been defined as a ‘systematic and sustained’ learning that is undertaken to bring about change in the knowledge, attitude, values or skills of an adult (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982). Educational needs are usually for self enhancement, job improvement or increased opportunities but may also fulfill internal needs of self-fulfillment, esteem, and self actualization (Cross, 1981; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007).

Library adult education has been defined as:

Those library activities for adult individuals and groups which form a part of the total educational process and which are marked by a definite goal, derived from an analysis of needs and interests. These activities aim at a continuing cumulative educational experience for those who participate, require special planning and organization, and may be originated by the library or by request from the individuals or groups concerned (Asheim, 1955, p. 9 -10).

Some avenues of library adult education include individual enquiry and self-directed learning, organized educational programs, formal social networks, and informal group dynamics. Examples of these include book clubs, reading circles, artwork appreciation/exhibitions, literacy development training, and computer skills training.

Critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy, which Freire (1970) termed “problem-posing education” is also described as liberatory and social change education. Proponents of this theory contend that learning leads to critical consciousness and is able to provoke social and political change (Brookfield, 1995, 2005; Freire, 1970, 1973; Giroux, 2004; Lather, 1998; McLaren, 1989). Brookfield states that critical theory and its contemporary educational applications, such as critical pedagogy are “grounded in an activist desire to fight oppression, injustice, and bigotry and create a fairer, more compassionate world” (2005, p. 16). And yet another theorist declares that “critical pedagogy considers how education can provide individuals with the tools to better themselves and strengthen democracy, to create a more egalitarian and just society, and thus to deploy education in a process of progressive social change” (Kellner, 2000).

These concepts of critical pedagogy and critical theory are not being used interchangeably; but critical pedagogy has been used as an educational application of critical theory.

Community development. Community development has been described as a process of collaborative effort towards improved physical, social, and economic advancement by the people in the community (Chavis & Florin, 1990; Lindsey, Shields & Stajduhar, 1999).

Another definition adds that the process of community development requires a substantial

input by the community to define their own goals, mobilize resources and develop action plans to counteract whatever problems have been identified (Lindsey, Shields & Stajduhar, 1999; Minkler, 1990).

Scope of the Study

A case study was conducted of two libraries in rural communities in the southeastern North Carolina. The study included a demographic questionnaire, guided interviews of four librarians and eight adult patrons, field observations, participant observations - of the librarians at work, and patrons' use of the library; and also included interviews - of four librarians, and eight selected adult patrons. The selection was based on the information gathered from a demographic questionnaire created for the study. The goal of the study was to discover what, if any, were the impacts of the community library on adult learners in rural communities, how rural libraries worked in collaboration with community agencies and institutions, and how the rural librarian perceived and enacted the roles of adult educator and community leader.

Subjectivity Statement

No research is bereft of all subjectivity, since there must have been, no matter how minute, a personal interest or curiosity undergirding an interest. Therefore, as recommended for qualitative research (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002), I recount my subjectivity in the subsequent paragraphs.

I immigrated to this country with tremendous expectations and hopes of fulfilling the American dream. My quest since my arrival has been for familiar grounds, searching for

answers to the insecurities, inequities and injustices that were pervasive in the society I came from.

I am a strong advocate of democracy and social justice. I believe in the equality of all peoples, in equity and inclusion in service to all, and this has been carried over into my research work. I believe in helping the voiceless to find a voice, in awareness raising, and community conscientization towards development. I believe in community enlightenment, and how information can be best used for economic emancipation. I share Forrester's (1989) notion of manipulating or using whatever power you wield to the advantage of the underprivileged or the non-vocal group.

I do not believe in knowledge for its own sake, all learning is towards an end. Knowledge increases usefulness and productivity. I believe in the emancipatory capacity of knowledge, which is why my study is on the role of community libraries in the education of adults. I believe that for now the library is still the main venue or source of knowledge for rural communities which are bereft of such facilities as are available in the urban centers. I need to explore all learning and possibilities to raise awareness in my community, and to generate their interest in self development and progression.

I believe that true knowledge includes a spiritual understanding. I do not believe that absolute knowledge is possible. Why? Because I believe God is alive, still creating and I cannot know anything in perfection until I get to meet him.

Scientific relative knowledge is possible as we continue to probe and seek, through research, experiment, observation, experience and thought. It is incredible the amount of knowledge that is possible with observation and experience, especially in an area of

particular interest to the individual. I believe that an understanding of this nature of humankind should be exploited by educationists to diversify curriculum and instructional methods, so every person gets an opportunity to discover his or her special area of interest. This is why I believe libraries must reflect the culture and values of the communities in which they are located. The aforementioned subjectivity statement informs my interest in community libraries and how they impact the lives of everyday people.

Summary

The foregoing section consisted of the introduction to the subject of this study, and has enumerated the purpose, the research questions, the significance of the study, and the scope of the study. The following section, chapter two, reviewed the related literature to provide a wider view of the different aspects of this study. This was to elucidate the necessary background information required for a true comprehension of this study. It was also to elicit what ideas are prevalent in the areas of study, and help to pinpoint what gaps exist in the field.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of current literature on the role of the community library in adult education. The research questions guiding the study are:

1. What, if any, are the impacts of the community library on adult learners in a rural community?
2. How do rural libraries work in collaboration with community agencies and institutions?
3. How does the rural librarian perceive and enact the roles of adult educator and community leader?

As a backdrop, to help answer the above questions, several interrelated concepts determined to be relevant to this study were examined in the review. These included the major areas of adult education, community libraries and rural communities. The conceptual framework used in the study – critical pedagogy also described as social change education, necessitated discussions in this chapter of the concept of social capital with allusions to the concomitant paradigm of community development.

It was determined that within rural communities, as in most communities, libraries played a significant role in education, especially in the education of adults. As was mentioned in chapter one in the discussion on critical pedagogy, learning increases awareness – conscientization, which in turn creates a sense of identity. Learning, in community or in a group, developed into a sense of belonging- embeddedness, and through further interaction and socialization engendered social capital. The social capital may

enhance the cohesiveness needed for building trust and work towards the development of the community. Please see Figure 1 below for a conceptual overview of the literature.

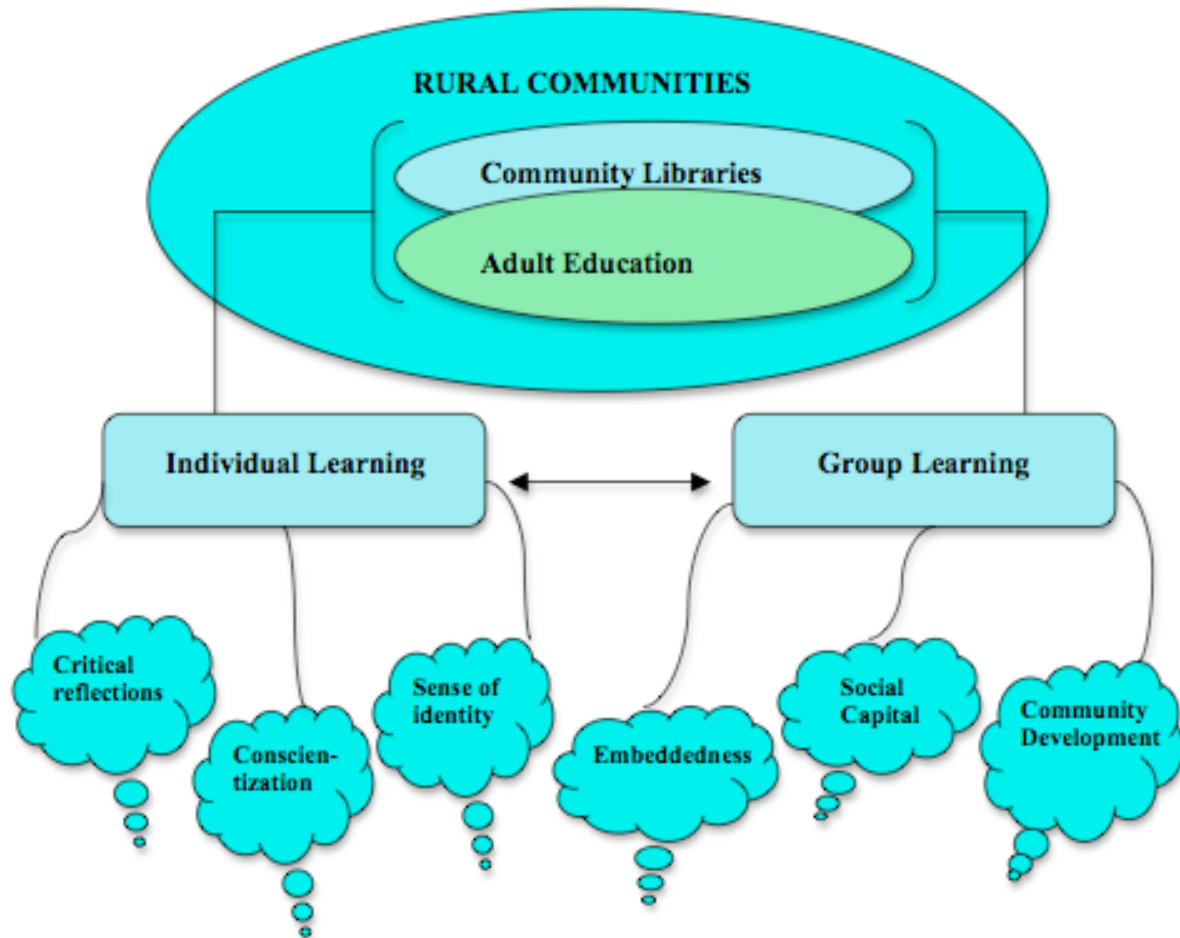


Figure 1. Conceptual Overview of Literature.

There are four main sections discussed in this chapter. The first section comprised of an expose on rural communities and the realities of rural life which included the perceptions of rural communities, and discussions on the current back to rural migrations and rural

rebound. In the second section the literature defined adult education and the dimensions of learning in adult education, models of adult education, and examines the role of the public library in adult education. The third section traced the history of public libraries with a focus on their beginnings, their mission, and their changing role in the present. The fourth and final section consisted of discussions of rural libraries and social capital and covered the community library as a channel for building social capital, and contributing towards community development.

The first three sections examine what is prevalent in current literature in the areas of rural communities, adult education, and public libraries, while the last section, rural libraries and social capital advocated for libraries as engines for social change and community development. All areas to be discussed in the literature review therefore included:

1. Rural communities and the realities of rural life.
2. Adult education, lifelong learning and the public library.
3. History of public libraries and their role in adult education.
4. Rural libraries, social capital and community development.

Rural Communities and the Realities of Rural Life

This section covered a discussion on the definitions of and the different perspectives on rurality, to enhance an understanding of what the realities of rural life are and be better able to appreciate the role of the community library in rural communities. There are two sub-sections, a) Perceptions of rural communities, and b) Rural migrations and what has been recently described as “back to rural” migrations.

The definitions earlier stated in the introduction will be reiterated to form a basis for the discussion in this section. The idea of community is deceptively simple, but that depends on how narrow or wide the definition is required to be. Definitions of community could be from a geographic or locational perspective – geographic communities, or the commonalities of interests – communities of interest, or of demographic characteristics such as age, race, gender, and sex – demographic community (Galbraith, 1995).

Community is further defined by shared interests, values, experiences, or traditions. The community has been described as a group of people with a common sense of identity and purpose, which could be a family, a trade or a profession (Pratt, 1998); or the first social grouping outside the family, to which each individual is exposed (Konig, 1968). And again, community is where people interact with others to find mutual support, collective experience, and above all, self definition (Mead, 1934). In adult education literature, Wenger (1998) refers to communities of practice as sites of adult learning, organized around the principles of shared ongoing activities, structures, and relationships within a group of people.

Trying to define rural community is even more complex. It is usually defined by the perceptions of the people who know when they are rural, but more quantifiable basis are required to satisfy the needs of demographers, policymakers, or educational researchers. Such figures are then used to make policy decisions and to determine allocation of resources which often short- change the recipients. Numbers really cannot describe what it means to be rural, and often misrepresents the needs of those on the receiving end of the definition (Rios, 1988).

According to Whitaker (1982), “rural” was first used by the U.S. Bureau of the Census in 1874 when it was defined as indicating the population of a county exclusive of any cities or towns with 8,000 or more inhabitants. By 1983 the specific definition of rural had been dropped. Instead, the urban population is now defined as all territory with a condensed population of 50,000, and urban clusters with population of at least 2,500 (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1983). The bureau then lumps all other people together in its definition of rural as, all territory, population, and housing units not classified as urban.

Other attempts at defining the concept of “rural” have been qualitative, and were based on categories that fall under social, demographic, and economic information. These deviated from the usual features that defined rural in terms of a simple life, agrarian occupations, low population densities, and homogeneity, but examined other measures like agriculture, mining, manufacturing, poverty, growth of retirement population, cultural values, religion, income, number of persons per household, ecological factors etc (Cordes, 1987; Croft, 1984, 1985; Deavers & David, 1985; Horn, 1985; Miller & Luloff, 1981; Rosser-Hogben, 2004; Whitaker, 1982). The non-specificity of a definition for rural may be attributable to the different perspectives from which research into the concept is approached. From whichever perspective however, the uneven social and economic development of rural communities show that other considerations like the geography, economy, population, and history must be taken into account (Falk, Schulman & Tickamyer, 2003).

Perceptions of rural communities. Despite their heralded demise, rural communities remain an important part of the American society. Though often ignored in current accounts of social change, they form a substantial portion of the population, industry, resource base,

and territory of the nation, more precisely 80 percent of the land and one fifth of the population (Hamrick, 2002). The uneven social and economic transformations of the last century had left a serious gap to the disadvantage of rural areas; they were a prime site for disproportionate and persistent poverty. Some of the communities are several hours away from major shopping facilities, cultural opportunities, medical, and most other services (Falk, Schulman & Tickamyer, 2003; Heuertz, Gordon, Gordon, and Moore, 2003).

Up till recently, residents of remote rural places, bypassed by economic development, were often struggling to provide livelihoods for themselves and their families. They often relied on forms of public assistance and on a mix of formal and informal practices which barely provided an adequate living (White et al, 2003). However, despite persistent poverty and diminished opportunities, a sense of community and attachment persisted and flourished (Brown, 2003; Deseran & Riden, 2003). There is, in rural communities, a “sense of identity” which has been extended to convey also a sense of belonging, of embeddedness, and of a shared identity and distinct self image, which has been attributed some form of value and described as social capital (Deseran & Riden, 2003). Although being isolated from broader-scale processes is usually viewed as negative, it may also mean more control at the local level, and can force communities to develop local social capital (Crump, 2003).

To be viable the capital needs to be invested, and the investment of every individual in the community lends *voice*, or adds value to the capital, either for the community to be *heard* in demanding action or change, or for mutual benefit and support within the community. This, according to Chaskin (2001), is described as community capacity: “the interaction of human capital, organizational resources and social capital existing within a

given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of that community” (p. 295). The existence of social capital, or the potential for it, even when not being currently exploited, has been identified as critically important to community development (Marre & Weber, 2010; Reimer, 2002). It is also claimed that communities with high social capital achieve superior outcomes in several domains; while communities with low social capital may be assisted to build up stocks of this resource so their performance will improve over time (Krishna, 2002). The assistance may be in the form of encouragement, sensitization, and inspiration, which is where community libraries and the librarians come in.

An adult education researcher characterized rural communities by their low population densities, limited resource bases, relative isolation, and cultural or ethnic homogeneity (Galbraith, 1992); while Ritchey (2006) added a connection to nature, local-based independence, shared values or collective responsibility, and lists their challenges as health care, change and loss, crime, and technology. Some of these perceptions were confirmed in the findings of a survey funded by Kellogg Foundation asking the general public about their images of rural life (Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, 2002), but there were some differences from the reality as perceived by rural residents. In a later research (Bracken, 2008) rural residents were found to be in agreement in matters concerning their tie to nature, low population density, changing population demographics, struggling economic and tax bases, limited access to health facilities, the brain drain, poor education quality and a struggle with crime and drugs. However, rural residents were most particular about rural culture, identity and independence. This is why Bracken (2008), in her chapter on defining

rural communities suggests that future adult education research should be framed to include more specific considerations of rural context.

One important finding, most relevant to this study is that “social control and collective interests were present, but the idea expressed was that they should be governed more informally, through social peer pressure, collective sense of responsibility, and cooperation rather than through formal rules, regulations, or policies” (Bracken, 2008, p. 85). The implication then is that informal and nonformal adult education activities were judged by the perceived power play. Direct and structured exercises of power were perceived to be heavy-handed and inappropriate and therefore rejected, while visible informal exercises of power were acceptable. The community library, where and when it is centrally situated within the community, and ingrained into its social structure, is often well-perceived and readily acceptable to members of the community.

So for the purposes of this study, from an understanding garnered from the several and diverse definitions of rural communities, and in simple terms, a rural community is that which is populated by people mostly of retirement ages, of agrarian life, of factory and construction workers, and miners of low education, and of small clusters of people. It may be within as little as half an hour or as far as a day’s journey from the nearest urban city, but if there is no interaction, communication, or viable and easily accessible links to the urban center, it is a rural community. In essence, the isolation makes it even more important for a rural community to have a ‘place’ within the community that, apart from being the locus of community life, is also the link to the world; this is the niche of the community library.

Back-to-rural migrations and the rural rebound. Recently there has been a renewed interest in the viability of rural communities with the back-to-rural migrations, the increased heterogeneity of the populations and the economic “rural rebound” (Brown & Glasgow, 2008; Jean, 2006). Current literature on rural migrations confirm that there is a reversal in rural migrations with a greater percentage of people moving back to rural areas in some parts of the world and some areas of the US (Brown & Glasgow, 2008). Review of literature confirms that rural migrations have seen a great increase with the economic depression and such population growth comprises of both commuters and retirees. City and urban dwellers are seeking respite from property taxes (Brown & Glasgow, 2008; Reader, 1998). They include commuters who use these rural places as bedroom communities but commute to the cities to work everyday. There are also retirees who prefer the quieter and more serene atmosphere of the rural environment. Brown and Glasgow (2008), claim that retirement migration was contributing to rural aging, and that the “percent of rural population at ages 65 and older (15 percent) exceeds that of the country as a whole (12 percent)” (p. 4). So, according to Johnson & Fuguitt (2000) older people were moving to rural areas more than anywhere else, and their migration in turn was attracting working-age people who were needed for the service, retail and construction jobs.

Some of the rural migrations are due to the new development taking place on the rural landscape. In recent years rural America has worked itself to the forefront of the economic recovery and therefore is witnessing growth and development in both population and infrastructure (Henderson & Akers, 2010). Rural employment growth rebounded with greater global demand for agricultural and manufacturing products and with that came a greater

demand for housing developments. With the failure of the economy as we know it now, and the appreciation and growth in agricultural markets, a higher recovery rate is envisaged, which makes a higher back-to-rural migration predictable. The current increase in agricultural demand and the renewal of industrial farmlands in rural areas has brought in an influx of seasonal farmhands. Also, as a result of increased manufacturing activity in rural areas, workers and families were attracted to rural areas that bolstered growth and development (Henderson & Akers, 2010).

Rural America could see greater growth and development in coming years because of its role in the economic rebound. According to an economic report, “rural America could lead U.S. economic gains in 2011. Stronger commodity markets and export activity have positioned rural America for sustained growth in the year ahead” (Henderson & Akers, 2010). Recent areas of growth observable in rural communities included commerce, population increase, industry, and of course housing development (Henderson & Akers, 2010).

Adult Education, Life-long Learning and the Library

Education has been defined as the sum total of all phenomenal logic and dynamic experience learned from formal or informal curricula through relationships with others and one’s environment (Seigler, 2002) It is a social process (Lindeman, 1961) and therefore does not occur in a vacuum, but is shaped by the context, culture and tools in the learning situation (Geissler, 1996; Jarvis, 1987a; Merriam, 2001; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Education helps a person to become self fulfilled, to develop effective lifestyles and to be

productive in the society to which he or she belongs (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007).

Adult education has been variously divided into formal, nonformal and informal learning activities (Candy, 1991; Coombs, 1985; Coombs, Prosser, & Ahmed, 1973; Merriam & Brockett, 1997; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Formal education is imparted through teaching in formalized schooling, usually with a fixed curriculum and in a classroom environment. Nonformal education is learning that is absorbed through experiences of everyday living. Informal education consists of learning in organized activities, outside of educational settings, that complement or supplement the needs of underserved adults or learners. It is usually more flexible and responsive to localized needs. It also is expressly concerned with social inequities and often seeks to raise the consciousness of participants towards social action (Merriam & Brockett, 1997; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007).

Adult education is considered a lifelong process, because people continue to learn as they go through various stages of life. It has been defined as a 'systematic and sustained' learning that is undertaken to bring about change in the knowledge, attitude, values or skills of an adult (Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982). Educational needs are usually for self-enhancement, job improvement or increased opportunities but may also fulfill internal needs of self-fulfillment, esteem, and self actualization (Cross, 1981; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Kim et al, 1995; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007; Valentine, 1997); or simply necessitated by changes due to life transitions (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980). According to Stubblefield and Keane, based on an adult education survey, "Americans learned because

there was knowledge to master, technology to adapt, and life's uncertainties to be resolved" (1994, p. 312).

The need for learning may also be precipitated by social realities and nature of the society or community. For example a shift in the percentage of adult population (Bills, 2004; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007; Spear & Mocker, 1984), and the increasing cultural and ethnic diversification with the influx of immigrants (Alfred, 2004; Briscoe & Ross, 1989; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007) could be contributory factors to the increase in the population of adult learners and to the need for learning opportunities in the rural areas. One other factor has been described as "globalization", which apart from mere international relations through travel, trade, and cultural exchange, also includes "the intensity and speed of flows and interconnections within these networks, and the reach of its impact" (Glastra, Hake, & Schedler, 2004, p.292). Another researcher describes globalization as "a movement of economic integration, of cultural homogenization, and of technological uniformization" (Finger, 2005, p.269). These factors are dynamic and ever-changing and therefore present the need for a reevaluation of the role of libraries in the community, and especially in rural communities.

What is both wide and narrow? Dimensions of learning in adult education. The scope of adult education has been determined to be very wide, but its reach is very narrow. Several factors may be responsible for this reality as is traceable in the literature over the years. A number of interesting descriptive anecdotes extracted by Knowles (1990) help to capture the thoughts of educationists over almost a century on the subject of the scope and limitations of adult education: Lindeman (1926), a pioneering theorist, saw adult education as

a quest for the meaning of experience (Gessner, 1956). Jacks (1929), an educationist, as a continuity and contiguity of the world of “bread winning and soul winning”; Mann (1929), self education on the job; Snedden (1930), pushing forward the learner’s powers of self-help; Leigh (1930), a process full of meaning and reality with the learner an active participant; Mackaye (1931), recommends a new mode of instruction to be grown in the field; Jackson (1931), self education; Russel (1938), group discussion; Rogers (1938), making groups of gregarious humans to yield educational value; Wiese (1939), taking advantage of spontaneous and unpredictable opportunities; Merton(1939), teaching merrily in an atmosphere of induced comradeship; Cherrington (1939), individual critical thinking; Thomas (1938), organizing adult contributions into a form of social purpose; and Field (1940), incorporating elements of the extracurricular. So, for almost a century adult educators have been preoccupied with the contrast in the unlimitedness of the scope of adult education, *wide*, as including all sustained learning that affects the life of an adult, and the encroaching factors that have the power to limit its reach, *narrow*, to a disproportionate few in a specialized group of people.

Several factors may be responsible for this dichotomy, of the scope versus the reach, as may be elicited in the discussions that follow. There are two sub-sections discussed under the dimensions of learning: a) From pedagogy to andragogy, b) adult learning principles.

From pedagogy to andragogy. Knowles (1970), in his unrelenting search for a unifying theory to capture all the disjointed insights, concepts, and principles on adult education, found one in his discovery of the word ‘andragogy’. Since the publication of his book *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy versus Pedagogy* (1970), there

has been an explosion in studies in the field, (Elias, 1997; Brookfield, 1985; Davenport, 1985), some critical, which might have led to a modification of the subtitle in a subsequent edition (1980), substituting *From Pedagogy to Andragogy*. Andragogy has since become an acceptable concept in the field of adult education, and has been described as the art and science of helping adults learn (Knowles, 1973, 1975, 1980, 1984; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). The assumptions underlying this concept have characterized the adult learner and determined the structure of adult learning activities (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). These are inclusive of the dimensions of *who*, who participates in adult learning and what are the motivating factors; *what*, what are the learning needs of adults and what precipitates these needs; and *how*, how do adults learn that differentiates them from children and what facilitates adult learning. These are all discussed under the next sub-section.

Adult learning principles. The assumptions listed as underlying the concept of andragogy as specified by Knowles (1970) include the following. First, adults experience the need to know - adults need to know why they need to learn before they can commit to it. This may be described as raising the level of awareness or ‘consciousness raising’ (Freire, 1970; Tough, 1979). The second assumption relates to the learners’ self-concept - adults have a self concept that enables them to take responsibility for their lives, so there is a need for them to be respected and credited with the capability to be self-directed. The role of the learners’ experience is the third assumption - this constitutes the major difference between youth and adults, and has both positive and negative impacts on adult learning. Adult experience is the richest resource brought to bear on the new learning and, when tapped to advantage, enhances and accelerates the learning process. The multiplicity of all the experiences of the

learners adds to the diversity and richness of learning for all. However, the same experience may become an impediment if an adult learner has formed strong attitudes and beliefs, which may act as obstructions in the learning process. Also for the adult learner the self-identity consists of the experience and is subsumed in it. Any form of insensitivity towards the experiences may be construed as a rejection of the person. According to the fourth assumption, readiness to learn, adults are ready to learn as soon as the need for learning has been identified. Assumption five, orientation to learning, posits that adults are oriented to learning when they are confronted with life application situations such as promotions and better jobs, and sixth, motivation — adults are motivated to learn by internal pressures like self-esteem, quality of life and increased job satisfaction (Knowles, 1970).

The context: Who participates in adult education? Context is an important and integral component of learning, and includes the culture, traditions, language, beliefs and values of the individual learner, and of the community (McNergney, 2001). According to Jarvis, learning, even self-directed learning, rarely occurs “in splendid isolation from the world in which the learner lives;...it is intimately related to that world and affected by it” (1987a, p. 11). It is impossible to separate the learner from the context because it is that which determines the need and the motivation for any learning experience. Under the context, the discussion covered the characteristics of participants, the motivating factors, the socio-cultural implications and the power and ethical issues involved in adult learning.

The profile of the typical adult learner has not changed in the last few decades, but has remained remarkably consistent across several studies (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Such studies have revealed that despite increases in the number of

participants, and wider subject areas, differences in educational levels, and in mode of learning, in formal or nonformal institutions, there is hardly any variation both in the profile, and the demographic statistics of the kind of person who participates in adult education (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980; Collins, Brick & Kim, 1997; Johnstone & Riviera, 1965; Penland, 1979; Tough, 1979; Valentine, 1997).

In order to understand and work with adult learners in rural libraries there needs to be an understanding of certain distinguishing characteristics of adults that are aligned with what the library offers. Several scholars have contributed toward this understanding, including Brookfield, 1986; Cantor, 2001; Kegan, 1994; Knowles, 1980; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007; and Rogers, 1961. Adult learners bring with them to the learning forum a great resource in their accumulated life experiences, and are able to relate new information to the store of mental resource they possess (Brookfield, 1993, 1986; Knowles, 1980; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Adult learners are characterized by their willingness to learn due to their maturity, and are therefore also autonomous and self-directed. Adults are more reflective and show greater responsibility and consciousness of the demands of reality (Kegan, 1994; Knowles, 1980; Rogers, 1961). Adult learners are goal-oriented and are practical, therefore they need to find relevance of the learning to their lives (Cantor, 2001).

The context: What motivates adults to learn? Adult learning is motivated by both internal and external factors (Tough, 1979). Most adults learn in order to address specific needs in their lives, either to solve life problems or meet challenges. Some of the identified needs include physiological needs; external expectations; professional advancement; needs of

safety and security; social or relational needs; cognitive interest; escape or stimulation; self-esteem; and self-actualization (Boshier & Collins, 1985; Cantor, 2001; Morstain & Smart, 1974; Tough, 1979). Employment related motives were found to be the strongest factors motivating adults to learn. An NCES study reported in 1991 that about thirty five percent of adults participate in adult education for improvement and advancement for job purposes. This has been corroborated in other studies (Cross, 1981; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; NCES, 1991 in Kopka & Peng, 1993; Valentine, 1997).

While some studies offer explanations for why adults learn, other studies examined why adults choose not to engage in learning opportunities. The limited number of participants found in adult education programs prompted research into why those who might benefit the most are not participating in adult education. Two most cited reasons are lack of money and lack of time (Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007; Valentine, 1997), and next was “family responsibilities” (Valentine, 1997). Several other reasons were advanced for non-participation, and researchers clustered these into types of barriers: there were dispositional barriers and situational barriers (Johnstone & Rivera, 1965), institutional barriers (Cross, 1981), psychological and social barriers (Page, 2005; Rubenson, 1998), and sociological barriers (Davis-Harrison, 1996; Jarvis 1985; Nordaug, 1990; Quigley, 1990; Rubenson, 1998; Sissel, 1997). Psychological and social barriers include factors like the uncertainties about change, fear of technology, inexperience, perceived need, and need for guidance (Page, 2005).

The sociological perspective differed from the others in the examination of some barriers that were attributable, not to the non-participants, but to the structure and the “middle

class bias” that is apparent in the organization and presentation of knowledge in adult education (Jarvis, 1985; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Some of the sociological barriers were race, gender, class, age and educational background (Boudard & Rubenson, 2003; Davis-Harrison, 1996; Gorard & Selwyn, 2005; Rubenson, 1998; Sissel, 1997). McClenaghan (2000) went one step further to state that social capital can explain the differing levels of participation in formal or informal adult education.

The preceding enumerated barriers to participation imply that with the removal of such barriers in the society, there could be free access to those that hitherto had been denied access. As stated in Jarvis (2003) “.... change will depend on seeing that the problems lie within the nature of the provision adult education makes and not in those who do not avail themselves of the resources it offers” (p.166). This study is believed to bring a closer scrutiny into the changes that may be needed in the “nature of the provision” so allowances can be made to accommodate all.

The context: How do adults learn? Several theories have been propounded by researchers on how adults learn: Cross’s (1981) CAL model, McClusky’s (1963, 1970, 1971) theory of margin, Knox’s (1980) proficiency theory, Jarvis’s (1987a) learning process, and Knowles’ (1970, 1980) andragogy. Knowles’ andragogy has been discussed and found to be most adaptable to learning in the public library environment. So for the purposes of brevity only andragogy, and self-directed learning in particular, will be discussed in this sub-section.

Knowles’ (1970) theory of adult learning, andragogy was widely accepted at its inception and has been a predominant factor in the field, guiding the curriculum and structure of adult education for a few decades (Godbey, 1978; Knowles, 1973, 1975, 1980, 1984;

Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). He defined the term simply as the art and science of helping adults to learn (1970). However, the hold of this concept on the field seems to be subsiding, as several critiques have identified ambiguities and inconsistencies in it which conflict with present sociological findings (Brookfield, 1986; Cross, 1981; Grace, 1996; Merriam, 2001; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007; Pearson & Podeski, 1997).

The most relevant criticism, one that lends an insight to this study, is the factor of the sociological context. Knowles is criticized for not acknowledging the socio-historical and cultural contexts of the learning transaction. In his model the individual is portrayed as autonomous and free to make choices and decisions as pertaining to the learning. However in reality, the adult learners' choices are constrained and determined by the context and forces of power and politics that may be beyond their control (Grace, 1996; Jarvis, 1987b; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007; Pearson & Podeski, 1997). While these critiques may indeed be a set back to andragogy and its stance on the autonomy and freedom of choice of the adult learner, they however give an insight to what corrective measures may be taken to make adult education more inclusive. The role of the community library was examined in this area to determine its function as a synergetic influence; first, towards diminishing the socio-historical and cultural influences over the individual; and second, in expanding the scope of the learning process to include, apart from self direction, some group dynamics. This would thus include the community, and therefore encompass the socio-cultural context.

Self-directed learning, as a process of learning, has been defined as learning for which people take the primary initiative for planning, carrying out and evaluating their own learning experiences (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). The earliest model was

proposed by Tough (1967), which he termed as self-planned learning. The framework was further developed in subsequent writings (1971, 1979), and included thirteen steps in the self-planned project, that covered the what, where and how to learn (Tough, 1971). Knowles's (1975) description of self-directed learning comprises of six steps that are like a condensed form of Tough's (1979) thirteen. Though criticized for their rather prescriptive and linear nature (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007), these two theorists provided the language, concepts and terms of description for key elements of the process (Kasworm, 1992).

The descriptions of self-directed learning, as prescribed by Tough (1971) and Knowles (1975) also provide a basis for the role of libraries in adult education. Public libraries are mandated to offer an open and free access to resources without any interference, prescription or instructional and institutional impositions. They are the only institution where any and all materials are freely and easily accessible with no sanctions or restrictions, so all adult learners are able to diagnose, plan, identify the required materials and resources, choose appropriate resources and implement their learning. However the librarian may not assist in enforcing a learning contract, or act in the supervisory role, as were prescribed by the theorists.

Other models of self-directed learning were proposed that expanded the original concept to include the context, the cognitive process, the environmental possibilities, and personality characteristics of learners. Some of the models, (as used in Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007), include Spear's (1988), Cavaliere (1992), Brockett & Hiemstra (1991), Danis (1992), Garrison (1997) and Andruske, (2000). Spear's (1988) model has been found

to be of particular interest and relevance to this discussion. His assertion and identification of three major elements that play a significant role in self-directed learning is resonant of the concept of the public library as a learning institution. The elements identified are: the opportunities available in the environment, past or new knowledge, and chance occurrences. These elements are further expanded and expatiated to include residual and acquired knowledge, directed, exploratory and fortuitous action, and consistent and fortuitous environment (Spear, 1988).

The public library is an open environment with several opportunities to meet with and interact with different groups and people. There is also room for exploratory studies and action as there are no fees or constraints. Anyone may sign up for any or all group meetings and continue or choose to opt out at any time. One other point of interest in Spear's model is the idea of clusters. Spear (1988) contends that self-directed learning is not linear, but the learner may be engaged in several learning activities, and through a process of sorting and relevance is able to assemble the clusters into a relevant whole. Community libraries offer a wide variety of resources and programs that enable adult learners to engage in different things that are relevant to different aspects of their lives.

Self-directed learning has been categorized as the most effective learning method for the andragogical model, and is best suited to the nonformal setting which is definitely available in the library environment (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). It may be incorporated also into group learning, as members diagnose their needs, formulate the objectives, design a pattern most suitable to their needs, and work out means to evaluate the

results. Most important of all is that the library, with its open, free and accessible information and educational resources, is an excellent location for self-directed learning.

There are several hypotheses on the goals of self-directed learning out of which three groups have emerged: (a) Tough (1979), Knowles (1980) and others believed in the goal of self-directed learning for individual enhancement, (b) Mezirow (1985b) and Brookfield (1985, 1986) focused on its role in fostering transformational learning, and (c) Collins (1996) and Brookfield (1993) believed in its goal as promoting emancipatory learning. It is my belief and contention however, that all three are interrelated and work towards the goal of the emancipation of not only the individual, but the community. When an individual becomes self-directed and is transformed into a reflective creature, part of the ability to be reflective is also consistent with the ability to critically reflect on the circumstances and context of his or her surroundings, and to make appropriate decisions to reject or accept them. All of which may, of course, lead to emancipation of both himself or herself, and others who may have been roused to the same level of consciousness.

Role of the public library in adult education. This section is a discussion of the role of community libraries in providing informational and educational resources to adults in rural areas. The discussions examined the resources available to adult patrons in public libraries and also provided a link between the discussions on theories and the dimensions of adult education to the more practical and demonstrative discussions on individual and community library use. The discussions will also cover the application and relevance of Paulo Freire's theory to adult learning, linking adult education, as is accessible in community libraries, to self development, consciousness raising, and to community awareness and development.

Learning in community. The public librarian is responsible to the entire community and has direct access to all the people and their representatives (Hightower, 2004; Penland & Mathai, 1978). The public library has been designed to cater to individuals as well as groups in the community. It is therefore, able to cater to the individual needs, whether young or old, children or adults, and also to the community needs. In fact, it has been observed that the public library is the only educational institution with a mandate that covers the entire life-span of its clients (Monroe & Heim, 1991; Vavrek, 1995a), and with the priority to enrich the minds and lives of people through information and knowledge. The public library earned the acronym “the people’s university” for its services in education, especially in adult development (Birge, 1981; Gates, 1990; Johnson, 1938; McCook, 2004).

The library is a resource for a global awareness and development, through which people are presented with different perspectives from which to make their choices (Banjo, 1990). Librarians are neither teachers nor instructors; they may only make resources available, give reader’s advisory, assist in online searches in information retrieval, and plan programs to facilitate and create the right environment for learning. They act as user’s guide in the selection, maintenance, and development of effective networks for easy and freer access (ALA, 1978). They may not be active participants, but can direct and lead others. They may not be teachers, but they do create environments that encourage learning. Libraries have been designated as quasi-educational institutions (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007).

Community libraries may be avenues to building successful models of innovative and transformative services that will help close the information gap between urban and rural

populations (Carnegie, 2003; Whitson & Amstutz, 1997). Learned (1924), envisioned an institution that could serve as community intelligence, and believed that the public library possessed the capability to cater to the primary information and intellectual resource of a community, and could provide for vocational and commercial information needs, as well as assist adults in intellectual pursuits (as in Birge, 1981).

With the advent of Information technology - the Internet, global access and personal PCs, the role of the library as an all round educational resource has been further established. For many rural dwellers, libraries are the sole provider of free Internet service. A recent survey indicated that more than 90 percent of rural libraries are connected to the Internet (Flatley, 2001; NCLIS, 2000).

Librarians, as facilitators of the learning process, require an understanding of their learners, library users or patrons. As stated previously, the adult learner has been characterized as a mature learner who has a wealth of experience to build on, and therefore prefers to be autonomous, self-directed, and self-paced. He or she is highly motivated, though often constrained by time and family obligations. For the adult learner, learning must be goal oriented, relevant and practical (Cantor, 2001). Knowles (1970; 1975; 1980) andragogical model of instruction has been found to be most adaptable for learning in the library environment. In this model, the learner is the primary designer, or at least regarded as a mutual partner, of the learning activity and process (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007).

Carr (2003) opines that cultural institutions are expected to make favorable contributions to the development of learners, whether as individuals, in groups, or as

families, “whose lives are engaged with each other – embracing each other over their mutual reflections” (Carr, 2003, p.40). Learning is inseparable from the learner and since the learners’ capacities are determined by their environment, the learning is therefore impacted by the environment and community (Carr, 2003; Freire 1972, 1974; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Horton (1990) shares in the belief that education has a liberating potential through critical analysis and action. Social action is inherent in critical reflection and awareness. Adults are more reflective and show greater responsibility and greater consciousness of the demands of reality (Kegan, 1994; Rogers, 1961).

From the study of the available literature as seen above, the community library and therefore the librarian, provides the resources, facilitates the process and creates an environment conducive to learning for adult patrons in the community. The next sub-section is a presentation of the avenues of learning.

Avenues of learning. From literature, library brochures, program advertisements and observations, there are four identifiable areas of service through which libraries play a role in adult education: 1. individual inquiry and self development through self-directed learning; 2. organized educational programs; 3. formal social networks; 4. and informal group dynamics. These are discussed in the following sub- sections.

Individual inquiry: Self development through self-directed learning. As was defined earlier, self-directed learning is a process of learning by which people take the primary initiative for planning, carrying out and evaluating their own learning experiences (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Brookfield asserts that adult educators need to “shift to learners as much control as possible in the learning process” (1993, p. 227). He goes further

to call for “more easily accessible and adequate resources so that learners can more readily exercise control over their learning, especially learners who have been denied access to resources because of cost or preferential treatment for privileged groups” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). The community library is an open forum and its atmosphere and environment are conducive to self-directed learning. The librarian is not expected to play the role of an advocate, or direct the patron towards any particular choices, but is able to display all the options that are available in the community.

Organized educational programs. The public library is an active agent of adult education, sponsoring and inaugurating educational activities, and offering library space for such activities (Gates, 1990; Lee, 1966; McCook, 2004). Librarians collaborate with other adult education agencies in the organization of programs and in outreaches to the community (ALA, 2004b; Johnson, 2004; Vavrek, 1995a). One major program area is literacy education (Lee, 1966), and the other is readers’ advisory (Lee, 1966; McCook, 1990; Phinney, 1967).

Illiteracy remains a significant problem in the U. S. (Walton, 2001). Literacy education continues to be very crucial, and much more so in rural areas (Vavrek, 1995a). This problem has been further compounded by the need for information literacy and computer literacy. Many rural communities have become heterogeneous, with the influx of immigrants that work in agricultural and in the industrial sector (Lindsey, Shields, & Stajduhar, 1999; McCook, 2004; Rosser-Hogben, 2004).

Other forms of organized educational programs may include: English as a second language (ESL), computer literacy classes, Adult Basic Education, art, fishing, and gardening.

Formal social networks and informal group dynamics. The constant and face to face interaction that takes place through organized educational programs promotes and reinforces mutual trust and reciprocity, thereby increasing the social cohesion in the community, and fostering awareness and development (Prins & Drayton 2010). In most rural communities the library is also the community meeting place, where there is free and available space for groups and associations to meet (Amberg, 2010; Gates, 1990; Harris, 2007; Lee, 1966; McCook, 2004; Oldenburg, 1989). It is therefore a venue to reach out to different groups in the community and to develop awareness and consciousness. Libraries have been known to encourage *formal social networks*—club memberships, volunteer groups, and *informal group dynamics*- quilters club, storytelling group, book club, farmers forum, flower arrangement classes, chess players, etc. Such networkings have been described as communities of practice (Brown & Duguid, 1996; Brown & Gray, 1995), and are self organized groups that share a common sense of purpose and are dedicated to the joint enterprise and mutual engagement. Such groups are encouraged and developed by making resources readily available, advertising programs, and displaying group products. Such interactions with the community have developed into coalitions and greater collaborations in civic engagements (Johnson, 2000). Such informal group dynamics are also examples of context based learning, and what has been described as the knowing of “just plain folks” (Lave, 1988).

Adult and rural community-based learning has yet to be fully examined in the literature. Despite the great potential for neighborhood renewal, this area of adult education’s claim to relevance is yet to be made clear, and differentiated from the prevalent focus on technical facilitation of individual learning vis-à-vis accreditation and progression

(Thompson, 2001). This paucity is because in recent years there has been a shift of focus from neighborhood renewal and community empowerment, to the more individualistic approach through technology.

Technology, in this instance entails information technology; and information in rural communities was, more often than not, accessible through the community library as had been stated in the introductory chapter. This statement transposed the discussion into the section on the history and development of the public library, and its mandate and mission. This was to reveal the position of the public library in the community and subsequently, explicate its role and impact on adult education in rural communities.

History of Public Libraries

The discussions in this section cover a brief history of public libraries from their inception to the present, examining the developmental stages and what contributed to the growth. The mission and mandate of the public library are also discussed with a particular examination of their changing role from custodians to information experts, and a short expose on the present challenges. The different sub-sections consist of the following: The beginnings of the public library in the U.S.; the mission of the American public library; and the changing role of public libraries and present challenges.

A seasoned librarian made a statement that succinctly describes libraries, as will be discovered in the historical examination in this section.

Librarians are not considered information and referral specialists. We are information and referral generalists...One of the advantages that the library has over other institutions is that they have this whole backup of the body of human knowledge. You

know the Dewey Decimal System, 000 to 999 - well, that covers anything anybody ever did, hoped to do, or thought or dreamed about. (Jones, 1980, p. 18-19)

Public libraries have become adept at adapting to the changes over time. This may be because, as in the statement quoted above, they were programmed from the beginning to be “information and referral generalists” with a system that covered “anything anybody ever did, hoped to do, or thought or dreamed about” (Jones, 1980, p.18 - 19). The public library has metamorphosed from the one room with a sparse but treasured print collection of the mid nineteenth century, into the “something for everyone @ your library” of the present (American Libraries, 2004a). The changes that occurred have included the services, accessibility, collections and collection management, location, layout and available resources (Davies, 1974; Gates, 1990; McCook, 2004; Seymour, 1980; Seymour & Layne, 1979). However, one thing has remained unchanged, free service to all the people. Whatever changes have transpired over the years which may have affected the *how*, the mode of information dissemination; the *where*, the location and layout; and the *what*, kind of information and services disseminated; the *who* has remained constant, all the people. The commitment of the public library to *all* differentiates it from other public agencies. In fact, it has been observed that the public library is the only educational institution with a mandate that covers the entire life-span of its clients (Monroe & Heim, 1991). From the first private collections made accessible to people, to the most recent, current, largest public libraries of today, the priority has been to enrich the minds and lives of people through access to information and knowledge. The public library has earned the acronym “the people’s university” for its services in education, especially in adult development (Birge, 1981; Gates,

1990; McCook, 2004). This point of coalescence forms the bridge between the public library and education. Libraries are considered as quasi-educational organizations, as education is considered to be an integral part of their mission (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007).

There are few professions in the community that have as broad a mandate or commission to administer public educational and informational services, as do librarians. The public librarian is responsible to the entire community and has direct contact to all the people and their representatives (Hightower, 2004; Penland & Mathai, 1978). Learned (1924) as reported in Birge (1981), envisioned an institution that could serve as community intelligence, and believed that the public library possessed the capability to serve as the primary information and intellectual resource of a community, and could provide for vocational and commercial information needs, as well as assist adults in intellectual pursuits. Events have proven him right. The term Public Library was first used to describe libraries that were not privately owned, which included the society libraries and mercantile libraries, and it was not until 1876 that the term “Free public library” was used to differentiate tax supported or public funded libraries (Joeckel, 1935; U. S. Dept. of Interior, 1976). However, the term Public Library as is presently generally used, and as used in this paper, refers to tax supported and publicly funded libraries. A public library has been described as an establishment set up by the government to serve a community and provides an organized collection of library resources, paid staff, maintains a regular schedule in which services are available to the public, and is supported in whole or in part with public funds (U. S. NCES Report, 2003).

Beginnings of the public library in the U. S. The American public library grew from auspicious beginnings in the early colonies to astonishing dimensions by the end of the Nineteenth century and the mid Twentieth century. Though the growth cannot be attributed to one single influence, but was channeled by social, political and cultural issues that were prevalent at the time, self education has been acclaimed as the precursor of this growth (Gates, 1990; Harris, 1994; Lee, 1966; McCook, 2004). The need for self-improvement and adult education was one prominent factor in the establishment of libraries, and particularly the public library. The veracity of this claim is traceable in the different stages of the development of the library from private collections to the large holdings evident in the public library that evolved (Bramley, 1991; Gates, 1990; Lee, 1966; McCook, 2004).

One other factor contributory to the rapid growth was political; with the political awareness of the colonists came the recognition of the need for an ‘informed citizenry’ to uphold a democratic institution. The unenlightened persons had to be able to comprehend the problems of government, to think independently and be able to vote intelligently. These responsibilities created a need for access to a steady and continuing source of information, free from censorship (Bramley, 1991; Gates, 1990; Lee, 1966; McCook, 2004).

Other factors that contributed to the growth of public libraries included the need for further education beyond public schools, and the need for freer access to books by mill workers and artisans beyond the Lyceum movement. There was also the cultural exigency for the assimilation of the new influx of immigrants; there was a need for an institution to take charge of their enculturation or Americanization (Bramley, 1991; Gates, 1990; Lee, 1966; McCook, 2004; Roger, 2002).

A historical search revealed that the period of evolution of the public library in America was a glorious time of diffusion of knowledge, great benevolence and widespread growth and development, industrially, economically, and intellectually (Birge 1981), but it was also a period pervaded by underpinnings of repression, bias, segregation and much more (Harris, 1994; Lee, 1966). There were recognizable stages in the development of libraries in America that parallel the development of adult education. The stages that were identified are Private libraries, Special institutional libraries, Association or Joint Stock libraries, Common School libraries, Endowed libraries, and Free Public libraries. For the purposes of this study only the evolution and growth of the public libraries will be discussed further.

Public libraries. What may be described as the first public library was initiated by the benevolence of one man, Captain Robert Keayne. He was a private collector who, in his 1656 will, gave 300 pounds for a public building in Boston, which was called the Town House. He also donated his private book collection to be accessible to all (Garceau, 1949). The library was described as public in the sense that it was open to all, but it was not financed by public funds. Records show this library was destroyed in a 1747 fire (Thompson, 1952).

The Peterborough Town Library, founded in 1833, is accorded the distinction of being the first public library established with public funding from start (Daniel, 1961; Lee, 1966; McCook, 2004). The Boston Public Library, however, was to become the epoch-making landmark in the history of public libraries in America, and an important landmark in the world. The movement for a public library was initiated by a French man, Nicholas Vattemare, who had traveled widely in Europe and was passionate about establishing in America, a model of what he had experienced in the libraries in his travels. He proposed

consolidation of existing libraries into one institution where there would be free access for all. After years of meetings, talks and lobbying, approval was received and the enabling Act came into effect in 1848 in Massachusetts. This act gave approval to levy a tax for the libraries, which would be free to all. The Boston Public library opened in 1854 (Birge, 1981; Daniel, 1961; Davies, 1974; Lee, 1966; McCook, 2004; Thompson, 1952). The library owed its initial start to the generous donation of cash and books by Joshua Bates (Davies, 1974). The model of a free public library quickly spread to other towns and cities that were big enough to accommodate the tax.

Carnegie libraries were a significant development in the history of public libraries. These libraries made a great contribution to the development of the public library and played a definitive role in adult education (Gates, 1990; McCook, 2004). Andrew Carnegie was a philanthropist whose contributions made a profound impact on the American library. Between 1898 and 1925 he donated \$56 million to build 2,506 libraries: 1,679 public library buildings in 1,412 communities across the nation and 830 overseas. He was dubbed the patron saint of libraries (Bobinski, 1969). Carnegie revealed his motivation for funding thousands of libraries in an address delivered in 1894, “the result of knowledge [gleaned from libraries] is to make men not violent revolutionists, but cautious evolutionists; not destroyers, but careful improvers” (Wall, 1970, p. 821). His bequests came at a time when there was a great need for expansion of libraries. It was also a time when, with the influx of immigrants, there was a proliferation of evening classes and adult education. His beneficence contributed greatly to the cause of adult education (Bobinski, 1969).

Historians have attempted to determine what social and economic factors were determinants of the vision and support for public libraries (Daniel, 1961; Davies, 1974; Gates, 1990; Lee, 1966; McCook, 2004; Seymour & Layne, 1979), but Shera succinctly provides a conclusion to the discussion:

Complex social agencies do not arise in response to a single influence; the dogma of simple causation is an easy and ever threatening fallacy. It cannot be said that the public library began on a specific date, at a certain town, as a result of a particular cause. A multiplicity of forces, accumulating over a long period of time, converged to shape this new library form. (1949, p. 200)

Whatever the motives, the public library was raised upon a foundation of adult education, and its expansion came with the extension of the adult educational impulse to the masses. The public library and librarians were dedicated to the continuing education of the common person and a commitment to the library as a “people’s university” (Johnson, 1938). This dedication and commitment accounts for the changes and development that have propelled the American public library to its present status; and the factors responsible for this have affected, among other things, a change in its mission and goals. This is the focus of the discussion in the following section.

The mission of the American public library. There were several suppositions for the establishment of the public library as have been deduced from discussions in the previous section, but at the inception of the Boston Public Library it was acknowledged as a natural development of the state mandated and supported educational system. It was also an agency of post-primary education to cater to individuals that wished to work at their own pace

towards self-improvement. But the more apparent problems that precipitated the need were the concern for Americanizing the large numbers of recent immigrants, as well as providing them with educational and recreational possibilities to render them harmless to the American way (Harris, 1973).

According to Thompson (1952), the committee of the City council that gave approval for the mandate for the Boston public library, recommended certain considerations. Three of them were: 1. that it may be the means of developing minds to make people to become an honor and a blessing to their race, 2. to give the school leaver an opportunity to make further advances in learning and knowledge, and 3. to supply an alternative form of preoccupation so people do not resort to lesser forms of amusement that are prejudicial to the elevation of the mind. The public library, then, started out on its mission as a repository of books made equally free and accessible to all people for self-elevation and continuing education after high school (Gates, 1990; McCook, 2004), but as many more became aware of the possibilities available in the library, they were drawn to its portals.

There were however, discordant notes in the voices and writings of a few historians who felt that the motives of the campaigners for the public library were more than humanitarian (Davies, 1974; Harris, 1973; Lee, 1966). Michael Harris (1973), a more recent writer who was more critical of the motives of the humanitarians, believed that their motive was more repressive. In his paper, *The purpose of the American Public Library: A revisionist interpretation of history*, he described George Ticknor, who was foremost in the move for the public library in Boston, as a “frank elitist” who, with others of his cadre, believed in the “inevitability of stratification, persistence of natural inequalities, necessity of aristocracy,

and... folly of all attempts at social and economic leveling” (Rossiter, 1962, p. 154). George Ticknor is quoted to have said that the new immigrants “at no time consisted of persons who in general were fitted to understand our free institutions or to be entrusted with the political power given by universal suffrage” (Tyack, 1967, p. 233). He saw an urgent need to assimilate the immigrants and bring them into subjection to the American institution. He felt that the remedy for the influx of ignorance was education, and believed in the library’s potential as a means of restraining the dangerous classes. He not only gave his support but also insisted that the public library be as popular in appeal as possible (Harris, 1973). The public library then was perpetuated on the belief in its capacity to keep order in the community, by giving people a harmless source of recreation.

Just before the turn of the century, in the 1890s, there was an influx of a new set of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, Russia, Poland, Austria-Hungary, the Balkans, and Italy. This sudden incursion caused some alarm and a new challenge to “Americanize” (Harris, 1973). Librarians rose to the challenge by designing programs to Americanize the immigrants and bring them into compliance to the set traditions and the institution of the American way (Harris, 1973).

A significant instigator of change and development in the mission of the public library was the formation of the American Library Association (ALA) in 1876, which gave voice and a sense of professionalism to library workers. The formation of an association was an impetus for great development and growth for libraries, especially public libraries. By 1896 there were at least 1000 public libraries across the U. S. It was a period of great expansion through women’s involvement and philanthropy as it spurred the change of

services to “expand the limits of women’s lives and open new possibilities” (McCook, 2004, p.43). Women’s clubs were formed with the express intent of founding public libraries and extending services to women and children (Watson, 1994, 1996, 2003).

The passage of the 1890 Massachusetts Law, creating a state board of Library Commissioners that mandated communities to establish and improve public libraries was another motivating factor that galvanized the spread and reach of the public libraries (McCook, 2004). With the devise of the “traveling libraries” by Dewey in 1893, a network of women went to work traveling and supporting traveling libraries to rural communities to encourage reading and library development at the grassroots level. By 1897 the public library had become fully entrenched as a community institution and noted for its role in encouraging self-education among adults (Lee, 1966; McCook, 2004).

The entrance of women into the library profession has been ascribed the turning point when library service designed mainly for cultural upliftment shifted to one of community-based service. This change included the foundation for youth services, the opening of the stacks, and the development of services to immigrants (Hildenbrand, 2000; McCook, 2004).

The active participation of libraries and librarians in the World War 1 as “instruments of propaganda” further entrenched the library as an institution in the fabric of U. S. culture, and gave the opportunity for connection to other community agencies (Wiegand, 1989). The Library War Service Program was a civilian effort initiated by the ALA with fundraising drives and book donations. The Carnegie Corporation provided funds for building libraries on thirty-six army posts and 7,000,000 volumes were placed in those libraries through this effort (Lee, 1966). The librarians that served at these posts had the first experience in

providing personal guidance to patrons. This war program was the beginning of a new direction in public library service to adults.

In the 1920s and 1930s the ALA began to focus its attention on adult education and extension, and in 1926 established the Board on Library and Adult Education, later known as the Adult Education Board (ALA, 1926; Birge, 1981). More services were incorporated into library services for adults that were geared towards vocational improvement, civic enlightenment, and personal development (Lee, 1966; McCook, 2004; McCook & Barber, 2002; Monroe, 1963). Some of these services were reference and information, adult education, readers' advisory, community programming, career support, genealogy, and local history. During the twentieth century, librarians worked thoughtfully at the task of defining the ideal configuration of public library adult services (Birge, 1981; Lee, 1966; McCook, 2004), but it was still basically up to each public library to determine the structure that best suited its community. In 1934 ALA appointed John Chancellor to initiate a ten-year assessment of adult education development in public libraries (Lee, 1966; McCook, 2004). In his report he recommended the public library as an indispensable agency for education; and in his book, *Helping Adults to Learn* (1939), he also reported a Chicago librarian as contending that librarians should provide services to groups, be thoroughly familiar with developments in the field of adult education, and be ready to become active agents of adult education, sponsoring and inaugurating educational activities, and offering library space for such activities (Lee, 1966). The Public library had gained acceptance as an adult education agency and was characterized as the "people's university" by Alvin Johnson in his book, *The Public Library - A People's University* (1938). Librarians interacted with other adult

education agencies, and the Adult Services Section was created within the Public library division of the ALA (Birge, 1981).

As Knowles observed:

The library moved from the status of an adult education resource toward that of an adult education operating agency... it moved from perceiving its constituency as consisting of individuals towards perceiving it as a total community, and ...it moved from regarding its function as custodial toward regarding it as educational (1977, p. 115).

This observation makes a worthy closing summation to this era and the discussions in this sub-section, and provides a transitional statement to the discussions on the changing role of the contemporary public library.

The changing role of public libraries. The courage of the public library in taking the initiative to instigate change, and its dynamism in accommodating diversity, has transported it to its present status. The public library has remained valuable because it creates public value through renewal and reinvention (Rodger, 2002). This dynamism is still apparent in the continuing extension of services to accommodate community developments, technological advancements, and educational progression. This drive has given the public library the capacity to connect and provide information for all peoples of the world in a global village, in the new public library of the cyberspace, the “Cybrary” (Kapitzke, 2001; McCook, 2004).

The mission statement of the public library is not quotable or cannot be paraphrased in one sentence because the mission encompasses more than can be expressed in a few

words; but there is a paragraph that elicits what public libraries are about, which readily ties in to the beginning quote of this section:

Because change occurs rapidly, many individuals and institutions today suffer ‘future shock’— a sense of alienation from the world and from themselves, a sense of powerlessness in controlling or even coping with the direction of life. To enable individuals and institutions to cope with future shock, society needs an agency to identify relationships in the fast flowing river of change and to maintain the record of new ideas, technologies, and values, so that individuals and institutions will be able to perceive and then control the direction of change as it relates to each person’s particular life experience. (PLA, 1979, p. 2)

The contemporary Public library still keeps its hold firmly on the resources of the past that entrenched the institution in the fabric of the community, has forged new ways through the maelstrom of the immediate past to construct its present, and is keeping pace with the present while looking to the horizon to grasp sight of the future. It is still a forum for the provision of printed and non-printed materials. The collections are tailored to meet the individual and group needs of its constituency for information, education, self-realization, recreation, and cultural growth, and for assistance in carrying out their duties as citizens and members of the community (Gates, 1990; Seymour, 1980). The librarian is trained to organize, interpret and guide patrons in the use of these materials and make them easily, freely, and equally available to all. The library is a community meeting place, and a locus of community information on health, education, government and other local services. It is a

place to get job information, acquire literacy skills and a melting pot for all social classes, and to close socio-economic gaps (Gates, 1990).

One major challenge that confronts public libraries has been in the unprecedented increase in information. There was a growing concern that the technological advancements may have caused an information overload, which makes it increasingly more complex to search efficiently for important information (Hecllo, 1994). Librarians have been suggested as experts equipped to deal with this problem (Hecllo, 1994; Kuhlthau, 1999; Whitson & Amstutz, 1997). The challenge only predicated a shift in the emphasis for libraries, from the simple role of preservation to the more complex role of sifting and selecting what to preserve and what to discard (ALA, 1979). Additionally, there was a controversy as to whether libraries could survive as the centers for information and knowledge dispensation. By contrast, the information glut has actually increased the need for libraries and librarians as the middle agents and voyeurs of the information currency. They act as users' guide in the selection, maintenance, and development of effective networks for easy and freer access (ALA, 1978).

One other challenge has been in the technological advancements and the incorporation of the computer to the library resource. First there was the fear of libraries becoming extinct, or librarians being technologically challenged and inept, and therefore being left behind in the vast expanse of the information highway. Not only have libraries and librarians caught up, but have become indispensable in linking their communities to the world, giving global reach with a local touch (McCook, 2004). Practically every library has its own link to the new virtual libraries, and libraries in cyberspace — cybrary. This

connection has greatly enhanced adult education and learning, especially in the increase in the number of participants in formal institutions through distance education. This formal learning support also includes home schooling families, and enrolled college students who find the public library more convenient and accessible than the academic library (McCook, 2004).

Again, there was a fear of the advent of the computer increasing the gap between the haves and have-nots, and between the rural and urban communities, but the library had always maintained its policy of free access to all, so were ready to combat this force. With the help of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 40,000 computers were supplied to libraries in all 50 states between 1997 and 2003, increasing computer access to all U. S. residents with a focus on the most impoverished communities (American Libraries, 2003a; McCook, 2004). This donation has been acknowledged as the largest foundation award to public libraries since the Carnegie building grants of the early twentieth century (Janes, 2004; McCook, 2004). Though this benevolence may not have solved the problem completely, they have alleviated the concern and panic with which librarians were gripped.

Present challenges: Future prospects. There are several challenges public libraries still need to overcome to forge their way into becoming the libraries of the future. These concerns include the ethical questions of access and equity (Levinson, 1995; Quesada, 2007; Winner, 1991); creating more space to accommodate the new technological additions to their resources (McCook, 2004); reconceptualizing literacy – new literacies and 21st century skills; and creating or sustaining a sense of place. These are discussed here to give closure to the discussion on the beginnings and the present of the public library, and to presage an

advocacy for the anticipated future of the public library as a channel of building social capital, and contributing to community development. The discussions under this section include sub-sections that characterize the public library as a) organ of social democracy, b) the digital divide: computer literacy, c) information literacy, d) space and place, e) a place @ the library, and f) sustaining the public sphere.

Organ of social democracy. The community library was described as an organ of social democracy and an instrument of personal self-realization (Birge, 1981; Gates, 1990; Johnson, 1938; McCook, 2004; Vavrek, 1995a, b). The community library was characterized from its inception by its commitment to the goals of promoting an enlightened citizenry; providing the opportunity, materials, encouragement, and stimulation for continuing self-education; and serving the community inside and outside the library walls. As was mentioned earlier, public libraries also have a history of moving towards inclusive service to all community residents, and for their commitment to equitable service. The library has been found to be the most well situated agency to assist in the identification and location of needed services and service agents (Birge, 1981; Gates, 1990; McCook, 2004). Several initiatives are underway to propel the public library forward towards achieving this goal, and to perpetuate its legacy of equity and justice. One of these includes the 2-1-1 initiative, which provides callers with information and referral in times of crisis and for everyday needs (2-1-1. Get Connected). Another is in the policy of equity of access to all, as established in the ALA National Policies (ALA, 1978, 1979): *Library services for people with disabilities: Policy and library services for the poor*. This policy is in place to ensure provision of services to all

community members regardless of age, ethnicity, language, economic class, education, and physical or mental challenges.

However, there are still some prevailing concerns about the issues of access and equity (Hall, 2007; Quesada, 2007; Stephens, 2007). The issue of race is highly explosive but obvious, it confronts all, but none dares to tackle it face on. According to Hall in *Race and place*:

Our policies and rationalizations do not drive the bus. We do. Yellow palaces and white cathedrals exist because we who work in libraries create them as well as the distances between them. We want to believe that libraries are politically neutral and colorblind. To sustain this belief we close our eyes as we steer. But who gets run over in the process? (2007, p. 33).

More often than not, racial lines are compounded by social exclusion and economic isolation; and the digital divide further widens the gap (Hall, 2007; Hindman, 2000; Metcalf, 2007).

One such community of underserved peoples is the Native Americans. Tribal libraries play a significant role in initiatives as critical as the preservation of language and other cultural expressions, and the protection of sovereignty and self-determination, but they are underserved and get minimal sustenance from federal funds (Biggs, 2004). It has been recommended that libraries need to contextualize and develop new approaches in order to respond to the needs of different learners, patrons and communities (Biggs, 2004; Freire, 1985; Heely, 1998).

Other concerns regarding equity are discussed in the following sub-headings and cover areas of digital divide and computer literacy, information literacy, space and place, a place @ the library, and sustaining the public sphere.

The digital divide: Computer literacy. There is the concern that despite the supply of computers and all the hi-tech gadgets, rural communities may still lag behind in the quest for information, and therefore in fulfilling their educational needs, whether for self development, continuing professional education or simply for self actualization. This may be because of the time and expense of training the rural community patrons, if this were at all possible, in the use of computers. A large proportion of such adult patrons would fall within the range of the 50s at the lower end, to the 90s at the other extreme. Most in this age bracket need help to become computer literate, and if they already are, to be assisted in the intricacies of information sourcing and navigating databases on the web (Mabry, 2003; Mani, 2004). Meanwhile the concentration on technical equipments is dissipating the resources for books. Who will train the trainers? Whose responsibility is it to make the computer illiterate literate? How long before the gap is closed, if at all? What is being done to keep the information flow in the mean time? These are some of the questions that come to mind to which answers are yet to be found in any literature.

Information literacy. The increased use of the internet and the web as informational and educational channels has also raised the question of reconceptualizing literacy (Reinking, 1995; Semali & Pailliotet, 1999). Literacy may be construed as the ability to construct one's own meaning from an information-rich environment (Mayer, 2000). Information is not an end goal but a tool for learning, which encompasses understanding, action, knowledge, and

growth (Fink, 1989; Kuhlthau, 1999). It has become necessary to be information literate to be considered literate, and one dimension of an information-literate person is striving for excellence in information seeking and knowledge generation (Donham & Stein, 1999; Kuhlthau, 1999). There is a need to train library users in information sourcing so they can be more fluent, and probably leave the librarian with more time to deal with patrons with more pressing needs.

Space and place. Public libraries are fast running out of space. More recent buildings have designed their structures to accommodate the workstations and the wireless hotspots for use of laptops, but most public library buildings do not have the necessary space for the expansion that is taking place (American Libraries, 2005b; McCook, 2004). There is a need for more humane designs that would be more people-centered in orientation. These changes could mean a few additions in the form of lounge areas, a front porch, and coffee bars, which brings us to the final discussion of a sense of place (American Libraries, 2005b; Kent & Myrick, 2003; Vereen, 2005; Watkins, 2004).

A place @ the library. The library is strategically placed at an advantage in the community because it is an open forum with free access to all. Community libraries may be avenues to building successful models of innovative and transformative services that will help close the information gap between rural factions-ethnic, social, economic and cultural (Bushway, 2000; McCook, 2002); while accentuating their diversity in cultural displays and acknowledging their values.

McCook (2004) describes a “sense of place” (SoP) as “the sum total of all perceptions- aesthetic, emotional, historical, supernal — that a physical location, and the

activities and emotional responses associated with that location, invoke in people” (p. 294). It is her contention that the public library provides this sense of place that can transcend new development to help a community retain its distinct character. I believe this SoP may be further enhanced with displays that reflect the community and forge stronger connections with the people; their history, the art and culture, and whatever specific things are unique in the community.

Harrison and Dourish (1996) made a distinction between space and place by describing “space” as the “opportunity” and “place” as the “understood reality”; and went on to clarify this by declaring that “a space is always what it is, but a place is how it’s used” (p. 69). This means that the same space may function as different places at different times and as different places for different people.

The cultural role of the library as an agency of acculturation, Americanization, and standardization of life style and values, has shifted to an agency which recognizes cultural and ethnic differences and encourages self pride and appreciation of different cultural heritages (Abdoo, 2004; ALA, 1979; Augustyn, 2004, a; b; Watkins, 2004). The community library is evolving into a “third place”, a ‘happy town’, a sanctuary or a safe haven that is away from work, home or the world (Abdoo, 2004; Amberg, 2010; Berry, 2005; Brey-Casiano, 2005; McCook, 2004; Oldenburg, 1989; Wagner, 2001). This therefore justifies the need for programs that foster social cohesiveness and inclusion of all peoples in the community, to help them to find their place @ the library (PLA, 2004).

Sustaining the public sphere. In recent years, as was envisaged by McCook (2004), the public library has been evolving into a commons, a role which is part of a larger concept

of the “public sphere” (McCook, 2004). This concept was based on Habermas’ description of people connecting ideas through broad discussions: “reaching mutual understanding through discourse indeed guarantees that issues, reasons, and information are handled reasonably, but such understanding still depends on contexts characterized by a capacity for learning, both at the cultural and the personal level” (1996, p. 324-325). McCook, in her projection, had declared that a vibrant public sphere was able to provide an opportunity for this kind of discourse to take place, and to promote democracy. She reiterated her confidence that public libraries that recognize the importance of sustaining the public sphere would respond to their community’s desire for a place to address critical issues in their lives (McCook, 2004).

The commitment of the public library to *all* differentiates it from other public agencies, and makes it uniquely suitable as a place for context based learning, self-directed learning, and community of learning, for self development, for creating awareness and raising consciousness. All of these aspects move towards the goal of fostering trust and cohesiveness, building social capital, and promoting economic development in rural communities; and that leads the discussion to the role of the library in building bridges of inclusion for social capital and community development.

Rural Libraries, Social Capital and Community Development

The discussions in this section are to demonstrate the role of the community library in fostering community trust and cohesiveness towards building social capital for community development. This role involves not only an active participation in the planning that contributes to the development of comprehensive community initiatives, but also a perceptible role in the implementation of the programs (McCook, 2000a). The discussions

include a detailed expatiation on the definitions of social capital, differences from other forms of capital, and dimensions of social capital, with allusions to its capacity for community development.

Public libraries have woven themselves into the fabric of the community as havens of knowledge and information, for educational or recreational resources, and as a place for socio-cultural support. However with the multi-faceted growth, development and change that are apparent around the world, libraries have had to be adaptable to meet the needs of a more explosive population. Researches have confirmed that public libraries impact human, physical and community capacity; and are shifting from passive roles of recreational reading and research institution to becoming active economic development agents (Barron et al., 2005; Dempsey, 2007; Hancks, 2011; McClure et al., 2000; Urban Libraries Council (ULC), 2007). These developments have not been limited to metropolitan areas, big cities or exclusive sub-urban neighborhoods; but have stretched their tentacles to the grass roots to encompass rural communities (Luloff & Swanson, 1990; McCook, 2004; Rosser-Hogben, 2004).

As was first discussed under the statement of the problem, rural America has been undergoing a change, and an influx of migrant populations (Lindsey, Shields, & Stajduhar, 1999; Rosser-Hogben, 2004). This sudden influx and the heterogeneity of the population has created a challenge for public services, educational institutions, social service agencies, and small businesses (Lindsey, Shields, & Stajduhar, 1999; McCook, 2004; Oldenburg, 2001; Rosser-Hogben, 2004). Meanwhile fiscal policies are yet to catch up with these changes, therefore rural communities are often short of necessary funds for social amenities and

resources. This situation did not encourage social interactions that might build social capital thereby becoming an impediment to the development of the communities. Libraries have been a mainstay and a rallying point for communities they serve, because of their accessibility to all, guaranteed admittance, and free services and resources (McCook, 2004). They also have established a reputation as one of society's most trusted institutions (Brown, 2001). Several researchers therefore advocate that the onus is still on the community library to adapt its resources and services to include the expanding populations, and also to promote collaboration with community leaders, social service agencies, educational institutions, health practitioners, and businesses in order to provide programs and services to accommodate everyone (McCook, 2000a; 2000b; 2004; Monley, 2006; Rosser-Hogben, 2004).

In recent years librarians have been urged to move beyond the library premises to reach out to the communities they serve and be a part of them; to become collaborators in community development (Hanck, 2011; McCook, 2000a; 2000b). McCook believes that librarians can make substantial contributions towards the development of effective collaborative partnerships amongst stakeholders in rural communities (Hanck, 2011; McCook, 2000a). She asserts:

Public librarians, as citizens of the community in which they work, need to participate in community initiatives and planning. By participating at the outset in planning and visioning, librarians will be at the table and in a position to identify opportunities for the library and its services to provide solutions to community...challenges. (McCook, 2000a p. 25)

Community development has been described as a process of collaborative effort towards improved physical, social, and economic advancement by the people in the community (Chavis & Florin, 1990; Lindsey, Shields & Stajduhar, 1999). Another definition adds that the process of community development requires a substantial input by the community to define their own goals, mobilize resources and develop action plans to counteract whatever problems have been identified (Lindsey, Shields & Stajduhar, 1999; Minkler, 1990).

Current research and literature suggest that the public libraries have the potential to be agencies of social cohesiveness by building bridges of inclusion of all towards community development (McCook, 2000a; 2000b; 2004; Monley, 2006; Rosser-Hogben, 2004). This involves libraries, as channels of fostering social cohesiveness, working as collaborators in community partnerships and development in their policy of equity for all. The commitment of the public library to ‘all’ differentiates it from other public agencies, and makes it uniquely suitable as a resource for increasing social capital and promoting economic development in rural communities. This leads to the discussions on the potentials of the public library in building social capital.

Building social capital for community development. “Self and society go together, as phases of a common whole. I am aware of the social group in which I live as immediately and authentically as I am aware of myself” (Cooley, 1998, p. 12). This declaration by Cooley transposes this discussion into the areas of society, social capital and the individual as a part of a whole; a unit in a more complex entity of the community. In this section, the discussions will explicate the connections between the individual and the community, and social capital

and community development; with the library as the channel or venue, and information and communication as the building blocks.

The context. Robert Chambers, in his foreword to *Whose voice?* (1998), a book about participatory research and policy change, opens with this startling remark: “Whose voice? Presents a dramatic learning: it is that now, in the last years of the twentieth century, we have new ways in which those who are poor and marginalized can present their realities to those in power, and be believed, influence policy and make a difference” (p. xv). He goes on to expound on the increasing polarization of power and wealth into North and South, into “overclasses” and “underclasses”, and describes how the overclasses are materially buoyant and are linked by instant communication; while the underclasses increase in numbers and remain isolated, both from the overclass and from each other (Chambers, 1998). Also Jarvis (2008), discussing the economic destabilization of the world used the gap between the growing rich and the very poor as an example: “even in the first world, the poor continue to be excluded and get poorer with, for example, 16.5% in the US living in poverty and 17% of the population of the U.K living below the low income threshold” (p. 26). Summed up in the parlance of the people, “the rich get richer and the poor have children.”

I believe poverty and isolation are inexorably linked, and viciously dependent. A poor man is often suspicious of those around him, finds it difficult to trust anyone and tends to isolate himself from others. And because of his isolation, he does not get timely information that may be of benefit to him, or receive the support that may be available to him; he lacks information, and is further deprived because of his ignorance. Information, then, is power,

and communication and access are vehicles of information. This notion therefore constitutes the ties between communities, community libraries and social capital.

Social capital, social change. In recent times there has been a renewed interest in the role of social institutions in the reinforcement of effective democracy and equitable governance. Scholars in many fields have begun to explore the multiple sources and manifold consequences of varying stocks of social capital. The concept of social capital has been in use for nearly a century, but has currently become increasingly popular in the social sciences and in organization studies (Adler & Kwon, 2002). This exponential growth has traversed the field of sociology and political science where it originated, and extended its reach to economics, public health, urban planning, criminology, architecture, and social psychology, among others (Bushway, 2000; Jackman & Miller, 1998; Lindsey et al., 1999; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Putnam & Goss, 2002; Woolcock, 1998).

There is current enthusiasm in the concept of social capital in the field of library science in the role community libraries could play in its development, which informed this section on social capital as a progenitor of social change. The discussions in this section covered the a) definitions of social capital, b) difference from other forms of capital, and c) dimensions of social capital.

Definitions of social capital. The terminology social capital was first used by Hanifan (1916), a progressive educator and social reformer, to buttress his claim of the importance of renewed community involvement to sustain democracy and development. His account of social capital anticipated virtually all of the crucial elements of later interpretations of the concept by other intermittent users in the twentieth century. Some of

these are: Seely (1956), as negotiable securities; Jacobs (1961), as a collective value; Loury (1977), as an insidious legacy; Bourdieu (1985), as the aggregate of actual or potential resources; Schlicht (1984), as an underlying economic value and social order; and finally Coleman (1990), to highlight the social context of education (as used in Putnam & Goss, 2002). The putsch that transported the concept, and caused it to evolve into a ‘prospering sub discipline’ came through Robert Putnam’s writings on social capital in Italy and the U. S. (Hooghie & Stolle, 2003).

Putnam defined social capital as “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (1995, p. 67). His writings on the concept have generated controversy (Adler & Kwon, 2002). There are differences of opinion on the definition of the concept, and whether it is or is not a form of capital (Baron & Hannan, 1994). Some of the points debated include: the appropriability and convertibility of social capital (Anheier, Gerhards, & Romo, 1995; Bourdieu, 1985; Coleman, 1988; Smart, 1993); its validity as an asset (Evans 1996; Putnam, 1995; Sabel, 1993); its viability as a substitute or complement to other resources (Lazerson, 1995); and its sustainability or depreciation rate (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Sandefur & Laumann, 1988). It is impossible to get into an explanation or comparison of the different definitions, as that would digress from the focus of this study, however the definition used by the World Bank would take us to the next level of discussion on social capital.

Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society’s social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be

sustainable. Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions that underpin a society-it is the glue that holds them together. (World Bank, n.d.)

One point, that is crucial to the discussion in this paper, is the nature of social capital to be either positive or negative. Coleman (1988), described social capital as ‘collective goods’, but then it could be argued that it becomes an asset from which others may be excluded (Hecchter, 1987); and the accompanying downside of parochial groups that may be working at cross-purpose to the society or community’s best interests (Portes and Landolt, 1996). This dichotomy has spurred a broader understanding of the concept to include the *bonding and bridging* capabilities of social capital. Thus high bonding capital maintains a cohesiveness and a *knowing* in multiple settings; this has been variously described as “density of acquaintanceship” (Freudenburg, 1986), “strong ties” (Granovetter, 1973), and “closure” (Coleman, 1988), (all as cited in Zacharakis and Flora, 2005). But the stronger the cohesiveness of the bonding, the narrower the interests, and this may actually preclude access to resources that may be of assistance to the group or community. That is why it has been suggested that *bridging* social capital is required to build *cross-ties* to create links to groups outside the community (Narayan, 1999).

The model developed by Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) helps accentuate the different components that make up the paradigm for this section of the study. The model identifies the components as the interaction between participants, the available resources, and the desired outcome of the interaction. The available resources are in two parts: a) knowledge resources which consist of knowledge of community networks, skills, procedures and rules, communication media, and value or attitudinal attributes of the community; and b) identity

resources – cognitive and affective attributes, which include self confidence, norms, values and attitudes, vision, trust and commitment to community. These resources represent individual goodwill and collective goods which when brought together in interaction generate social capital for the benefit of members and the community.

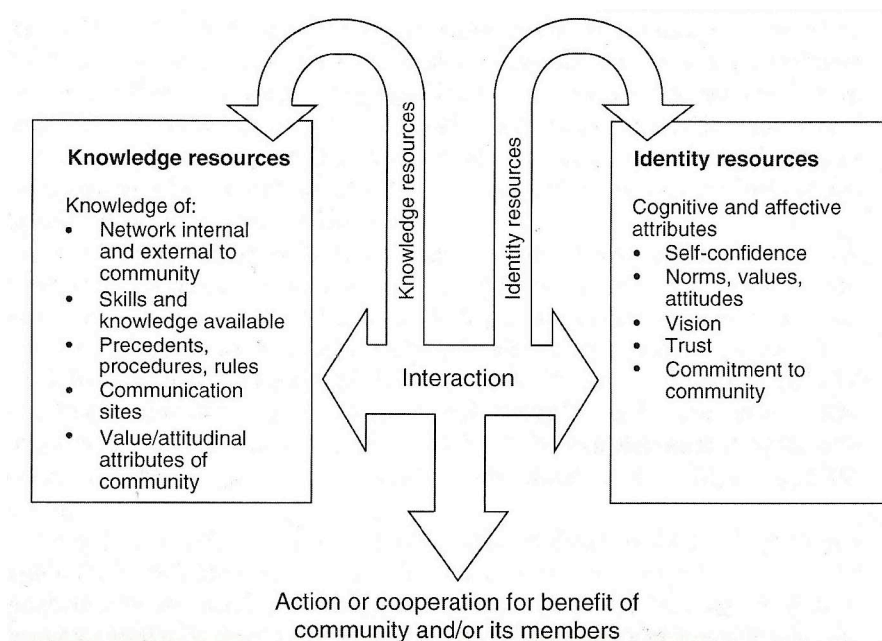


Figure 2. The Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) Model of Building and Using Social Capital.

According to the model, the value of the social capital available to participants in the interaction is determined by the ability to match desired outcomes to available resources, and the process of interaction itself: “Central to the model is the interaction. The efficacy with which resources are drawn on is determined by the processes that occur within the interaction, and the conditions under which the interaction takes place” (Balatti & Falk, 2002,

p. 286). This concept accentuates the role of the library both in the building of social capital, and also in the dissemination of it for use in the community. The rural community library is both a facilitator in the provision of knowledge resources and in the promotion of identity resources, and also provides the forum for the interaction of both – a conducive atmosphere, which enhances the building of social capital.

Difference from other forms of capital. The term social capital has been used to differentiate the value of social institutions from other forms of capital. While material capital refers to man-made and natural items over which rights of ownership can be asserted, human capital refers to the individual, household, or community capabilities in terms of strength, skills, education, labor power, physical health (Norton, 1998); and those personal attributes are valuable in an economic context. An example is educational achievement where this investment is rewarded with returns of wage and salary. When that education can be tapped as a resource by another member of the social institution, it has become an asset to the institution or community, and is a form of social capital. The term social capital has recently gained currency to describe assets which households or individuals can draw on, not only to mobilize claims, but also to take collective action to deal with problems. It is used in reference to the norms, trust and reciprocity networks that facilitate mutually beneficial cooperation among a given social group or community (Norton, 1998; Putnam, 1993; Richling, 1985). Social capital can thus be drawn upon by individuals to enhance learning, to accelerate social mobility, to improve economic growth, to advance political prominence, or to precipitate community vitality (Wall, Ferrazzi, & Schryer 1998). Various kinds of social support and information flow from social relationships, depending on the extent of the

investment of the social capital that may facilitate actions that otherwise might not be readily available. People draw on their social connections to find employment, adjust childcare to irregular work schedules, or exchange services (Granovetter, 1973, 1983; Portes, 2000).

Dimensions of social capital. Social capital is an asset within poor rural areas because of its important role in social institutions, not only for social cohesion but for economic development (Mosser & Holland, 1998). The extensive nature of social institutions can be seen to stretch from informal bodies, such as families and households, through local associations made, for example, from sports clubs to formal organizations concerned with political, religious and educational matters (Paxton, 1999; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Further distinctions were possible between social institutions by whether they were hierarchical or horizontal relationships, or may be by integration or linkage (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Woolcock, 1998; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). The interactions with other forces that prevail against social institutions may have a positive or negative impact, to build up or to erode stocks of social capital; these interactions may be from within the individual, within the community or through extra community linkages by members of the social institution. Therefore social capital may not always be beneficial. Horizontal networks of individual citizens and groups that enhance community productivity and cohesion are said to be positive social capital assets, whereas self-serving exclusive persons, gangs and hierarchical patronage systems that operate at cross purposes to community interests can be thought of as negative social capital and burdens on the social institution (Fukuyama, 2001; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Portes and Landolt, 1996; Putnam (1993).

There are, however questions as to the origins and nature of social capital. It is argued that it is impossible to make conclusions about the rise or decline of social capital unless it can be determined when certain aspects of social capital matter, and its origin. Arguably, it does not make sense to make inferences from trends in associational memberships and other types of social interaction regarding the state of social capital if we do not even know which types of social interactions or which types of institutions contribute to its creation (Hall, 1999; Kohut, 1996; Ladd, 1999; Putnam, 2002). Some researchers focus on networks of relationships, such as market relationships in which there is an exchange of products and services, as well as a hierarchy of relationships and authority (Adler & Kwon, 2002). The consensus however is on social relationships as an essential factor in creating social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2002; 2004; Balatti & Falk, 2002; Coleman, 1990; Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; Kilpatrick, S., Field, J., & Falk, I., 2003; Naphapiet & Ghosal, 1998; Paxton, 2002; Putnam, 1995). The research is ongoing and sociologists are yet to come up with conclusive evidence or outcomes on these controversial issue. A contemporary researcher on the theories of social capital contends that it is possible to use different parts of the different theories. She asserts that although there is no consensus on which theory is the best theory of social capital, the dominant paradigm of contemporary social capital theories is functionalist (Storberg-Walker, 2007). In "Borrowing from others", Julia Storberg-Walker examines different social capital theories and their connections to Human Resource Development (HRD) to expand the possibilities for borrowing from multiple social capital theories for HRD research and practice. I believe that this is also possible with public libraries, but may be the subject for other research.

Of the several distinctions that have been made by researchers on the concept of social capital: internal or external, hierarchical or horizontal, formal or informal, measurable or not, or even whether it is social capital or simply community commitment, I have found that Falk and Kilpatrick's (2000) model and description, lends itself to the idea of libraries as resources for generating social capital. The model has been discussed earlier in the section, but in reiteration their description declares that: "only through social capital are the skills and knowledge of human capital made available for the benefit of individuals, the communities, and regions in which they live and ultimately the society at large" (2002, p. 282). This description encompasses both the internal ties of Coleman (1990), Fukuyama (1995) and Putnam (1995), and the external ties of Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), Knocke (1999), and Portes (1998) to construct an overview of social capital that is attributed to both individual and collective actors, and fits in perfectly with the role the library plays as a channel of social capital.

This description also attributes the source of social capital to some form of structure and content in the actors' social interactions. It is safe to presume, therefore, that where the relations are thoughtfully designed and developed to include a certain form or structure, social capital may be increased. There indeed is recognition of the potential of the public library in the creation and development of social capital in the U. S. and other parts of the world.

Cox (2000), in a research funded by the State library of New South Wales refocused attention on the perspective that libraries create social capital. The project was part of a wider set of studies of the possible scope of social capital, but this was focused on the attributes of

public space and services as contributing to the development of interpersonal relationships, which in turn may develop social capital. In 2001, at the annual ALA conference, ALA president Nancy Kranick declared libraries as the cornerstone of democracy as the theme for the year; she also affirmed that “the library is an institution rich in social capital and poised to usher in a new era of civic awareness and community revival”. Putnam served as guest speaker at the president’s program. Since then there have been a few research studies and a few publications, exploratory discussions, statements and allusions to libraries as creators of social capital in the community (Boaden, 2005; Bourke, 2005; Bundy, 2003, 2005, 2007; Drueke, 2006; Ferguson, 2006; Hillenbrand, 2005; Jones, 2006; Kapitzke, 2001; Preer, 2001).

There has been a lot of other research on this topic in Australia and other parts of the world. One other example is a research study in the U. K. (Bryson, Usherwood & Proctor, 2003). This project was also focused on the attributes of the public library as public space and its impact in forging relationships, which in turn may develop social capital. Other researchers include Hillenbrand (2005), a social capital audit of a community library in South Australia; Boaden (2005) on libraries as building community connections and contributing to building social capital; and Kapitzke (2001) critically examining libraries as key physical depositories and cultural archives in the production, preservation and mediation of social capital.

Others who have advocated that libraries broaden their role and step out into the community include McCook (2000a) and McCabe (2001). These advocates focus on issues

that relate libraries and librarians to social capital and make recommendations on how to build social capital. A recent research report in the U. K. stated that:

The resources of a public library can influence the degree to which individuals and groups respond to one another around the world, enabling even the most deprived communities to be global players. Part of this is the consequence of sharing ideas, conversations and stories with others – books of every variety, emailed personal letters, and even music and films. These elements work together to create common interests, aspirations and even tangible artifacts. In short they help to make links between people and institutions that are the basis for community. The accumulation of these links involves the construction of social capital (Bryson, Usherwood & Proctor, 2003).

As has been repeatedly shown in preceding discussions, libraries are becoming more and more “a third place” – free, accessible, safe and welcoming; attributes that make the library a gathering place or meeting point for all generations. They offer a place to form relationships, to see and be seen, to meet for conversations and even find a date (Bryson, Usherwood & Proctor, 2003). The inclusion of Public Access Computers (PAC) into rural library services has created greater visibility and increased attendance and library use (Heuertz et al., 2003; Clark, 2007; Gregorian, 2007). The influx from the computer attraction can be used to advantage to introduce the people to other services available in the library, and of course they get to see the displays and promotional materials (Janes, 2007). More importantly they meet with other people, and they socialize. One excited librarian was reported to have described her small town library as “the Internet café” (Heuertz et al., 2003).

Finally, to pull all the pieces together, Freire (1970, 1985) contends that learning is emancipatory, and I have experienced the emancipatory capacity of knowledge. Knowledge increases usefulness and productivity, and an increase in knowledge increases the individual's capacity for social associations, thereby increasing social capital. I have always believed in the pragmatic use of knowledge, and therefore, in the process of enculturation in practical knowledge and problem solving skills. In the progressive learning context the purpose of learning is to transmit culture and societal structure; to promote social change; and to give the learner a practical knowledge and problem solving skills. Also, learners' needs are key elements in the learning process, and the intent is to invoke the broad social context of learners' collective lives, and design programs to empower them to become socially active, critically thoughtful, educated, responsible, and cooperative (Nesbit, 2002). Through direction, leading, and accessibility a librarian could stimulate the potentials of every individual, and also instigate or generate group dynamics to be channeled towards community development. Community and individuals do not depict separable phenomena, but they are simply collective and distributive aspects of the same entity (Brookfield, 2005; Cooley, 1998; Palmer, 1998). Long before community assumes an external shape or form; it must have exhibited itself in an individual who has found communion within him or herself. An individual that is self assured and has a high sense of his own value may cause his or her personal identity and integrity to draw others, or himself be drawn towards others into a community in which he sees his "well-being as integrally bound up with that of the collective" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 39).

There is continuing research as to the role of the library in the future. There is a suggestion that the future of the library lies in its reconstitution as a community center (Lear, 2002; Vavrek, 2001). Several researchers have suggested that there is a need to update the evaluation tools used in the measurement of the impact of the library on users (Ashley et al., 1998; Everest & Payne, 2001; Goodall, 1998; Linley, 1999). These, and the question of whether the library, in its attempt to keep up with technological development, is still able to continue to play its role in the rural communities as an educational resource center, is a challenge for the future of the library and education research. It is my belief that this research will make a contribution towards filling this important gap, while opening up new avenues for future research.

Summary

In the foregoing sections of this literature review there was a discussion on rural communities and the realities of rural life. There was an attempt at a clarification of what adult education included, and what role the public libraries played in it. There was a brief historical account of the beginnings of the public library, its mission, and the changing role from mere repositories and information dispensers to information experts and entertainment centers. And finally, there was a discussion on the role of community libraries in fostering social cohesion and building social capital, with the implication that there may be a need to reconstitute the public libraries to enhance community development. The next chapter is a description of the methodology and rationale for this study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of this case study is to appraise the role of the community library in the education of adults in rural communities. The study examined how two rural community libraries are used by adults and how the services provided have impacted the lives of participants in the areas of self improvement and community enhancement.

The questions that guided this study include:

1. What, if any, are the impacts of the community library on adult learners in a rural community?
2. How do rural libraries work in collaboration with community agencies and institutions?
3. How does the rural librarian perceive and enact the roles of adult educator and community leader?

Traditionally, research on libraries tended to be quantitative in approach.

Researchers mostly depended on the use of surveys and questionnaires (Hamilton, 1999; Herman, 2000; Williamson, 2002). However, there has been a greater shift to the use of the qualitative approach in library research (Herman, 2000; Williamson, 2002). This change is attributable to the dawning realization that the library and information sciences are actually social sciences and require a greater depth of study, and more information than the survey method alone could elicit or divulge (Hamilton, 1999; Herman, 2000). This qualitative study covers both the fields of education and library science; the qualitative method is believed to be most suitable for this study.

Design of the Study

Qualitative research has been described as an overarching paradigm that includes several forms of inquiry that help understand social phenomena without disrupting the natural setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Denzin, 2003; Merriam, 1998). Within this paradigm are several philosophical and ideological orientations that undergird the choice of the form of inquiry (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Denzin, 2003; Janesick, 2004; Merriam, 1998). Philosophical orientations include the positivist, interpretive, and critical philosophies (Merriam, 1998). In educational research, the interpretive orientation involves the lived experiences of participants under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Sherman & Webb, 1988). Meanings are constructed through interaction, which in turn is driven by personality traits, socio-political mechanisms, and cultural and physical contexts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Within the context of the rural communities, these factors become heightened to include socio-economic and developmental issues (Nesbit, 2006) that encompass social capital and community development.

The exploration of the role of community libraries in education involves the discovery of the meanings made by participants of their interaction with the library, and is therefore interpretive; while at the same time covers the conceptual framework of critical pedagogy. The illustrative diagram below (Figure 3) shows the different aspects of the study. From the bottom up, the overarching philosophical foundation is interpretive; the conceptual framework is critical pedagogy; the research paradigm is qualitative; the research approach is

holistic interpretive case study and the research methods consisted of a demographic questionnaire, in-depth interviews, field observations, document and artifact reviews.

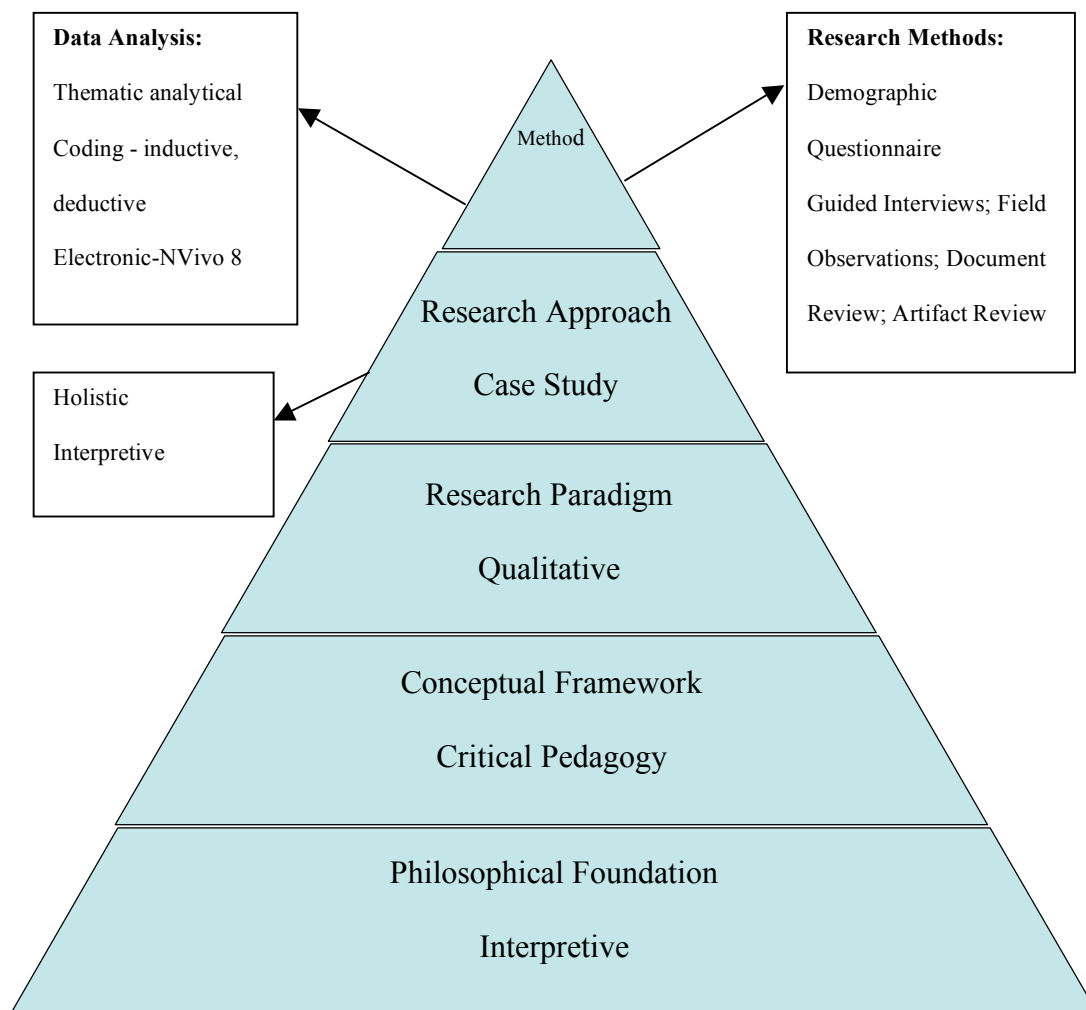


Figure 3. Illustration of Aspects of Study.

Though with differing orientations, many qualitative researchers have agreed on the following as distinctive characteristics of qualitative research: understanding from the perspective of the participant; researcher as the primary instrument of data collection; a necessity for fieldwork; an inductive research strategy, that is, builds towards theory from observations and intuitive understanding gained from field; and a descriptive report, with words and pictures to convey or depict what is learned (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Janesick, 2004; Merriam, 1998). These characteristics are most amenable to the topic in this study.

Case Study Design

The case study is the preferred research strategy in this study because the boundaries between the education of adults, the phenomenon, and the context of the rural libraries are not clearly evident. Case study has been defined in many different ways, depending on the perspective of the research: the research process (Yin, 1994); the unit of study (Stake, 1994); and the end product (Merriam, 1998; Wolcott, 1992). But there has been a consensus by researchers on one point, that there is delimitation, a kind of boundedness that exists in case studies (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Smith, 1978; Stake, 1994, 1995; Yin, 1994). The delimitation in this investigation is the impact on the education of adults, and the boundaries are set in the rural community library. Yet this study explored any additional factors that may have contributed to the impact the library has on the lives of the participants.

Merriam takes this point a step further and integrates the entity with the boundary to conclude that the phenomenon to be studied has to be intrinsically bounded (Merriam, 1998;

Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Yin, “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (2003b, p. 13). This concept forms a basis for the selection of the case study design for use for this study; indeed the boundaries between the participants’ education and the context of the rural libraries are not clearly evident, as the context and educational channel are seen as one and the same. While the study is of contemporary events, the relevant behaviors may not be manipulated (Yin, 2003b).

Within the interpretive perspective, this study is identified as a holistic case study. A holistic case study, unlike an embedded case study that focuses on specific areas or units within the case, examines the global nature of the case. In this study, I examined the global nature of rural libraries and how they impact the lives of their adult patrons. The examination covered all areas of learning acquired, whether formally, informally or nonformally, in the lifetime of an adult. Merriam (1997) makes a differentiation between adult learning and adult education, however for this study it is important to examine the impact of the library as a whole on the life of adults in the community, rather than specific areas or units of influence, as it might be difficult to separate or determine the different units. While the focus of the research is on the impact of the rural community library on adult learners in a rural community, the two other research questions examine the contributory roles of other agencies and institutions in the community and how rural libraries work in collaboration with them, and how the rural librarian perceives and enacts the roles of adult educator and community leader.

Case study research may also be defined by the overall intent of the study (Merriam, 1988), thus it could be descriptive, interpretive or evaluative. This study represents the interpretive approach to case study. In the interpretive case study, the rich and thick descriptive data are used “to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to the data gathering” (Merriam, 1988, p.38). In this study the theoretical assumptions include those of critical pedagogy – education towards consciousness raising, and the accompanying offshoots of social capital and community development.

The case study research may include multiple case studies to yield a more compelling and robust study (Herriott & Firestone, 1983); may have direct replication (Yin, 2003b); and may expand the external generalizability (Yin, 2003b). Additionally, it allows the use of multiple techniques which would enhance the extraction of rich information, while at the same time affording the necessary construct validity required to establish the quality of the research (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003a). Two libraries were included in this case study, which makes it a multi-site study. It is also bounded by the place and context of the settings, rural community libraries.

Sample Selection

As both the library and the patrons were to be part of the research for a holistic study, I had to choose a purposeful sampling strategy for the selection of both the libraries and the participants (Patton, 2002). Purposeful sampling enabled the selection of two libraries that met the specific criteria for the study; and from these sites specific participants were also

selected that would afford the necessary insight and information on the impact rural community libraries have on the lives of rural library patrons.

Site selection. A combination of factors were used in the selection of libraries to be used in this research study, a mixed purposeful sampling, for triangulation, flexibility and to meet the criteria for the study (Patton, 2002).

Community libraries designated as rural were first identified with the help of a seasoned state librarian and several online searches. I looked over the description, distance and location of these libraries and selected ten. I then visited the web sites of these ten, reviewing the opening hours and advertised programs, which gave me a sense of what the focus was for each one. I then selected five libraries to visit. These were all libraries located in the southeastern areas of North Carolina. I visited all five libraries, but I only met and spoke with three of the librarians. From my visitation and subsequent phone calls I found that the two other libraries and librarians had very restrictive hours and limited access. The table below depicts a summary of the selection criteria and results on the three libraries.

Table 1. Libraries Selection Criteria.

Pseudonyms	Programs & Characteristics Reflective of Rurality	High Adult Patronage	Diversified population	Distance from Urban & Inaccessibility to other resources
Michael T. Booker Library	Yes: Historical section on local heroes and celebrities. Displays of local artifacts. Embedded in community life with specialized programs. Unique home outreach program.	Yes, 93%	Yes	Yes, closest library and city is almost 50 miles away.
Harriet Tubman Library	Yes: Historical section on local heroes. Displays of local artifacts. Collaboration with community agencies.	Yes, more than 50%	Yes, 20% African-American, 10% Hispanic.	Yes, main branch of county, so feeds smaller libraries in surrounding towns.
William Goody Library	Non observable	Yes, 75%	Information not available	No, two colleges in same town

From these three options I selected the first two that were most suitable for my study of rural community libraries. These were designated as rural and far enough from urban cities with limited access to other informational/educational facilities, had a high percentage of adult patronage, characteristics and programs that were unique and reflective of their rurality, and diversified populations. They were also portrayed as involved in their communities.

These two were used in the case study, and were identified as Michael T. Booker Library and Harriet Tubman Library.

Participant selection. The specified criterion for selection of participants for case studies is that it be purposeful (Creswell, 2007). Miles and Huberman (1994) propose sixteen strategies for purposeful sampling and identify the purpose for each strategy. The maximum variation has been identified as most suitable for the participant selection for this study. This approach utilizes diverse variations and identifies important common patterns; it enables a selection of participants that would yield most valuable, relevant and robust information. Since this research is focused on the role of the community libraries in the education of adults, it is essential that maximum variation is used for participant selection to enhance the collection of optimum data, from participants who are old enough to relate their library experiences to their education, and have used the selected community libraries long enough for the experiences to be tied to the community.

In this study, a demographic questionnaire was included in the sampling to ensure the variation required for a maximum variation purposeful sampling. This questionnaire, designed to gather demographic data, was used also to enhance the participant selection process (see appendix A). The specifications for the choice of patrons included length of time of library use, time lived in the community, variations in gender, education, economic status, and in the ages, between the ages of 40 - 75. This age range is determined as the range of the “open nesters” and “senior citizens”; that is the age range when most adults usually have more time for pursuits in lifelong learning or adult education (Roberson & Merriam, 2005); and also because there is a skewing of the population towards the elderly range in rural areas

(Jones, Kendel, & Parker, 2007). An additional reason for the limitation to this age range is because participants were able to see and relate the results of their library use instead of still being in the process; that is, because of their ages and more experience they were better able to relate the impact of the library on their lives.

The participant sample consisted of four library workers: Michael T. Booker Library had only one certified librarian and one assistant, both of whom consented to be included in the study. Harriet Tubman Library had two certified and full time librarians and likewise, both of them participated. The participant selection was to include six library patrons, three from each library; but two participants, both from Library Two, chose to have another family member present at the interviews. Participants have been assigned fictitious names for purposes of anonymity.

The demographic questionnaire that had been stipulated for use prior to participant selection was introduced to the librarians and permission sought for its distribution and use in the selection. Due to privacy laws the Library does not keep personal records of attendance, so only the library staff recognized the regular patrons and could identify the constant users who could speak about the relevance of the library in their learning and lives. Ultimately the forms were filled out by people recommended by the librarians, and people I had approached and who showed interest in the research. Selection was then made from the number who had filled out the forms.

Twenty-five forms were deployed in Library One with fourteen respondents. Of the fourteen respondents two had incomplete information, four had not used the library for more than a few months, and two were employees of the library. Looking over the demographic

information, the remaining six were found to be likely candidates who fitted the criteria as required for the purposes of the research: were between the ages of 40- and above, had lived in the community for more than five years and used the library for as long, to be able to speak of their experiences in the library and of the community. These six were contacted by e-mail and the four who responded were called to schedule interviews. Only three were willing to give their time and finally participated in the study.

Twenty-five forms were also deployed in Library Two. The librarians here were much busier and had not helped to follow up on the questionnaire, so I had to be present on location more often and to get a few more people to fill out the forms. I finally had ten respondents, four with incomplete information, and one an unwilling candidate who never responded to my e-mails or phone calls. Of the remaining five, two were husband and wife and two were sisters who wanted to be co-participants.

The participants in this study fell into two groups. Library staff were selected as part of the study with no consideration but that they had worked at the selected libraries for a long time and were able to relate their experiences in the rural community libraries. Library users were selected because they were patrons of the designated rural libraries for no less than five years, had been born and or lived in the communities for more than five years, were between the ages of 40 – 75. These had filled out the questionnaire, expressed interest in participating in the study, and there were enough variations in age, sex and race that I did not have to use those as criteria for selection.

Data Collection

As is essential with case study research, multiple data collection methods were used to extract rich information and thick description (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003a; 2003b). These methods afforded data triangulation (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003b). This case is bounded by the context, specific locations of the sites, and the restrictive use of the sites for data collection.

Data were collected over a period of eighteen months, starting in the fall of 2008 till end of 2009. The data collection methods included: demographic questionnaire, in-depth interviews of selected participants - librarians and adult patrons, field observations on site at the libraries and of participants: observations of librarians at work and library patrons' use of the library, examination of documents and physical artifacts.

Interviews. Interviews have been described as the most important source of information in case studies (Yin, 2003b). The interviews were guided conversations, during which I was careful to follow a line of enquiry relevant to the case study, while keeping the conversation fluid and open. Two different interview guides, *open ended*, were used (See Appendices B and C); these were used mainly to guide the structure of the interview as the participants were encouraged to discuss facts, and to give their insights and opinions about events (Yin, 2003b).

The first interview guide, used with library patrons consisted of questions about library interests, library use, perception about libraries, attendance at programs, perception of adult education, and role of the library in participants' careers, hobbies, chosen endeavors or general interests(see appendix B). The second interview guide consisted of questions about

the librarian's perception about the role of libraries in the community, about program development, services, perception of adult education, and perception of the role of libraries in cultural awareness, educational development, and community development (see appendix C).

Though I communicated with all participants prior to each interviews, I had not met with any of the patron participants personally. So at the first meetings introductions were made and I spoke freely about myself, my research and a little about my background as nearly all were curious because of my accent. This put the participants at ease enough to speak freely and to be comfortable with me. I also gave each participant a copy of the official letter authorizing me to conduct the research (see appendix D).

Library premises were used for all interviews. The library setting had also been established as a familiar and comfortable setting for the participants. Librarian participants were easily reachable at the locations, but their consent was sought and appointments were scheduled prior to the interview dates. Consent forms were administered to all participants and signatures acquired before the beginning of each interview (See appendix E).

Participant interviews were between one and one half hours long; with an additional follow-up interview for all but two participants. The follow-up interviews were built upon responses from the first interview which helped elicit information of greater depth. Some of these included answers when the participant had indicated that they needed to give more thought to a particular question, or when I felt I needed an example or a story to give more depth to the response given.

All guided interviews were recorded by an electronic device, with the permission of the participants. Thus I was able to make notes on follow-up questions, and to note participants' non-verbal responses, like body language. Each interview was transcribed. As a form of member checking (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) the transcripts were given to each research participant for review.

Field observations. Field work has been described as an important aspect of case study research and often includes direct observations and field notes as a means of gaining first-hand knowledge of the phenomena under study (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2003b).

The field observations were based on an observation protocol that had been prepared and approved for the research (See appendix F), as recommended for case study research (Bodgan & Biklen, 1992; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003b). The observation protocol was designed to help elicit information that was relevant to the research questions. Some of the points of interest in the observations included: the location and situational setting, lay out, structural frame, displays and decorations, collections, and community life. These were to increase or add new dimensions to the data collected (Yin, 2003b). The periods of observation were varied throughout the daily opening schedules of the libraries so as to get a sense of the different groups of patrons who attended at different times of the day.

Field notes were recorded on the spot as observed, with side notes on reflections and what follow up may be necessary (Bodgan & Biklen, 1992; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Document review. Review of documents is a valuable resource in data collection in case studies (Yin, 2003b); they have an explicit role, often of corroborating other evidence and providing details. They are also objective sources and provide what is described as

stability, and help ground an investigation in the context (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Merriam, 1988).

Documents reviewed in this study consisted of information on the different rural communities some of which were from the North Carolina Rural Data Bank, and from the local community newspapers. These were to confirm the context and rurality of the locations of the library communities. Other documents reviewed included library brochures – on literacy and outreach information, advertisements of special programs on fliers and on the library announcement boards, library handouts that were available or on display at the libraries. These were needed for information on the resources that were available to patrons and the community, and to confirm some of the information that was received from participants.

Artifact review. An important part of the field work or observation included an artifact review because community libraries are characterized by the unique displays and collections that are distinctive to their communities (Gates, 1990). As identified by Yin, (2003b), physical and cultural artifacts are another source of evidence in case studies.

Photographic records were taken, with permission, of certain displays or decorations that were out during the data collection period. There were also pictures of the outlying farmlands that show the rurality of the areas. There were 70 pictures taken of the Michael T Booker Library premises and the community, and 85 pictures of the Harriet Tubman Library premises and community. There were also artifact displays which depicted the heritage and history of the people and uniqueness of the communities. Some of these included local quilt displays, framed picture of a tractor – a relic of the agricultural occupation of the people.

There were several other artifacts which will not be described as they may be unique to the settings and therefore compromise confidentiality.

The information gathered from the document and artifact reviews have been incorporated into the data to give further credence or convey important case characteristics (Yin, 2003b). This has been done, as much as possible, without identifying the site. The information was gathered over a period of eighteen months. Please see Table 2 for a summary description of documents and artifacts reviewed.

Table 2. Summary of Documents and Artifacts Reviewed.

Document/ Artifact	Michael T. Booker Library	Harriet Tubman Library
Data Banks	North Carolina Rural economic Development Center – Rural Data Bank, N C Economic Development Intelligence System	North Carolina Rural economic Development Center – Rural Data Bank, N C Economic Development Intelligence System
Fliers	Special programs – author book signing, popular actor’s visit	Special programs – Artist visit & talk
Sign Board	Announcements: Library programs & local community adverts	Announcements: Library programs; local community events & adverts
Community Newspaper	Local news reports - report on community response & support for new premises; on fundraising dinner for library	Local news reports
Brochures	Literacy information for children & adults	Literacy information; outreach programs for schools and senior centers
Photos	70 pictures were taken in all	85 pictures were taken in all
Library	Library building & premises, old & new, layout, private rooms, shelves, displays	Library building & premises, layout, conference rooms, shelves, displays, old piano
Community	Old downtown & railway station, new developments, main street	Cotton farmlands on outskirts of town, local pharmacy/merchandise store
People	Library patrons at computers, browsing at shelves, elderly relaxing in lounge chairs	Library patrons at computers, browsing shelves, agric extension use of room & computers for training
Artifact Displays	Old tractor picture, bust of local author, old grandfather clock, scout painted mural on wall	Quilt display, photography display from community college students, local artist’s paintings, tribal headdress

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of examining, categorizing, and systemically searching through the data gathered through interviews, observation and field notes and other evidence to enhance an understanding and presentation of the initial propositions of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Yin, 2003b). In qualitative research several strategies have been prescribed for analyzing data (Bernard & Ryan, 2010; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Dey, 1993; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003b) and recommendations made on which strategy was most suitable for what kind of study.

For the analysis of the data for this study, a thematic analytical design was found to be appropriate. The analytical design involved making a detailed description of the case and its settings and included different forms of data analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995). A holistic description and analysis was utilized in order to yield extensive thematic categories for interpretations crucial to the case (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003b).

The thematic analytical design combined both the inductive and the deductive approaches, since themes are derived both from the data – inductive, and from the prior understanding of the phenomenon under study – a priori or deductive approach (Bernard & Ryan, 2010). According to Bernard and Ryan (2010), the prior understanding, or a priori themes may be generated from “professional definitions found in literature reviews; from local, commonsense constructs; and from researchers’ values, theoretical orientations, and personal experiences.” Researchers go further to state that the decisions on what topics to cover and the questions included in the interview protocol already form a basis for a priori

themes (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Dey, 1993). Dey (1993), however suggests that even with a priori approach it is difficult to anticipate all themes; therefore the need to include the inductive approach with themes derived from the data.

The choice of the analytical design required that analysis began simultaneously with data collection. Hence I made detailed descriptions of the cases and the settings, taking notes on my reflections and looking for patterns between categories. I also looked at single instances; in qualitative research the lone voice is relevant, for direct interpretation.

I compiled the information gathered in separate notebooks labeled Lib. 1 and Lib. 2: field notes; documents like data bank statistics, newspaper reports, fliers, brochures; pictures of library premises and layout; displays, artifacts and evidence of rurality like farmlands in the outlying areas of town. Ongoing data collection and analysis enabled me to identify what else was needed to follow up on, and also to narrow down or focus on specifics, and to get that lone voice or an outlying factor. For example, when a participant made a reference to something in the library or community, I made a note to verify or follow up on it either by observation, document review or from another participant.

An electronic program, NVivo 8, an analytical software used in qualitative research, was used in the analysis of data. This program may be used to code and retrieve, build theories, and conduct analysis of data. I used NVivo 8 to retrieve and categorize my data based on a previously developed set of codes. This set of codes was based on my research questions and theoretical framework, a priori; and also on examination of the data.

Data was shared with colleagues at group discussion sessions for further assistance, comments, meaning-making and discoveries (Creswell, 2007). There also was constant liaison with and supervision by my advisor for guidance and direction.

Trustworthiness

For ethical reasons and quality judgments certain tests are required for trustworthiness of research (Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Merriam, 1998). Kemmis posits that what makes a case study research trustworthy is the researcher's critical presence in the context of occurrence of phenomena, observation, hypothesis testing, triangulation and interpretation (1983, p. 103). Probable threats to this study's trustworthiness included the accuracy of the record and transcription of interviews, researcher and respondent bias, and confidentiality. The research questions were used as a basis to produce meaning making questions to match the qualitative method (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Ethically my research was guided both by the code of ethics of library science and my core values as a professional librarian, and the graduate school requirements. The concept of anonymity and confidentiality are strongly upheld in the profession with strict guidelines in place to "protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted." Approval was sought and received from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at North Carolina State University who administers compliance for the ethical treatment of human research subjects to conduct the study (see Appendix D). Each participant received and perused the IRB forms. Then I gave each one a copy of the informed consent form, and after a clear explanation of the focus of study and data collection methods, and assurances of

voluntary participation and confidentiality each signed the form and received a copy for their records (see Appendix E). Confidentiality was maintained in the study by the use of pseudonyms for all participants and for both the cases under study, and also by devising a secure storage system for the signed forms, interview recordings and transcripts of the interviews.

Data credibility and researcher bias. According to Merriam (1998) “ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge with the researcher-participant relationship’ (p.213) which may compromise trustworthiness of a study, and goes further to recommend several steps to enhance data credibility. For *internal validity*, Merriam (1998) proposes that it is important to understand the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon of interest and to present a holistic interpretation of the study. She goes further to suggest six basic strategies to enhance internal validity: triangulation, member checks, long-term observation, peer examination, participatory research, and clarifying researcher’s biases. These were used in the study and some of them have already been discussed in this chapter. For peer examination, data was shared with colleagues at group discussion sessions for further assistance, comments, meaning-making and discoveries. There was also constant liaison with and supervision by my advisor and technical member for guidance and direction.

Construct validity has been described as “establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied” (Yin, 2003b, p. 34). To secure construct validity multiple sources of evidence were used; and participants were requested to review drafts of the research report (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003b).

Generalizability of the study entails to what extent the findings can be applied to other situations (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003b). Merriam recommends the use of multi-case study and suggests that the use of predetermined questions and specific procedures for coding and analysis would enhance the generalizability of the study; while Yin simply describes this process as replication logic. Marshall and Rossman (2006), recommend detailed records of the research process and data to provide additional rigor. I have used, extensively, participants' words to provide a rich and thick description, and to give external validity (Merriam, 1998).

For *reliability*, that is consistency of same results with the same procedure in data collection, there is a consensus that a measure of this might be difficult in qualitative research, because with time attitudes and circumstances may change perspectives of participants or the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003b). However because the goal of reliability is to minimize errors and biases in studies, it is recommended that the researcher carefully documents details of procedures so another investigator could replicate them in another study (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Yin, 2003b). Such care has been taken in this study as there has been an assiduous record of the details of this research. The potential for subjectivity in qualitative research has been explored extensively in current literature which demonstrates the need for a clarification of the researcher's bias.

Subjectivity statement. No research is bereft of all subjectivity, since there must have been, no matter how minute, a personal interest or curiosity undergirding an interest. Therefore, as recommended for qualitative research (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002), I reiterate my subjectivity in the subsequent paragraphs.

I immigrated to this country with tremendous expectations and hopes of fulfilling the American dream. My quest since my arrival has been for familiar grounds, searching for answers to the insecurities, inequities and injustices that were pervasive in the society I came from.

I am a strong advocate of democracy and social justice. I believe in the equality of all peoples, in equity and inclusion in service to all, and this has been carried over into my research work. I believe in helping the voiceless to find a voice, in awareness raising, and community conscientization towards development. I believe in community enlightenment, and how information can be best used for economic emancipation. I share Forrester's (1989) notion of manipulating or using whatever power you wield to the advantage of the underprivileged or the non-vocal group.

I do not believe in knowledge for its own sake, all learning is towards an end. Knowledge increases usefulness and productivity. I believe in the emancipatory capacity of knowledge, which is why my study is on the role of community libraries in the education of adults. I believe that for now the library is still the main venue or source of knowledge for rural communities which are bereft of such facilities as are available in the urban centers. I need to explore all learning and possibilities to raise awareness in my community, and to generate their interest in self development and progression.

I believe that true knowledge includes a spiritual understanding. I do not believe that absolute knowledge is possible. Why? Because I believe God is alive, still creating and I cannot know anything in perfection until I get to meet him.

Scientific relative knowledge is possible as we continue to probe and seek, through research, experiment, observation, experience and thought. It is incredible the amount of knowledge that is possible with observation and experience, especially in an area of particular interest to the individual. I believe that an understanding of this nature of humankind should be exploited by educationists to diversify curriculum and instructional methods, so every person gets an opportunity to discover his or her special area of interest. This is why I believe libraries must reflect the culture and values of the communities in which they are located. The aforementioned subjectivity statement informs my interest in community libraries and how they impact the lives of everyday people.

However, as discussed under trustworthiness, I was diligent in following protocol – with record keeping, triangulation, peer review and member checks, so I believe researcher bias was greatly minimized.

Limitations

The limitations of this study center on the methodology and the nature of the field of Library Science. The focus of the study is on adults in rural communities and the impact the community libraries may have on their education. The research participants' experiences may be different and diversified therefore generalizations may not be drawn from the results. The participant selection has been limited to persons aged forty and above, not younger, it is therefore not representative of the community. Two libraries were used in the study, and both were selected from the rural south eastern parts of North Carolina, the study is therefore not a comparative study between urban and rural libraries.

Summary

This chapter consisted of the description of the methodology of the research. The description covered the overall qualitative design which consisted of a holistic interpretive case study. The sampling methods consisted of mixed purposeful sampling for the site selection and maximum variation purposeful sampling for the participant selection. The research methods were outlined - demographic questionnaire, guided interviews, field observations, document review, and artifact review. The processes of data analysis were discussed, and finally, issues of trustworthiness and the researcher's bias and assumptions were addressed.

Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of this research was to elicit the role of community libraries in the education of adults and in promoting social connectedness in rural communities. Data revealed the impact of the community library on the awareness-raising of the adult patrons of the community libraries and on the community development generally. This study provided insights into the educational development materials and resources available to patrons in rural community libraries, educed information on the economic enhancement provided by the libraries, and demonstrated the leadership role of the librarian in the community.

Data sources for this study included a review of documents and reports, physical artifacts available on display, field observations, observations of librarians and library patrons, and interviews of librarians and adult patron participants.

The research questions guiding the study were

1. What, if any, are the impacts of the community library on adult learners in a rural community?
2. How do rural libraries work in collaboration with community agencies and institutions?
3. How does the rural librarian perceive and enact the roles of adult educator and community leader?

This chapter is presented in three sections to fully present the case study: a full description of the two libraries, participants' profiles, and the findings from the data. The first section gives the context of the case study and the two sites under investigation. The second section is the participants' profiles, which includes the biographical information of

each participant. The third and last section discusses the findings from the data gathered from the interviews, observations, artifact review, and review of documents on library background information.

Context of the Study

The context of this case study is rural community libraries, with the two sites selected from the southeastern areas of North Carolina. These towns were designated as rural and used to consist extensively of agricultural farmlands. More recently however, these communities became a haven for commuters from the hectic cities not too far away, for retirees looking for a tax break on their homes, and developers looking to exploit the new influx of people to build housing developments.

The rural community libraries situated in these communities experienced a spurt in attendance with the growth in the population. Also, more people came in with the economic downturn, and the libraries became the community foci points for information, internet access, and meeting space. The Michael T Booker Library is situated in Davenport, and the Harriet Tubman Library is located in Covington. The names of the libraries and towns have been changed for reasons of confidentiality. The communities and library settings are described below from information gathered during observation, from pictures taken for record purposes, from documents and artifact reviews. All of these have been extensively described in chapter three under the methodology, and have helped to determine what is described below and the context of the cases under study.

Michael T. Booker Library. The Michael T. Booker Library (MTB) is situated in the town of Davenport, in the southeastern area of North Carolina. This town is like a typical

small town with the main street running through the center square, the public offices on one side of the road and the stores along the other side. The relics of the old town were only observable by driving down one of the side roads. On one of my visits I took a wrong turn on my way to the library and literally came to a dead end. There were dilapidated buildings with rusty machinery in what used to be yards. On inquiry, I discovered that the area used to be the heart of the town's industry. The produce from the vast surrounding farmlands used to be received and processed for onward transportation from there.

On my next visit I deliberately drove around the back streets for further investigation and to take pictures for my record. I could see the old train tracks, the remnants of the processing plants and store houses, and the relics of a once thriving tobacco farming community. Now, at the time of gathering data, this town was in the middle of transitioning into what a participant described as a "bedroom community," with a spurt of growth in its population, new housing developments, sprouting small businesses, and a brand new library building.

At the time of my first visit, the library was occupying a temporary location, sharing the premises with the police station. The space was small and cramped with no reading rooms at all. There were six computers near the entrance in full view of the library attendant. From my perspective, both as an adult educator and a librarian, the arrangements and cramped premises were neither conducive to learning nor provided the freedom and privacy required for adult comfort. I was ready to move on but stopped to ask a few questions anyway. When I was informed that they had 93% adult patronage that statistic caught my attention. Even in the cramped space, 2400 patrons visited the library in the last month prior

to my visit. These facts piqued my curiosity and I was willing to discover how this community library managed to maintain its patrons' interest and keep attendance high.

By the time of the data collection, the library had moved to its own newly renovated building, which was a lot bigger than where it previously was situated. I later gathered from interviews with the participants how the community members had prevailed in a long drawn out fight to get the library situated at this premises.

The new library space consisted of a wider entrance with a small circulation desk and display tables. In our first walk through the library, the librarian expressed great pride in an area with two lounge chairs, decorated with small artworks that represented the local heritage, and with magazine racks standing within reach. She mentioned how these had become the "place" for some of the elderly loungers or mothers worn out by hyperactive children.

There were two different sections clearly demarcated – adult and children – with each section having its own bookshelves and computer sectors. In the adult section were long rows of shelves and books, and there was still space for a few work tables, a conference room, and two separate quiet study rooms. The adult computer section comprised of twelve computers with individual cubicles, a vast improvement on the six computers sitting under the close watch of the librarian at the previous location. There were also now special display sections like an African-American collection and study texts for SATs, GREs, and GMAT.

The children's section contained lower book shelves with the usual paraphernalia of attractive children's posters, paint jobs, and arts and crafts. There was a separate computer

section with six computers and individual tables with two chairs so parents could supervise or oversee their children's work. There was also a separate room for the children's program which had a mural painted on its wall courtesy of the local Boy Scouts - evidence of community involvement and participation in the library.

The services were diversified and included most of the same things offered at typical public libraries: internet service, reader's advisory, circulation - with books, journals and interlibrary loans. The programs ranged from the regular children's story times to adult book signings, local celebrity visitations, and even specialized programs like antique valuations.

Harriet Tubman Library. The Harriet Tubman Library (HTB) is located in Covington, a small southeastern town with a population of less than 5000 people. It was in an area designated as rural. Driving down from Raleigh, I started to notice the cotton fields, miles away from town, and long stretches of white cotton heads ready for harvesting. It was such a beautiful sight that I stopped to take pictures. This was a much bigger town than Davenport, the location of the other library site in the study. This town was also the main city of the county and therefore had the county seat, county offices, and branch offices of several government agencies. This town actually had a branch of a community college, albeit housed in a small commercial building, several banks, the courthouse, four pharmacies and many small businesses.

The library had a pleasant atmosphere and was comfortable. I entered this county library and felt right at home, even though I had never visited before. There was a newspaper and magazine display, arranged to catch a visitor's attention. There were also displays of art,

and the children's section had dolls, puppets, animal figures, and a wall mural. The numbered aisles were large, the information center had community events posted, and there was even a piano sitting in a corner, albeit with a few books and pictures exhibited on it. The lighting was good, and the overall atmosphere was welcoming and conducive to learning and relaxation – a perfect setting for a library.

The lobby was large, but not very spacious. The circulation desk was up front with a small office behind it. Adjacent to the office, to the right, was a big conference room that was available for use by community groups on a first-come-first-served basis. On the other side, across from the circulation desk, there were several computer cubicles all occupied by patrons. On the same side, there were two other smaller rooms that could be used for two-party meetings or individual quiet study. And a little further in, there were two sitting areas with comfortable lounge chairs and center tables – one with magazine racks to the side and the other probably just a reading corner.

The librarian was easily accessible and happy to be of service. The patronage information I needed was readily available: the library had roughly 50% adult patronage and a high level of diversity among its patrons; consisting of 20% African American, 10% Hispanic, and the rest Caucasian. The librarian also mentioned that they had a few patrons who attended the community college and several others who were distance learners at other colleges and used the library for online classes.

There were more services and programs offered at this library because they had more staff. There was a children's librarian who organized the children's story times and outreach activities to the community kindergarten and daycare centers. Adult programs included some

collaboration with other community agencies, like one with the local farmer's Agricultural Cooperative Extension Program which I had the opportunity to observe.

Similarities and dissimilarities. The libraries settings were described extensively, but for the purposes of analysis, some of the descriptions are reiterated with emphasis on similarities and dissimilarities. Both libraries were similar in their designation as libraries serving rural communities, were situated in smaller accommodations, and were located in easily accessible areas of town. There are, however, three notable characteristics in these libraries that make for important differences in the findings.

The Michael T. Booker Library (MTB) was a community sponsored library. First established by communal effort and presently by choice of the community members, the library has remained independent of the county. This characteristic presented financial and service limitations. Whereas the Harriet Tubman Library (HT) was the county headquarters and main branch of its county and it was government-sponsored and therefore had greater opportunities and access to more funds and a wider circulation. This library also included a higher number of qualified staff and assistants, whereas MTB had only one qualified librarian, one other full time staff member, and multiple volunteers from the community who helped out with shelving and other non-specialized services.

A second difference that was notably significant was in the rurality and proximity to other libraries. While the MTB was further removed from any other town, had no other libraries close enough for easy access by members of the community, and was a stand-alone library, the HT was the main branch of the county libraries, and its patrons therefore had unlimited access to all the resources available at all other branches through inter-library loans

and web access. This one difference was very remarkable because of the limited access for patrons in MTB. The decision to be a stand alone library was by the community's own choosing as was discussed in the findings.

The third and last difference was in the perception of rurality of the communities. As discussed in the literature review, the perception of the community played an important role in the understanding of rurality (Bracken, 2008). While the community of the HT Library could be described as rural by official designation and geographic location, the community of the MTB Library was further removed by social and cultural factors. The population was less diversified and the community more cohesive, participants claimed it was easy to spot outsiders. Greater detail buttressed by information from data gathered will be afforded in later discussions in the findings section of the chapter.

The preceding section consisted of detailed descriptions of the cases under study, the Michael T. Booker library and the Harriet Tubman library. The descriptions included the physical location, the buildings, the layout, and displays of the libraries. There was also a short comparison of the libraries to highlight the similarities and the differences. The next section gives a profile of the participants in the study.

Participants in the Study

This section consists of an overview of the participants. Tables of the demographic data (see Tables 3 and 4) that was gathered from the questionnaire completed by participants to assist in the selection provides a synopsis of the participants. Profile descriptions of the participants provide insights into the personality of each individual.

Overview of participants. The participants consisted of 12 men and women between the ages of 35 and 78. The 35year old participant was the second library staff member for one of the libraries and had to be included. Their educational levels also ranged from GED through two-year College to professional degrees and graduate school. The information on the participants did not come only from the demographic questionnaire they had completed but also from the interviews. In telling their stories, some of them, especially the patrons, freely spoke about their lives, accomplishments, interests and passions. A few even spoke about their family background and growing up in the community. In the discussions all participants talked about what role the library had played and was still playing in their lives.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face at the library premises and were recorded. Most of the participants were interviewed twice, with the first interview taking approximately one and a half hours and a follow-up interview lasting about an hour.

Table 3. Demographic Information on Participants in Michael T. Booker Library.

Pseudonym	Age	Education	Occupation	Years lived in community	Years attending library	Distance from library
Tracy	43	MLS (Master of Library Science)	Town Library Director	Worked at the library; commuted from out of town.	9 years	N/A
Cynthia	35	High School	Library Assistant	35 years	27 years	N/A
Carol	59	MLS	Retired Librarian	18; 27 years	25 years	1 mile
Rhoda	78	RN	Retired Nurse	18; 5 years	2 ½ years	4 miles
Michael	60	College Courses & Cont. Ed classes	Sales Associate & Landscape Maintenance	60 years	6 – 7 years	4 miles

Table 4. Demographic Information on Participants in Harriet Tubman Library.

Pseudonym	Age	Education	Occupation	Years lived in community	Years attending library	Distance from library
Tammy	53	MLS (Master of Library Science)	County Library Director	11 years	11 years	N/A
Janet	49	MLS	Reference & Circulation Librarian	9 years	9 years	N/A
David & Allison Banks	68 & 67	4 year college; 2 year college	Retired Military Family	5 years	5 years	22 miles
Violet	45	2 year college	Full time Student	45 years	20 years	1 mile
Tina & Brea	53 & 60	GED GED	Retired Sisters	53 & 60 years	10 years	2 miles

Participant profiles. Tracy was the town library director in Michael T. Booker (MTB) Library and has a Master of Library Science (MLS) degree. She has been the library director here for nine years and knows most of her regular patrons by name. She loves her job and the community in which she works, but she decried the financial limitations that reduced her ability to do more for the community. She is very dedicated to her work and has trained her assistant and volunteers to be invested in their work.

She is well loved and respected in the community, to which participants in the study readily testified. She was 43 years old and was married with children. She drove over half an hour to work every day.

Cynthia was the library Assistant at the MTB Library. She had a high school diploma and worked at other jobs before joining the library as just an office clerk, and she later advanced to the position of library assistant. She had worked four years at the library. She stated that she loved her job so much she might go back to school to get qualified. She credited the librarian for the quality of the training she received that helped to put her in the position of trust she held as library assistant. She was 38 years old and recently married. She was born in the town of Davenport and had lived in the community all her life.

Carol was my first library patron interviewee. She was a patron at the MTB Library, a library volunteer, a member of the Friends of the Library, and a very active participant. She had an MLS degree which informed her interest in the library to which she brought her knowledge and experience.

She was born and raised in the community but went away to college and to work. She came back later to work at the school library from where she eventually retired. She was

quite happy to volunteer at the library because she felt it was a privilege to be able to give back to the community. She saw her activities not as a sacrifice but a give and take because she was getting as much out of it as she was giving. She was 59 years old and married. She loved to read non-fiction and she was active in the community.

Rhoda was a patron at the MTB Library, a library volunteer and an active participant. She was born and raised in the community, went away to college, and did not come back until she retired. She had a degree in Nursing. She was dedicated to her work at the library and said it had given her much more than she was able to give back. She donated books she had read to the library and spent a lot of her time there.

Rhoda was 68 years old and unmarried. She was, by her own admission, “set in her ways” and needed a place like the library to help her unwind and meet other people. She was witty and had a good sense of humor, yet at the same time she was strong in sharing her views about the people she felt were not more forthcoming towards the library.

Michael was a 60 year old patron at the MTB Library. He was born and raised in the community, and even though he had done a bit of travelling and spent some years away in college, he had always lived here and come back to the land and community he loved so much. Michael was so enthusiastic and voluble about the historical landmarks and heroes of the community and about his childhood that it was difficult to get him to address the issues concerning the library or focus on answering the questions to which I needed answers. I gathered that Michael’s family had large farm holdings, a portion on which he still lived. He had a few years of college education though he did not graduate and he had worked in the

community most of his adult life. He still worked as a salesman in a large department store about half an hour from town. He lived with his two adult children.

Michael said he visited the library about twice a week even though he worked and lived quite a distance from there. He loved to do research on whatever subject caught his interest at the time. He therefore came in to use the computers and sometimes borrowed books and tapes.

Tammy was the Librarian in charge of HT Library and the Director of the County Libraries of which her library is the headquarters. She had an MLS degree and had worked in this same library branch for 11 years. She only recently became the Director. She was very professional and very busy, but she also was very enthusiastic talking about her job, her community, and her people. She spoke with pride about the developments taking place around the community and freely discussed her role and involvement in the community. She was 53 years old.

Janet was the librarian in charge of reference and circulation in HT Library. She had an MLS degree and had worked in this same library for nine years. She knew the patrons and some of their histories. I believe this was because her work brought her more into contact with the library users. Janet was very precise in her statements and would not say much more than was required in her answers, even when prompted. She was 49 years old.

David and Allison Banks were a couple who wanted to be interviewed together, so I have presented them as a couple. They were both patrons of the HT Library, members of the Board of Directors, and very active in the library. They were also active in the community in

which they lived, an even smaller town about 20 minutes from the library. They had several club memberships, and David was the President of the Ruritan Club in his community.

David Banks was a 68 year old military retiree, and his 67 year old wife, Allison was first a military daughter before she married David, so she had been in a military family all her life. They both went back to school later in life and got their degrees as adult learners. They both had travelled quite a bit before deciding to settle in this community. They chose to live here because they preferred the quietness of the rural community, and according to Allison, “I would only get lost in the city.”

Violet was a patron at the HT Library. She was born and raised in the community and had only been away briefly for one year of education at a four year college. She had to come back home when she got pregnant with her daughter. She had worked different jobs in the community before deciding to go back to college. She was presently a full time student in the branch of the community college in town. She was 45 years old and lived with her mother and teenage daughter. Violet had indicated that she could only spare the time for one interview because of her tight schedule, but she was very cooperative and tried to cover all the areas within that time frame.

Tina and Brea were sisters and were both patrons of the HT Library. They chose to be interviewed together so I have presented them as a couple. They were both born in the community and had both lived there all their lives. Tina was 53 years old and had a GED while Brea, who was 60, had been working on her GED for about five years. Tina had gone back to school to get her GED so she could improve herself and increase her job prospects. Brea was persistent in her effort because she wanted to be a role model for her son and her

grandchildren, because her daughters had not completed high school. The two sisters had different interests. Brea came to the library at least once a week and liked to read fiction, keep up with the school Accelerated Reading list, and spend time browsing the Internet. Tina loved to read magazines and especially liked jokes. They both had worked at sundry jobs but were now retired and loved to spend time at the library and with their grandchildren. Brea was married and lived with her husband and teenage son in high school, and her sister Tina lived with them.

The preceding participant profiles covered information gathered on all participants in the study. This afforded a necessary insight into the lives of the participants to enable a better understanding of their perspectives in the findings. The information gathered from these interviews, from observations, and from document and artifact reviews form the data from which the findings are described below.

Findings

Through interviews with 12 participants in this study, observations, and document and artifact reviews, several factors emerged which enhanced the learning of adults through the rural community libraries. In this section I present the data for the rural community libraries: Michael T. Booker library (MTB) and the Harriett Tubman library (HT). Figure 6 gives a summary of the findings for the three research questions and the discussions that follow elucidate the themes and the subthemes under each question.

Table 5. Summary of Findings.

Research Question 1: How do rural community libraries impact adult learners?

- | <u>Themes</u> | <u>Subthemes</u> |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Affording Access to Information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Providing resources for self-development b. Fostering career and professional development opportunities |
| 2. Providing Engagement Opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Allowing direct interaction with others b. Permitting volunteer opportunities |
| 3. Granting Access to Sacred Place | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Presenting personal quiet space b. Offering space for collective group gatherings |

Research Question 2: How do rural community libraries work in collaboration with community agencies and institutions?

- | <u>Themes</u> | <u>Subthemes</u> |
|---|---|
| 1. Functioning as Multipurpose Facilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Providing training site b. Acting as government repository c. Opening venue for mediation d. Supporting organized special events e. Opening for artistic exhibitions |
| 2. Organizing Community Outreaches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reaching out to Senior Centers b. Collaborating with schools c. Providing service to homebound |

Research Question 3: How does the rural librarian enact the roles of an adult educator and community leader?

- | <u>Themes</u> | <u>Subthemes</u> |
|--|---|
| 1. Nurturing an Environment for Learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Facilitating learning efficacy b. Inculcating personal service orientation c. Maintaining need based resource collection |
| 2. Building Bridges of Inclusion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Promoting community awareness b. Generating social capital c. Advancing sense of belonging |

Emerging Theme: Rural Community Development

- a. Changing the landscape of rurality
- b. Back to rural migrations
- c. Factoring in the library

How do rural community libraries impact adult learners? Rural community libraries were found to directly impact the lives of adult learners in several ways. The discussions of these factors are presented under the following three themes: affording access to information, providing engagement opportunities, and granting access to sacred place. These themes were divided and further discussed under subthemes as needed.

Affording access to information. The rural community libraries provided free access to all resources to members of the communities who would avail themselves of the services. Such resources included books, magazines, journals, newspapers, tapes, DVDs, and the internet, including web access to several specialized sites and data banks. Janet, the reference and circulation librarian at the HT Library offered an explanation that encapsulates the story of rural life and rural libraries:

A lot of people come here for internet access because they can't get internet where they live. They live out in the country and all they have is maybe a dialup connection available to them or some people don't even have cable TV available to them. So, you know, that's the rural nature of the county is one of the reasons that more people are coming here for internet access. For instance, if they could perhaps afford, they have a computer at home and they could afford internet access but it's not available.

The rural community library, therefore, was like a lifeline connecting most of the people living in these communities to information that is required and essential to their livelihood. The theme, affording access to information, has been classified into two subthemes, providing resources for self development and fostering career and professional development, which are discussed in this section.

Providing resources for self development. All the participants in the study shared readily on how having such free access in a rural community had impacted their lives. Patron participants shared different experiences in self-directed learning with the resources available at the rural library, while librarian participants recounted stories of similar feedback they received from patrons. These resources afforded the patrons information that was timely, life changing, and was accessible to the patrons, which are all great examples of lifelong learning. Areas of impact included personal development and emancipation; changes in life situations, and simply acquiring some new knowledge for empowerment. The following are their stories.

Carol, Michael, Violet, Tina and Brea each told stories of how using the resources at the library facilitated their personal development and helped them to accomplish some significant things in their lives.

Carol, a retired librarian, recounted her childhood and how she read everything the library had to offer: “As early as I could walk around by myself in a small town, I would go to the library and get library books. And basically, I read pretty much everything they had.” She went on to speak about learning:

My focus has always been on learning how to learn. It is important what you learn because they teach you a basis to attach other things to it. But just, you know, if you don't plan and think about it, a life-long process of learning, then you should be left behind. That's my philosophy of education right there.

Describing herself as a perfect example of “upward mobility,” Carol said neither of her parents went to college. She believed the library had significantly impacted her ability to make through college and to accomplish all she had in her life.

Though not expressed so succinctly, these other patron participants recounted their own stories. Michael, a salesman, attributed his achievements to his love for reading and declared that “being well read gives you...greater ability to communicate.” Two patron participants, Tina and Brea, spoke proudly about their GEDs (General Equivalency Diploma). One had accomplished this feat, and the other was still working on her high school equivalency diploma – an achievement they attributed to their continued attendance at the library.

Before Violet, a 45 year old college student, decided to go back to school, she tried to start her own business. She endeavored to teach herself different things, one of which was candle-making. She had used resources from the library – books and the internet: “I was trying to start my own business and getting tips for that and just looking at different areas of candle making. And so, that was the kind of things I'd come to the library for.” Violet concluded that the library “has definitely positively helped...me with brainstorming or trying to further change me and so um, see how far I've gotten.” She thought that the library helped to improve the way of life of people and was a source of information and direction. She declared that the library was “kind of central for a rural community, for people who are not working professionally....just a lot of people, white collar or blue collar....That's the kind of mix we have in the community, so it affects the lives of everybody.”

Violet thought that the information available at the library was “unlimited” depending on how far you wanted to develop yourself and that if “someone doesn’t use the library...they [were] just limiting themselves.”

A few of the stories told of life changing situations, and how having access to the ready information made a difference. Janet, reference and circulation librarian narrated the stories of two patrons whose lives had been greatly impacted by the access they had to library resources. One young lady had gotten pregnant and married at 16. When her marriage broke up, she went back to school and got a nursing degree. The librarian had observed her growth and development through her consistent use of the library before and while she was in nursing school:

And she went back to nursing school and she got a degree. I think it was a two-year degree in nursing and she is now working as a nurse and so, you know, she was fairly young when I started working here...I just know that she has been coming here consistently, even when she was going to school...You know, to see her accomplish that and doing better and her children are getting older and stuff.

Another patron had a medical problem that she needed to research:

Well, there was a lady a few years ago who um, came here and asked for some help finding some medical books. She had been diagnosed with breast cancer and I guess her doctor had given her some, you know, different options for the treatment. And she wanted to know more about them...I gave her some books and she took them home and I saw her a couple of weeks later and apparently she had decided to have surgery and she had already had her surgery, just a few days earlier, and was out of the

hospital and was back in the library and looked very well and I was absolutely amazed. And I said, you know, well, you look awesome. How do you do that? You just had surgery. She said, oh, yeah. I was up the next morning. I cooked breakfast for my family. And so she had a really easy time with it. But she was very, very appreciative. She said that what I have given her had been very helpful in helping her make up her mind and so, about what kind of treatment to get.

The timely information had given that patron the understanding she needed to help her to make a decision and to make a bold and positive move towards the restoration of her health.

For some of the patrons it was just acquiring some new knowledge for everyday living, and for that feeling of empowerment. David Banks, a retired military officer, saw the library as a place where one could access the “raw data” and make up your own mind. He likened the library to a treasure mine, where a “little mining” might get you a “gold medal.” Speaking about the impact of the library, David said having access to unadulterated information was priceless. Unlike what you would get from newspapers or television during election campaigns, which for rural communities was usually the one town newspaper, such access was invaluable because you could get all the information that would help you make an informed decision. Carol, a retired librarian, also spoke to this point as she described how people would come in just to read the newspapers and magazines: “An average part of their little routine every day is to come in every day or two. Come in and sit down and read the magazines and the newspaper.”

The librarian participants, Tracy, Cynthia, Tammy and Janet, told of how many patrons came in to develop their knowledge skills and for personal empowerment by doing

independent researches and using self-help books. Cynthia, a library assistant, seemed to spend a lot of time with patrons and had very much to say about their needs:

We have some that are, you know, learning to do new things. For instance, they want to start a hobby. They are retired now and they might want to read more or they might want to learn how to crochet or they would come you know, to get books on how to crochet. Or they are trying to get in better shape so they might come and check out diet books.

Others have taught themselves to type or use the computer through online help, with little assistance from the librarians. One librarian explained,

We don't have anybody that can be on, like instruct them....On our home page, we have a couple of different sites for them to go to if they aren't really familiar with the computer maybe. One of them is typing and that kind of thing. One of them is how to use the mouse and different programs. I think that helps a lot too.

Cynthia recalled what a patron had shared with her on how she had used a book from the library:

And she said, you know, those are really neat. She said I got this book one time that was um, Volkswagen Repair for Dummies. She said I took a complete Volkswagen engine and repaired it and now it works all from that book Volkswagen Repair for Dummies.

Using Carol's reflective statement in conclusion, the rural community libraries afforded people the opportunity "for employment,...enrichment,...learning, and...it's just...a great place to...grow. It's a wonderful opportunity for anyone who would like to take

advantage of it.” Having free access to the various resources gave information that enabled patron participants in different areas of their lives: the enablement for self development and emancipation, for changes in life situations, and also simply for new knowledge and understanding gathered for everyday living. The next section transposes to the information required for career or professional development.

Fostering career and professional development opportunities. The rural community libraries served as the center for career and professional development for many patrons in rural communities who have no other access for such development. Such resources included needed professional textbooks, online materials, new job skills, or simply becoming computer literate. With the economic downturn there have been more people visiting the library for assistance and in search of jobs, information for career change, or simply the solitude and refuge from home. Most of the participants had something to say, either regarding themselves or recounting what they had observed or learned from library acquaintances.

For professional development, Tracy, town library director, remarked:

We also provide materials for different careers. You know, teachers that have to take a practice test. They might come here and get a study guide or someone who wants to work for the post office takes, I think, an ASVAB test.

Many people were computer illiterates in these communities where they were not previously required to have any informational technological skills to accomplish their tasks, but changes in the community job markets required new skills. Cynthia, library assistant, declared passionately, “It’s really, it’s very intimidating...they really don’t know what they are doing

but they really want to get this done.” Tracy, library director, narrated her experience with the influx of patrons to the library:

We’ve seen a lot happen since the economy has come down...we are helping them find new jobs or um find ways to get new jobs, ways to education, um, for example this company, I think they laid off like 400 people. We had a surge of these employees coming in and saying what am I going to do now. I need books on health careers. What can I do maybe in health careers? Or I need some help with the computers. Could I, I never used the computer before and I know wherever I go, I am going to have to have experience with computers.

Tammy, county library director, corroborated this in her statement that the library had become busier since the economic recession and proffered that “traditionally whenever the economy, or if there was a recession...always, historically shown that public libraries got busier.” She thought that this was due to job losses, or that people could no longer afford the extra expense of cable or internet access at home.

The change in employment criteria and application processes to favor Information Technology (IT) was a strong factor in the need for library resources for many people, especially in rural communities. Both libraries experienced a great increase in patrons coming in for assistance with computers, online job searches, filling out forms for jobs and the Employment Security Commission, preparing resumes, and researching career changes. Librarians have had to extend themselves to help out beyond the call of duty, especially in these communities where the library was the only recourse. Janet, reference and circulation librarian commented on this:

People if they want to work at Food Lion, or they want to work at a gas station or the Dollar Store,...they are all doing online applications now. They don't want to do things on paper anymore and a lot of these people are either doing low skill jobs and they have trouble finding the website and finding the application and you know, have difficulty filling it out and they have to have [an] e-mail address to put on the application. So they have to create an e-mail address for themselves. So, um I think without public libraries, I don't know what these people would do. I mean if you don't have a computer at home, what are you going to do?

And Tracy, library director, said patrons set out to use the computers at the library but then discovered neither were they computer literate nor did they know how to write resumes or cover letters:

They come out and say, "Well, I need to write a resume. This is what I need to do. Do you have a resume book? Or I need a cover letter. Can I, do you have any books on cover letters?" So I think we started out as "I will go to the library and use their computer to fill out this information," and then we've moved on to "I need help with resumes, cover letters. What kind of career am I going to have next?" Um, that kind of thing. I think that is, where else can they go and get help with resumes.

Adults who were taking classes in colleges far or near to the communities had the benefit of online access at the libraries; they did not have to travel several miles to attend classes or use the college library on campus. Cynthia, library assistant, shared that:

We have a lot of people that come in to do their assignments for online classes....we've had a huge increase in the amount of people that are taking classes

since the economy has gotten so bad. They may have lost their jobs and they find they may want to go back to school or maybe they decided that um, they want to specialize in a different area. We have a lot of people that um take on-line classes.

And Janet, reference and circulation librarian, confirmed this by stating: “We get a lot of college students...more so than any other library I worked.” Violet, a full time accountancy student in the local branch of the community college, said she found her rural community library to be “very convenient to my home”; because it had all the resources she needed for her papers and research as well as the added comfort of familiar surroundings amongst her own people.

All twelve participants – librarians and patrons, unanimously declared that the internet access was the greatest attraction to library patrons and had the greatest impact on the community. There were, however, several other resources available to them as have been explicated above especially in the form of direct assistance from the librarians. Librarians readily offered support and assistance where required, that enhanced patrons’ career and professional development. Available library resources increased patrons’ prospects especially with making career changes, taking online professional classes or examinations, learning new job skills, filling job applications, and for college students taking, online classes. The next section is a discussion on the library as a forum for engagement opportunities.

Providing engagement opportunities. The library is an open forum and therefore provides opportunities for engagement, which include direct interaction with other people and volunteer opportunities for willing members of the community. It is a place where there are no membership restrictions at all, as long as you have proof of residence in the

community. It is therefore open to all ages, with no sex, racial, or socioeconomic differentiations, which fosters a free atmosphere for personal engagement. Most of the participants marveled at the opportunities available to meet up with different people or to simply be in close proximity to other people, especially for the elderly. It is also an avenue for self investment as it provides volunteer opportunities for many. Most of the retired participants had or still volunteered at their local community libraries.

Direct interaction with others. The rural community libraries were an open medium for interpersonal interactions. Participants who visited often and consistently found that they recognized other patrons, and the librarians got to know some patrons by their names. It was a venue where patrons could meet with friends or relatives, and as Carol so succinctly declared “I think it’s a social point, I really do.” The open environment for informal gatherings fostered a kind of kinship and connectedness in the community. Violet, college student, described the connectedness and tried to make a distinction between that and forming relationships:

I developed a relationship with the librarian, because I do so many things out in the community and we have a certain relationship because I do attend here...Um, and um, as far as my school classmates that are still in the area, I might see them here...it’s not a gathering place for relationships but um, I do think there are people you get to know sometimes,...while I’m here sometimes I meet, you know, communicate and you know, have social contacts.

Allison Banks simply said: “you just kind of...pick up a connection with certain people.”

Cynthia, library assistant, spoke about the direct interaction:

Our computers, as you notice, they are pretty close together. I mean, you are sitting right beside somebody. Um, a lot of times, if we are really busy and somebody has a question and I can't quite get right over there, the person beside them will do whatever they can to help them. They have a time, they have 60 minutes a day. And that person is sacrificing their 5 or 10 minutes that it takes them to help the person beside them but they are helping them in some way and I think that's really neat too to see people helping each other.

Cynthia, also spoke about how friendships developed from the group meetings that were conveyed at the library:

It doesn't happen a whole lot but usually the reading groups, they just last for a long day. They start at like 1:30 and they might be 4 or 5 before it's done. But by the time they leave here, they've exchanged recipes... it's not just the reading group. I see it a whole lot when story time meets. All the moms sit together. They um, they might leave here and have a play date. They might all have lunch together. This is probably the only time really during the week that they see each other. This is their child's friend and so the moms are now friends.

Public libraries are usually an open environment everywhere else, but the interaction and connectedness are more pronounced in the rural library setting because of the smaller population and limited resources. People who had lived in these communities all their lives knew generations of family and friends, and more often than not they met at the library. Brea, retired grandmother, fondly recalled one such meeting:

About a month ago, I came up here and I met the daughter of a man that my mother used to work for and I hadn't seen them in years and they were up here and I mean we sat like an hour talking. Before she got to do what she had to do. It's just a good place to meet.

And Tina her sister, not to be outdone, exclaimed "Sometimes I meet people that I haven't met for years and years!"

There was also the direct interaction necessitated by the essential services provided to people in the community. Examples of these included one-on-one tutoring by arrangement and attorneys from out of town coming in to do depositions. Tammy, county library director, remembered how they had to clear out a room to enable an adult literacy teacher to tutor one of her students, and Cynthia, library assistant also spoke of one-on-one tutoring sponsored by the school system for students in the community.

The preceding section discussed how rural libraries afforded members of their communities venues for personal interaction. This included intermingling with other library patrons during the normal course of library transactions, impromptu meetings with family and friends, and arranged meetings between people like personal tutors and students, or attorneys and clients. The next form of engagement opportunities are discussed under volunteering.

Volunteer opportunities. Rural community libraries are avenues for volunteering for members of the public who wish to give their time in assisting the community. Such venues are limited in rural communities, so the library benefits greatly from this resource, while the volunteers are happy to have a place to volunteer at. This is especially true for retirees who

need such opportunities to feel useful and to give back to the community. This was the case for Rhoda, retired nurse, who volunteered at the Harriet Tubman Library:

The other role for me is um, being able to volunteer here. That's very meaningful to me. I feel like that I am giving something that is needed, not something that just somebody else can do but something that is really needed. And I enjoy that a lot. And I volunteer here anytime I am needed.

Dealing with change is especially difficult for the older generation, and having so much time on their hands is a problem with which many retirees have to contend with. This was often mentioned by the older participants who found the library to be a support system. It has all the resources in one place for research, information, and leisure. The library is also a place for continued preoccupation for volunteering, group meetings and organized programs.

Carol's statement succinctly summarizes the feeling: "I was very concerned that when I retired that I would be bored. I very truly was." Carol was a 59 year old retired librarian who now volunteered her time and expertise to help out at the Michael T. Booker Library. Rhoda, who was 78, unmarried, and lived alone, described her volunteer work at the library as getting her out to meet with other people and providing an experience to "broaden her horizons." She exclaimed:

Well it's had a very positive affect on me as I say. Because I am retired, I'm pretty free to do various things here and it's been very good for me because it, it gets me out with other people. I live alone and it's ah, been very difficult for me to. And I've had to, I guess I broaden my horizons a little bit because I am pretty set in my ways. And

so sometimes I had to bend a little and that's good. So it's been a very positive influence on me.

David and Allison Banks were retired volunteers at the Harriet Tubman Library; they served on the Library Board and also on the Friends of the Library committee. For them it was a “privilege” to be able to give back to the community.

Librarian participants from both libraries also mentioned that apart from the retirees, there were also young people who needed the community hours on their college applications and people who had to serve to make restitution for offenses for which they had been convicted.

The previous subsection has shown examples of engagement opportunities through volunteering. The next section, granting access to sacred place, discusses the library as a space and place; and it covers the final findings for research question one – impact of the rural library on adult learners.

Granting access to sacred space. The rural community libraries were public facilities, centrally located, and often used as space for public meetings, organized community programs, civic group meetings, or any group requiring use of the available space. The libraries had a “first come first serve” rule, which meant any member of the community could come in to make a reservation until the available spaces were fully booked. The libraries were also a place for individuals, an almost sacred place, for personal quiet, rest, and safety. These will be discussed under the sub-headings personal quiet space and collective group gatherings.

The rural community libraries had become *the* place for most patrons, especially

since there were no other recreational facilities. Participants spoke about the lack of other positive hangout places and how the libraries substituted for individual and collective gathering spaces. Violet, a student, said, “There is not much available other than the library after 4 o’ clock, . . . you see a lot of young people in the library because there's not really, not really much, um available.”

Personal quiet space. The libraries were also a “place” for the people - a personal space for people who desired a quiet environment to simply lounge and rest. For some it was a comfort zone, a secure place to be amongst others without any intrusion on the personal space.

The patron participants described the sense of place in different ways. Tina, a retired grandmother, said coming to the library sometimes was a spiritual experience, like going to church. Brea, her sister, thought it was “just relaxing, coming here to the library. I don’t really have to be doing anything.” She also said “Sometimes I stay here all day, all day long. It’s just comfortable here, really comfortable here!” Violet, a college student, declared that it was “the place,” a learning environment. For Rhoda, a retired nurse, it was satisfying her need to sit, read and chat. And to sum up in a retired librarian’s words, Carol said, “It’s a joy to come to this library because it has such a lovely atmosphere and such a pleasant atmosphere!” I could relate to the experiences being described because I had observed people just lounging in the chairs, just resting or dozing.

Tracy, director at the MTB library, spoke compassionately about a recently widowed patron who would just come to the library and sit, and sometimes she would help out with the book sales:

She will just come and sit for an hour or two. Um, you know, to be around other people and she has become extremely good in helping us with our book sales. But that's very therapeutic for her to get out of the house and feel like she is helping and to feel needed.

She also spoke of a lady who would just come in to have her quiet time away from her busy household: "I just think spiritually, you know, I mentioned the lady that comes in. And that's just her quiet time. And as a mom, I can appreciate. You know, with young children, it's kind of hard to have time for yourself."

The rural community libraries were thus a place for patrons to come in and be comfortable, relax and just enjoy the sense of well - being. It was also a place to be around other people without necessarily socializing. However, there was also provision for socializing and being with a group. This is discussed under the next sub-heading.

Collective group gatherings. The rural community libraries were the meeting places for groups and civic organizations in the communities. And since they were free and available to all, there was a great demand for use of the facilities. However, as at the time of gathering the data, the Michael T. Booker library did not open at night, and the Harriet Tubman library was only open one night a week. According to Tammy:

We are open one night a week until 8:00 o'clock and that's on Monday. Every Monday is blocked with a different civic organization or we have businesses that want to meet... There are some nights we have people in both rooms to meet. So we are available for them to use.

The libraries provided the space for collective gatherings for several groups. The

librarian participants were able to reel off names of the different groups, and most patron participants mentioned one or more in which they were involved. These included groups like the Book Club, Friends of the Library, Kiwanis Club, the Lions Club, Rotary, the Literacy Association, Boy Scouts, Calligraphy group, Quilters' Club and Crocheting group. Tammy, county library director, described a group that met in the library, and proudly disclosed what had been accomplished through the meetings and the support:

We have a local writers group that meets here every Tuesday in this room and they critique each others writing and they are very serious about it. And because of that, ah, almost every one of them have or are about to publish a book.

Cynthia, library assistant at the MTB library, told of the contributions that were made to the library by two groups that met there. The Kiwanis group met once a month and raised money to buy books for the library. There was also a community watch group that met there regularly and would give a donation every year. The same community watch group donated a clock to the library because they were always late closing their meetings as there was no clock in the room where they met. Cynthia concluded her report by saying "So that always works out to everybody's advantage."

The libraries were like a sacred place for the people of Covington and Davenport, a place for their individual needs and personal preferences, and spaces for their community and groups gatherings. No other words can be more effective to summarize the impact of the rural community libraries on the adults in these communities than in the poignant remark made by Violet, college student: "If the library was destroyed by fire or tornado...we would definitely feel the impact, because...it is kind of central for a rural community...it affects the

lives of everybody.”

The findings under this section answered the question, how do rural community libraries impact adult learners? Findings showed that the libraries impacted patrons’ lives in three different ways: (a) through affording them free access to information resources that enhanced their self development and helped foster their career and professional development, (b) by providing engagement opportunities in direct personal interactions, or permitting volunteering opportunities, (c) by granting access to sacred place for personal or individual place and for collective group gatherings. The next section presents the findings for research question two and covers the libraries’ collaboration with other agencies in the communities under study.

How do rural community libraries work in collaboration with community agencies and institutions? The findings presented in this section focus on research question two, which looked at how rural community libraries collaborate with community agencies to provide services to the community. The information is derived from interviews with the librarian participants, most is confirmed by the patron participants, and some corroborated by observation and document review.

The findings are discussed under two themes that describe the role of the rural community libraries in the collaboration process: (a) functioning as multipurpose facilities, and (b) organizing community outreaches. Under these two themes are several subthemes that are described below in the voices of the participants.

Functioning as multipurpose facilities. The rural community libraries under study, Michael T. Booker and Harriet Tubman libraries were the foci in the towns in which they

were located. The towns were very limited in the spaces available for general public use and depended heavily on the community libraries. The facilities, therefore, were always fully booked up and as Janet, reference and circulation librarian at Harriet Tubman library, declared, “This building serves as a meeting place for the community for a lot of different things.”

This situation was further aggravated in the Michael T. Booker library because it was open only one night a week, on Mondays until 8pm. This was attributed to a limitation of funds as they could not afford to pay more than the one licensed librarian and one other full time staff assistant. They depended mostly on volunteers to keep the library running.

The libraries functioned as (a) a training site, (b) a government repository for forms and information materials, (c) a venue for mediation between community and government, (d) a resource for organized special events, and (e) a venue for artistic exhibitions.

Training site. The facilities were often used as training sites for different organizations, ranging from the local small businesses and corporate businesses to government departments and government affiliates. In my interview with Tammy, county director and librarian at Harriet Tubman library, she mentioned that they occasionally have the agricultural extension trainers use the conference room and all the computers for their training sessions with farmers. I was able to observe one of the training sessions where there were 19 farmers in attendance; the training went on until 4pm in the afternoon. This of course meant the regular patrons had no access to the computers that were in use the whole day. The librarian, however, believed this inconvenience was worth the trouble for the community since they were predominantly an agricultural community, and training the

farmers was perceived as enhancing their productivity and a boost to the economy:

We have worked out our classes, the cooperative extension. They are coming in and so we are partnering with them and ah, in fact, the cooperative guy said he needs more than one computer. He is going to have the computer classes for the farmers and he's going to have, um, like a pond management class. He's going to have classes on pesticides. Um, you know, so this will be us helping the farmers and also ah, small business people and which farmers are too....Although we are not teaching the classes, we are providing the computers and the space and um, you know, so, I think that is a great thing because agriculture still is our main industry as far as money-wise....It's a 28 million dollar ah industry in our county.

There was also a college that used the Michael T. Booker library for classes every week, and according to Tracy, library director: "We had a partnership...where we had a literature class that came in and they used the library's resources. They were working on early childhood literature. So they would come in and actually hold their class at our library."

Some other training that took place at the libraries included tax preparation courses, corporate training with Burger King, Waffle House, the Census Bureau, and IT department training of county staff. There were also a couple of workshops for caregivers organized in conjunction with the Council on Aging. There was more going on at the Harriet Tubman library than at the Michael T. Booker library because they had larger space and more rooms. This meant the training could go on without disrupting the regular library use, except for the occasional shortage of computers like when the farmers were in training.

Government repository. The libraries were a repository of information materials that included forms usually procured at government offices – court forms, divorce forms, tax forms, and even social security and passport applications. It is not unusual to find tax forms in any community library, but these rural community libraries even helped dispense divorce forms. Tammy said:

A lot of times people will be sent from the courthouse which is almost right across the street, it's just across the block from us, to fill out whatever forms that they need....We had a girl that worked here that was in high school and she said, you know, it's really disturbing to me that I know exactly what somebody needs to do a divorce themselves.

The librarians also spoke about other government departments like department of aging, social services, and the health department. I observed a lot of information literature and brochures on display at both libraries and was informed that “they’ll bring all kinds of stuff over here.” This was also confirmed by Janet of the Harriet Tubman library:

Some of the county agencies ask to put up displays here in the library. I know the Department of Social Services and I think the Department of Health come over here and put up displays. Um, it seems like once a year there is like probably a National Adoption Month or something. They bring materials over about adopting children. And there are various other things during the year that they always focus on some issue. They bring over displays to be put up. The adoption is what comes to mind.

The libraries had several different forms on display, and every time I visited for observation there was always something new. This meant that the institutions constantly

brought fresh supplies, and according to Janet, there were different things going on throughout the year. There was tax season when tax forms were brought in; flu season when the health department brought in posters and fliers about inoculations and healthy living; adoption month when social services came with information on adoptions and foster care; and preparation for another school year when college information, brochures, and financial aid forms appeared. An example of this was the description proffered by Tammy, library director, about helping the Low Energy Assistance program “get word out because the winter is coming up and we have um, adults, elderly who can apply for assistance.” The rural community libraries were therefore a forum for information, and publicity as well as a repository for the communities.

Venue for mediation. The rural community libraries were also venues for mediation between community groups and government agencies. The local fire station used the venue to demonstrate safety measures to the community. Community watch groups met to deliberate on challenges prevalent in the community. There was usually a town council member or whatever government agency was relevant present at such meetings. Tracy, library director, confirmed this at her interview:

We have a lot of community watch groups that now meet here at the library because we have a facility for them to meet....Whatever, your issue is, gangs or um, whatever concerns you might have....And we actually have a town council member that usually goes to those meetings.

Tammy, county library director, also confirmed that the library was used as a venue for mediation between community groups and county representatives.

Supporting organized special events. The rural community libraries organized programs in collaboration with community groups. These were to bring necessary services or programs to the communities while, at the same time, they were a form of outreach to draw new attendance to the libraries. Often such programs required some form of contribution from community businesses that were happy to be a source of support to their libraries and also receive the free publicity that went with such contributions. A Halloween program was planned by the MTB library which involved several departments and included many small businesses in the community as contributors. It was like a Fall Carnival for the community in which the Police, the Fire Department, and local farmers participated. Several businesses gave candy for the kids, restaurants gave gift cards for winners at the games, and nurseries donated pumpkins for a weighing contest. Everybody who was called upon helped out. The librarian said 300 people had attended the year before, so they were preparing for 400 for the year of the interview, 2008.

All participants spoke enthusiastically about these programs and seemed to have participated at one time or another. Cynthia of the MTB library described one such program:

Last Friday night we had a program that was run sort of like the antique road show where you could bring in something that you thought was an antique and we had somebody to appraise it and tell you maybe what it was worth and maybe what time frame that it was in.

Some of these programs were designed to fulfill some practical need of the community, like the antique road show cited above, and other programs were designed as outreaches, using local celebrities to attract more people to the library. Carol gave a quick

review of the programs that had occurred between the three month span of the first and second interviews with her:

I have been so pleased at the programs. Since I talked to you we have had two authors come. We have had an antique road show come. We have had [an author] to come and talk about his, be entertaining and talk about his book. We had [a main actor] from the Dukes of Hazard come.

These programs were well attended. One book signing that was sponsored by a book club at the MTB library drew 352 people and another 121; there were so many people that the library staff had to volunteer their time to help out.

Allison Bank's list of programs at the HT library included a Scottish fiddler and dancer, a storyteller, a banjo player cum storyteller, and a war veteran Polish immigrant. The authors, entertainers, and celebrities named by these participants were popular and home-grown, and therefore a great incentive to draw members of the community to attend the programs. The names have been excluded for reasons of anonymity for the people and for the community.

These programs were entertaining while at the same time educational for the communities. Some imparted information, some created awareness and some rendered services that were simply pragmatic to the people.

Artistic exhibitions. The two rural community libraries under study were found to be centers for art exhibitions for their localities. Some of the patron participants spoke about their different interests and what had been on display at their libraries at one time or the other. The librarian participants spoke about their collaborations with different groups in the

community in the art displays. Tracy, library director said, “a lot of elementary schools made, drew pictures of bugs and we put those up everywhere and that kind of just added to the library.”

I had observed a few of the different artistic displays and actually took some pictures at both libraries. Some of these displays included a photography collection, quilt collection, paintings; and some collections that depicted some historical significance to the communities - county history, and local authors, with an actual bust of a popular local writer. Janet, reference and circulation librarian spoke about two of such collections: “We have gotten people in the community...to bring things for the display case and there is a Navajo and arrowhead collection....another man had collected insects all his life and had a very interesting display for that.”

One of the communities only got an Arts Council offices and exhibition hall in the town about two years ago, and the other still doesn't have one; so the libraries were the centers for exhibits and displays. The HT Library, being bigger and having more space was more involved in this, and actually had permanent large display boards. Janet said the library had “always encouraged people to come and display things. We had photography. We did have a lady who did quilts. She came and displayed her quilts. We had people put up paintings.” The MTB library had a whole wall with a mural painted by the Boys Scout and a few paintings on display. I was privileged to witness and take pictures of both the quilt and the painting displays.

The community libraries served as multi-purpose facilities and were used by various groups in the community, both private and government agencies, for training personnel, as

government repository for forms and information materials, as venue for mediation between community and government, supported organized special events, and as venue for artistic exhibitions. Apart from what was available on the premises of the libraries, there were also outreaches to the communities through which patrons were serviced.

Organizing community outreaches. These rural community libraries did not have the regular mobile units to reach out to members who could not come to the library like in city libraries or larger communities, but did find other ways to meet the needs of different groups of underserved people in their communities. These include senior centers, schools, and the homebound; but the extent and reach in time and number varied between the libraries with the affordability and staff. The H T Library was of course able to afford more of these outreaches since they had a greater number of staff available.

I have included this sub-section because it is an important aspect of the services provided at these rural community libraries as it characterizes the rurality of the communities, uniqueness of such services and the devotion of the librarians to commit to such services even with the limited resources.

Outreach to senior centers. The four librarian participants spoke about the special outreaches to the elderly and the exchange programs that they had with the local senior centers in the two communities. According to Janet, reference and circulation librarian: “We have an outreach service to seniors who are homebound, that are in private homes, nursing homes, also senior centers, adult day care.” The outreaches included bringing books and DVDs to seniors who were homebound, in nursing homes, or adult day care centers. A staff member visited the senior center once a month or had them come to the library for a special

program at which snacks were served and there was a book discussion. Then the seniors were assisted in their selection for the next couple of weeks.

Outreach to schools. The two rural community libraries reported that apart from the regular outreach to neighborhood schools and the selection of Accelerated Readers (AR) maintained exclusively for the students at different levels, they also reached out to daycare centers in the community: “we also have an employee who goes to day cares and does stories.” This was perceived as something that was exclusive and characterized the rurality of these communities. Such outreaches however were at the instigation of the daycare centers and scheduled on the availability of the librarian.

Outreach to homebound. Both libraries had some form of outreach to the homebound or sick patrons. This was another unique feature of the rural community libraries. At the Harriet Tubman library this was done in collaboration with department of aging; and Janet, reference and circulation librarian reported that volunteers who took the resources to the homes of patrons who were known to be sick or homebound were “reimbursed for their mileage.”

The outreaches to homes in MTB library had been on a personal basis, on the initiative of the librarian. When the librarian noticed that a regular patron was not attending as usual, or was informed of a patron sick or otherwise unable to attend, arrangements were made to take books or whatever the patron’s interests were. Cynthia had said “we haven’t seen them for a while and we hear maybe they are sick, we’ll put together a group of books and just take it to them.” However, such services were becoming difficult to keep up at the MTB library because, according to Cynthia, library assistant, “since our numbers are up and

we've got a lot of people passing through...the ratio is probably not all that great of the people that we go and see." Therefore, as the library attendance grew and with the shortness of staff the librarians could not really keep up with this outreach, and it had become an occasional event.

In this section, findings pertaining to the collaboration of rural community libraries with other institutions and agencies in the community were reported. The themes discussed included: Functioning as multi-purpose facilities and Organizing community outreaches. Under one theme, functioning as multi-purpose facilities, there were findings which revealed that rural community libraries collaborated by providing venues for training, acting as government repositories for documents and information materials for public consumption, opening rooms to be used as venues for mediation, supporting organized special events and providing space for artistic exhibitions. The second theme, organizing community outreaches, revealed that libraries reached out to senior centers, collaborated with schools, and provided services to the homebound.

These findings were significant because they were uniquely characteristic of the rural libraries. They were services that would not normally be offered in urban or city public libraries.

How does the rural librarian enact the roles of an adult educator and community leader? In the rural communities, the work of a librarian went beyond the mandatory provision of information; the rural librarian nurtured the environment for learning and helped to build bridges of inclusion. The librarian was perceived by the community as a role model and a voice to the outer world – the county and all other agencies. The library

proffered the rural community entrance to the world and the librarian was the keeper of that door; therefore what the patrons were able to access depended so much on what the librarian enabled.

The findings in this section revealed how the learning environment enabled by the librarian affected the learning of adults in rural communities; and how the learning was contributory to the awareness and development of the people and subsequently the community.

Two themes emerged from the findings in this section, and are discussed under two headings: Nurturing an environment for learning, and Building bridges of inclusion.

Nurturing an environment for learning. The learning environment has a great influence on learning, and in rural communities the librarian was responsible for setting or nurturing the environment to enable optimum learning. Nurturing an environment for learning entailed creating the right atmosphere, making available the enabling resources, facilitating ease of reference, and building service oriented staff that was knowledgeable, approachable and enthusiastic.

In the rural communities under study, the onus for nurturing the environment for learning fell more heavily on the librarians who were short- staffed, had limited financial capabilities, had a greater demand for their services because they were the only avenues available in the community, and were further hampered by greater distances from other resources. The rural librarian nurtured the environment for learning by facilitating learning efficacy, by being service oriented and by investing in a need-based resource center. The findings for these three sub-themes are further presented below.

Facilitating learning efficacy. With advances in information technology and the availability of so much information online, the job of a librarian had gone beyond just pointing patrons in the direction of the available resources; there was a need to help search through the information to find what was required. There was also a need to identify the links and relevant sites from which to extricate information. In rural areas patrons did not usually possess the expertise or the technical knowledge required to access information readily. All librarian participants had reports of encounters with patrons, and several of the patron participants recounted their experiences with librarians at their different libraries.

Tammy, the director at the Harriet Tubman library recounted how she helped procure a specialized journal article to a patron who did not “even know the name of the journal” but just the publishers. She was even able to sort through the years of issues to find the specific article for the patron, who if she had the expertise could “have accessed that at home...without coming to the library.” Janet, reference and circulation librarian at the same library also spoke of how she assisted a woman and her grandson in finding the resources for a science project which was not an easy task for them. With her expertise she was able to help find the information and was greatly surprised when they came back to thank her:

He was working on a science project and it was about chromatography.... And it was hard to find information on that topic...but I looked in a lot of different places...gave her some information...about experiments that he could do and she came back a few weeks later and told me that he had won his division in the science fair and was going on to a regional competition.

Janet felt it was “part of her job to teach people how to use the resources” in the library because a lot of people do not bother to develop their study and research skills because of the ready information available on the internet. She opined that people did not realize that “everything on the internet isn’t necessarily accurate.”

David Banks, retired military officer, also spoke about the importance of the librarian as facilitating the learning efficacy. He said there was a lot of information available at the library “if you just know enough to ask. And sometimes that is hard.” He felt it was hard for people to ask if they did not know what to ask for. And this was where the expertise and training of the librarian came in because they were able to tease a little information out of patrons to help them move on to acquiring the information they really needed. Allison Banks, his wife corroborated this and said “the staff here...is extremely helpful. They just go out of their way for you.” Violet, college student, declared “they are familiar with what they have in the library,” so all a patron needed to do was ask.

Many patrons did not realize that the library was able to procure information or resources that may not be so readily available; the librarians have access to other lending facilities and contacts to get the materials or information from. This couple, David and Allison Banks did not suffer from this however, they knew that “if the book is not here, they may be available through the lending programs...they can check with other libraries and find the book for you and have it sent here. You can come into the library and pick it up.” Some other participants also reported how the librarians had helped get information, or procure one thing or the other. Carol, retired librarian, reported that in her search for resources for her book club, she often discussed the choices with the librarian who “makes recommendations”;

and when she needed an audio tape for a presentation she “came and they didn’t have it so I requested it.”

One exemplifying report of the nurturing of the environment by a librarian was at the MTB library. Tracy recounted how a patron had come in to request something but did not want to admit his handicap:

The one that sticks out in my mind is um, we had a gentleman who came in to ask, who had a legal, a personal legal question....But we don’t dispense advice...but for some reason, I kind of got the impression that he did not know how to read...So, um, luckily it wasn’t really busy and so I was able to sit down and read some things in the book to him and, you know, just let him ah, decide once I read that um, whatever topic it was that he was interested in. So I felt like I helped him but I did not in any way make him feel bad because he did not know how to read. And so when he left, he had a plan for what he was going to do next....And he was concerned that his lawyer was not being, you know, on the up and up with him. So he wanted a way that he could kind of check.

This report stuck with me as it did with the librarian, it was a perfect example of a nurturing effort. The librarian participant was able to identify the patron’s handicap, and without causing any embarrassment, was able to render the assistance required. This also leads to the next sub-theme of personal service.

Personal service orientation. At the rural community libraries under study the librarians were trained to be service oriented and were willing to give personal services. They were aware that the patrons’ comfort level was contributory to their interacting and use of the

resources, and whether a patron would seek assistance; and as Tracy, library director said, “they don’t have to feel like they are an inconvenience.” Therefore it was essential to establish that they were available and approachable; this was often accomplished by greeting the patron, or telling them “if we can help you, let us know.”

Some of these services were way beyond the call of duty but were expected in the rural areas. Carol, retired librarian expressed her amazement at the services and the commitment of the librarian at her community: “I think she makes available even things that they don’t know about and that is the key. And, and she is always trying to make available more and more things...She is [goes] above and beyond the call of duty.” There were several reports of assistance with resumes, cover letters, and actually editing or proof-reading for patrons. According to Cynthia, library assistant, “We do a lot of everything. We proofread, we help them type, we um, ... we try to work on, help on their resumes.” She said further that “as much as we can, we’ll stay with them, help them. Walk them through.”

David Banks, retired military officer, also reported witnessing the librarians going out of their way to assist. He reported his impression of a particular incident and declared: “one thing that really impressed me is the time that the library staff took to help these patrons fill out their voter registration forms.”

Another report was truly demonstrative of the rurality of the communities and the unique services offered. This report was of a librarian participant who on discovering that a family of patrons had run out of food, and the food banks were not open at weekends, had actually made a package which she personally delivered to their home. This is Tammy, library director at Harriet Truman library’s account of the episode:

I believe the family had two children and both parents lost their jobs... Well, they didn't get enough money or food stamps to last the whole month. And so that last week, you know, they didn't have any food and so ah, we do have a food like bank...but they are only open on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and so...I got a box of food for the family...to get them through the weekend and...we took it out to them and they were...so very pleased.

According to Janet, reference and circulation librarian, a lot of extraordinary things were expected far beyond the mandate of their jobs.

It always amazes me the kinds of things that people assume we can do for them at the library. They just like call up and they come and it's just like all kinds of things and everything. It still surprises me after all these years.

Because the patrons expected every assistance, the librarians strived to meet such expectations, but drew the line where it could be dangerous or illegal; as Janet further stressed "we can't tell them because, you know, that would be giving legal advice. And if we are wrong, you know, we could hurt that person, um, we can't do that."

Need based resource collection. It was the duty of the librarians to assemble resources that met with the needs of the patrons. This was done by gathering information as to the needs of the patrons and community by keeping tracks of requests, keeping tabs on interests, and the occasional survey to get the opinions of patrons. However prominence was given to different departments depending on the preferences and interests of the librarian in charge of making the decisions. For most patrons at a rural community to actually have what they require would depend on how invested the librarian was in the community.

In the rural community libraries under study it was found that the collections were based on the needs of the patrons and communities; and that the librarians were invested in the communities. All four librarian participants, and five of the patron participants, testified to the adequacy of the resources and the need-based collection system at their libraries. Only two patron participants had dissenting reports about the need-based resource collection.

Tracy, director and librarian in charge of Michael T. Booker library divulged the factors that guided her collection decisions:

I try to have a really balanced collection. Um, and I will say large print and African American are probably our two biggest collections that have exploded in the last couple of years because the need and their requests, you know, have come from the readers in those areas....But on the other, the flip side, since I do have a limited budget, I will pick an area, whether that is our reference section and I see that things are getting kind of dated, so that's my project for that year, I will pump a little bit of extra money into bringing that up to par. The next year it might be um, young adults...we always are trying to be the best that we can be within the parameters that we have.

She further explained that she tried not to leave anybody out, since it was her responsibility to have something for everybody. She reported how a group she had addressed had told her how they preferred her library because of "how much they find here that is of interest to them."

Michael, sales associate, and a patron at this library stated that he felt that the working public benefitted greatly from the library, especially with the unemployment

situation. He believed the director of the library had “done an outstanding job of offering them resources in their job search.”

The process at the second library in the study was not much different. Tammy, director at the Harriet Truman library, explained that they did the occasional survey to find the areas of need of the patrons to build their collection and expand their resource base. One of such surveys had revealed that there was a demand for job information and the library had found the means to meet the need. According to Tammy:

We did surveys and one of the surveys showed that what was really important to African Americans was job information and it was, you know, just that was unique to that group. Well, the job link center over behind...they provide training and for people that have lost a job and they also help people with their job seeking skills, resumes and all like that. But...they are not open in the evenings. So we...cooperate with them because we are open in the evening and have some kind of like, operate job fairs.

Tammy further elaborated on her plans to investigate ways to help small businesses. She stated that there were no large corporations in the area but quite a few small businesses, “but we do have a number of small businesses....That’s one thing I want to investigate and see if there is something we can do to help them.”

Patron participants were enthusiastic about their collections and how they were able to find most things they needed; and reported that they were able to make requests when necessary. However Violet spoke of her observation that the African American collection was not labeled for easy identification. She had observed, on a trip to another library out of town, that the African American books were labeled. She had mentioned her observation to

the librarian who had explained to her that they would have to change the whole arrangement to be able to do that. Violet thought a little change in the routine would have made it a lot easier for some people and attracted more from that particular group in the community. I tried to verify this information by observation and actually did not observe that any books were labeled African American. However, I observed that there was quite a good collection of African American literature, and during the following February, there was a prominent display to celebrate the Black History Month.

The librarians in rural community libraries were found to be contributing to the learning and education of their communities by nurturing environments conducive to learning. As discovered through interviews and observations, this was accomplished through facilitating learning efficacy, providing personal services and maintaining need based collections at their facilities. The librarians were found to be *selflessly invested* in their services to their communities, and were committed to service far beyond the call of duty.

Building bridges of inclusion. Rural community libraries were avenues for building bridges of inclusion. As these libraries were open and free for all, they had become a forum for bringing different people of all ages, races, social and economic classes together. This was something all participants recognized and appreciated. Tracy, director at MTB library declared that “the library is a place that kind of levels the playing ground” for all, gives everybody the opportunity of “bettering themselves.”

The rural community libraries were also an avenue for bringing members of the community together and through the planned programs, events and outreaches the librarians were actually perpetuating the environment for promoting community awareness, generating

social capital and creating a sense of belonging. Again this aspect of inclusion in the community is a development characteristic of the rurality of the communities, and of the character or deportment of the librarian in charge; as this was mainly dependent on the programs, events, commitment to and involvement in the community of the librarian. These programs, events and outreaches had been discussed earlier in other sections of this report. The focus in this section is on the discoveries that were made about the by products that were offshoots from such planned programs, and were therefore attributed to the roles of the librarian as an adult educator and community leader.

The findings under this theme, building bridges of inclusion, are presented under three identified sub-headings: Promoting community awareness, generating social capital and creating a sense of belonging.

Promoting community awareness. Community awareness is a major factor in community development. One of the mandates of the community libraries was to afford rural communities access to information and opportunities to resources available to other people everywhere. This was to enable members of the community to make informed decisions and to have options that would keep the members of the community at par with others; and also raise their consciousness levels to things happening in their community, in the county and around them in other communities and the world. All the participants in this study had an understanding of the role of the library in creating awareness and the librarian participants were active promoters of the awareness.

The librarians at the rural community libraries were responsible for planning programs and events that would entice members of the community to the library, and create

optimum awareness of the resources that were available in the library to them. However in creating the environment, atmosphere, and in planning programs conducive to attract the community members, librarians were also promoting greater awareness of their communities; affording members the opportunity to come to have a better communications amongst themselves and appreciation of their own communities. Carol, a retired librarian had the advantage of being a patron participant who at the same time had an insight to the workings of a library. She speculated that her community library, MTB library, was trying to involve the community in the events and programs so as to catch their interest. She explained:

So what the library is trying to do at this time is to involve the community in the events so that they will get used to coming to the library and feel comfortable coming to the library and do that as part of their everyday life.

She understood that all it took was to get community members to catch a glimpse of what was available to them in the library and they would become lifelong learners and users. She further expounded on the role the library played in enriching the lives of community members:

This really does enrich your life if you come. Because you can live vicariously through other people's experiences and you can have experiences yourself by coming....We've got magazines that people can read, we've got the computer, we've got the programs....And ah so I think a library definitely enriches a community, without a doubt. It is available and it's just a matter of getting people to see the light.

She became a volunteer and a "cheerleader" for the library so she could get people to "see the light"; she was the inaugurator of one of the book clubs and often helped out with other

programs. Speaking about the turnout and success of the book signings organized in collaboration with her reading group, Carol proclaimed” we are going to develop a culture with these book signings.” She was particularly excited about the response and how many more people were turning up at these events.

David Banks, in summing up how access to the information at the library could raise awareness levels declared that:

It can affect jobs and it can affect education which affects jobs. It can affect your outlook on elections. It can affect your outlook on, future decisions on investment.

Everything. Because all that information is out there in the library.

And for him personally, the library “opens the window so that I can see other countries...that I haven’t been to.” Violet simply said, “knowledge is power. Sometimes you just want to know something.” For her acquiring information or knowledge did not have to be for any particular reason. Brea believed her reading habit was making a difference in her life, and she in turn was affecting her family. She exclaimed:

Reading is like, like it’s fundamental.... And I read at home a lot and it’s, you know, it’s got my reading better, you know. It’s got me wanting to read and ah, and my grandchildren. I tell them how important reading is and they...don’t want to come to my house, they say “my grandmother reads; grandma always says go get a book.

Tammy, county director felt strongly that all the people of the community deserved the library services, and therefore there should be something for everybody. She declared passionately:

All 107 thousand people [number refers to whole county population] deserve our services, you know. And there are a lot of people out there that still don't know what all their public libraries have for them and to get that word out there and to get the information out there.

She stated that she made an effort to provide something for everybody, and as much as the limited funds would permit she would reach out to everybody. She related a discussion she had with an unnamed person about her desires to reach out to the Latino in the community by having a bilingual story time, but that this was limited by staff shortage as they would have to have such a program on a Saturday. This person had not understood why she would want to do that and she had responded "that's what we do." In reference to creating awareness in the community, Tammy said she readily would go out to address different groups that invited her as an "advocate" for the community.

Cynthia, Library assistant, reported that she felt that everybody appreciated the programs planned by the librarian and spoke of how they would approach her to express their feelings:

We always have really great response to things. There is always something in the newspaper and everybody will always come out and say we saw you in the paper.

Not necessarily us but the library. We saw what you guys are doing. We've seen how everybody is working together and I really think that they appreciate what we do.

The awareness translated to great support for the libraries in the rural communities. This support was very crucial for the libraries and librarians to continue to offer their services and execute the planned programs and events. This was especially true because of the limited

funds; there was always need to solicit for assistance from local businesses and individuals. Tammy, county director, said regretfully that “it takes money to provide library services,” and the inadequacy of funds sometimes limited the work at the library. The library assistant at the MTB library, Cynthia, recalled how they got help with the fall carnival by different local businesses donating different things:

Sort of set up like a fall festival where we have game stations, but every department in the town will be represented here...so not only will the police and the fire be here, um, all the restaurants in town have given us gift certificates to give out to the kids. We have a pumpkin weighing contest, one of the nurseries have donated pumpkins for us to use. Candy has been donated from WalMart and Sam's that kind of thing. Um, they want their name to be out as sponsors. Same thing for Andy's, I think it's called. They want their name to be out as a sponsor in the community and we need prizes. It really works out. I haven't had anybody um that was negative about it at all....But when you start talking to members of the community, they help you out. Um, they just help us out so much.

Tammy, county director, revealed her involvement in plans for a fair that was to showcase the farming legacy of the community. She discussed the plans for this County Agricultural Fair which, according to her, had stopped for a number of years but was being started again “to show people moving to this area...that didn't know about the tobacco or the cotton mill....the hope is to represent the roots...”

The awareness created, and the connectedness that exist in the rural community libraries, engendered a sense of belonging within the communities that extended beyond the

library confines. This brings us to the discussions of a sub-theme under the theme of building bridges of inclusion, creating a sense of belonging.

Creating a sense of belonging. Sense of belonging exists within communities where there is a community feeling of attachment and embeddedness amongst members of the community. It is not usually apparent until there is a need to come together for a certain purpose; or in the exclusion of outsiders or newcomers. This sense of belonging was found to be evident in the rural community libraries under study, and carried over to the communities in which they were situated. This was discovered from interviews with most of the participants in the study, and buttressed by the artifact displays and attendance at programs that reflected community enthusiasm and social connectedness.

The librarian participants spoke about the sense of belonging in their descriptions of how the people cared about their libraries, were willing to give freely and generously and generally cooperated readily with the library in the effort to reach out to the community and needed resources. Cynthia, library assistant was very succinct in her description, “it’s really amazing to see everybody mesh well together.” And about her observation of the people when they are in the library, she said:

I really feel like it’s like a hub. You know, you, you can really see um what people are passionate about when they are in here. Be it politics or we have a lot of teachers that come in. You really feel, you know, what the community is all about.

She went on describe how deeply involved the community was when decisions were to be made concerning the situation of the new library premises: “people just felt really, really strongly about where they want to build the library”; and again “they really came out and

showed what they felt about the library and they really just, they were very, very loyal to us.” This was one occasion when the community came out to support their library and voiced their preference for a library over other alternatives that were being considered by the council. The library premises at the time of the debate, was a small one room that shared the building with the local police station. Tracy, library director, also recounted this occasion. She said of the community “because of them and their passionate enthusiasm, just never backing down and just insistently, I mean it took 8 or 9 years for us to get the new facility. But um, people were willing to stay the course.” On another occasion the library was to be annexed as a branch of the County Libraries and again the community took a stand and vehemently voiced their preference to remain independent:

I think, um...is a close community. They’ve done a lot as a community....When one thing affects somebody, it’s really, stuff happens very fast around here....there’s been an annexation issue with [us]not wanting to be a part of it and the whole area around there, they all held up signs. They are all passing out flyers...when something happens, they um, are very quick to decide what their opinions are, what they are going to do about it and they get stuff done.

This was clear evidence that the library was embedded in the community and there was a sense of belonging. Cynthia was very forthcoming about her community; it was obvious, from her ready responses, that these were things that were close to her heart. She spoke at length about how everybody cooperated for the greater good of the community:

I think that the community and the town council and the people that we work for try hard and they know that they have to compromise some. So I think that is the reason

that....all the businesses and everything are coming to this area. It's because they are willing to give and take...we are a small town. So everybody does still know everybody and you may not get along with this person but everybody is willing to act like adults and compromise to get to the greater good for the area.

Tracy, library director also described her feelings about her patrons in words that expressed a relationship, a sense of community. She felt like she was an “ambassador” and she said “they know I care. And I do genuinely care.” And she believed she had developed a “relationship with them” and that was important to her patrons. She went on to buttress this feeling of belonging:

We are almost like a distant cousin. I mean, some of them will tell you everything, their whole life; too much information. But um, you know, most of the time, I think it is just something that they genuinely enjoy. And they know we are glad to see them.

On being asked whether she saw herself as a community leader she responded that she felt like she was a part of the community and was just giving back to a community that had given so much to its library. Then she went on to reiterate what her assistant, Cynthia had said about the community support for the library, citing an example:

And we just have tremendous community support, they are super supportive, as far as the public believing in the library and the value that it has in our community, and so that has also helped us in many ways. We just had a lady that came in and we had mentioned that we might want a new book security system...they are probably \$15,000 to \$20,000. She [works] for a non-profit grant writing outfit and so she has offered to.... So there are many wonderful people that, you know, just really believe

in this library.

Tammy, county director, saw herself as an advocate for the library, and explained that as she reached out to the community, the groups she touched would in turn reach out to others: “being an advocate out in the community and also in turn, by doing that, they would in turn be an advocate and also it would be like a ripple effect....and I certainly want the best for the citizens of [this] County.” She went on to describe her involvement in two different events that reflected the community feeling, and how the sense of belonging was promoted in the community:

I’ve gotten involved in a few things in the community. [Covington] was celebrating its centennial and they have a quite big celebration for that. So the old High School that is now closed, they had a, a reunion for all the people that have graduated....And I was involved in that, it was community-wide thing. And then [the] County celebrated their 150th anniversary a few years ago and they also had started planning two years in advance and so I was on the committee to do that.

Patron participants were more profound in their expressions of community feeling, and sense of belonging. Most vivid was Violet’s description of her community as having “a home town flavor”. And she went on to declare that it was “a typical rural, small town community. Um, we pretty much know when someone is not from the area.” So from her statements outsiders were easy to identify. She explained further how generations evolved and kept together:

But there used to be generations of um, you know, like my friends and then their children came and they would be here for generations. Like, now my oldest sister and

some of her friends, I can look and see that some of their children or grandchildren, are now using the library. You know, it kind of ah, evolves from one generation to the next generation.

Speaking about the library, Violet said she believed she had “developed a relationship with the librarian because I do some many things out in the community and we have a certain relationship because I do attend here.” So apart from her membership in the library, her other assignments in the community caused her to have a “relationship” with the librarian.

Carol, retired librarian, recalled when she first came back to the community she was “the new lady in town”; and she and the other six couples who had moved to the community about the same time were regarded as outsiders. She mentioned that a friend described the community as “provincial”, and when I probed further she explained that this was because the people were not “open to change.” She added that there were people in the community whose families had lived there for a “very long time”, and it was only recently that the area enjoyed a spurt of growth. She believed however, that the smallness of the community contributed to the sense of community and embeddedness. And the feeling of ownership and pride the library enjoyed from the community translated into their willingness to give of their time and money, and the people “just coming forward and donating.” Carol disclosed that there were tales told in the community about the library that buttressed the sense of belonging in the community:

That’s probably the things that are special in the town, the tales of the library that are told about...who gave this and whose grandmother did this the first time and...whose grandfather gave this and the clock that was inherited and given to the library and you

know. That kind of thing, that people pass on with some legends and stories and traditions and just whatever.

Carol also spoke proudly of a fundraising event she had been involved in and how this was a true reflection of a supportive community:

We had...a ladies luncheon...we had the attorney general, the district court judge, the mayor, businessmen, a retired senator, North Carolina senator, and they all volunteered their time and served as the waiters.... And you can't do things like this unless you have support of the people.

There was another understanding of the sense of belonging proffered by Carol, retired librarian. She described a group she belonged to, and there were members of this group who came from "out of town" because they preferred to attend library at the MTB library. This, according to Carol, was because it was "very personal and very small. And um, they, they feel like in [other library name withheld] it was so large they were part of a herd." These people felt more of a sense of belonging at this particular library because it was smaller and more personal.

Rhoda, retired librarian, in describing the changes that were coming to the community, spoke regretfully about the "difference in the compaction of this community." The development that was taking place and the influx of new people was causing a breakdown in what she believed was cohesion and sense of belonging in the community.

Brea, patron participant in Harriet Tubman library said she knew a lot of people in the community "being that I am from here"; while her sister Tina described the people of the community as "a lot of nice people. The people are really great in [Covington]."

From the several contributions from the participants, it was found that there was a sense of belonging in the community and that the library was indeed foci of the communities' pride, and a place of shared interest. From the discussion on embeddedness and a sense of belonging, there is a natural progression to another sub theme, generating social capital.

Generating social capital. Social capital is the capital generated from connectedness and is used as a currency where there is an existing relationship between the people involved. A few of the patron participants needed an explanation to enable them answer the questions that related to this theme; but once they understood what it meant they readily acknowledged that there is the possibility of the library generating social capital. The first interviewee, Cynthia, library assistant, declared that she met a lot of people at the library she has had to "hit on for things" when she needed assistance at the library; and she also described how the Moms that come for story hour become friends, exchange recipes and share who "the best babysitter around is." Violet described her experience of a friend she had made at the library calling on her for assistance as a "networking opportunity."

Carol, retired librarian told of people who had shown interest in the library and were able to use their influence to recruit some help outside the community:

One of our board members is a retired soldier's wife who has unbelievable contacts outside and she has scheduled a program. And then one of our other book club members' son is the attorney general for North Carolina and she has done a lot with her son and it's been so helpful. And so it basically, you have to have someone with a bigger picture to help you than just local. And that is just getting these people interested has just been a blessing to the community.

She spoke further about how the social capital developed empowers to effect change where it is needed, and she believed that was happening in her community:

We have a core of interested people, very intelligent, interested people that are willing to give of their time and their expertise I just think we are so fortunate because there is not a lot of money involved in a small town. Margaret Meade has a quote that says something about the ethics of change, the way to get change is to have a dedicated group of people to get involved and then change happens and that is totally what has happened here.

This “core of interested people” consisted of members of the community who were willing to invest their expertise in building something that was helping develop their community. Carol believed “the whole key is to widen the circle” to the advantage of the community.

Tammy described a relationship that had developed between two people in the library, which she believed was of tremendous impact in the life of the younger man. This is her report:

He is mentally challenged. He is a young guy, hum, probably in his early 20s maybe....And he checks out DVDs and ah, books. Well, he has ah, I don't know, [name withheld], I don't know if you've ever heard of him. He's a retired boxer....Anyway, [name withheld] is in here a lot and, this guy...developed a relationship with [name withheld] and they, you know, they all kid each other. They're going to go fight.

Tracy, library director, thought it was great when library staff got to know their patrons so well they looked out for them when they were sick or too old to get around by

calling them or sending books or DVDs they might need. She declared that was “probably one of the biggest byproducts of coming and using the library um that a lot of people don’t think about. But I would say it’s been my experience that that is very much the case.” Tracy went on to illustrate her statement with a story about a lady who had surgery years back, and the library staff had sent a package of magazines which they knew she loved. She had become a friend of the library, and was, at the time of the interviews in 2008, the president of the library board. Tracy ended by saying:

I am very proud to say, you know, that she is a friend of mine now because of meeting her at the library and she now is president of our library board. So I feel like she is um, very vested in us and we are very vested in her as a person.

Rural community librarians, in the performance of their duties were found to be going over and beyond the call of duty or their mandates to meet the needs of their communities. And in their efforts to nurture an environment for learning by facilitating learning efficacy, inculcating a personal service orientation in the staff and maintaining a need based resource, they were indeed enacting the role of educators in their communities. Moreover, librarians in rural communities were very invested in their communities, and were visible in the micro, within the library community, and the macro, in the larger community. In planning programs that promoted community awareness, an atmosphere that helped create a sense of belonging and generated social capital, the librarians were building bridges of inclusion that made for a greater cohesiveness and a sense of community. Rural community librarians were found also to enact the roles of community leaders.

Emerging theme: Rural community development. There was one theme that emerged from the findings that had not been included in the research questions; this was in the area of rural community development. Community development is an essential part of community studies and was discussed in the literature review in chapter two.

Both rural communities in which the libraries under study were located were undergoing big developments which were observable, and also figured prominently in the interviews. All participants were found to be very excited about these developments, but it was really high in the community of Covington where the new building of the Michael T. Booker library had been opened only one year before the time the interviews took place.

These developments are discussed as sub-themes under the headings: a) changing the landscape of rurality, b) rural migrations, and c) factoring in the library.

Changing the landscape of rurality. The changes that were taking place in the landscape of the rural communities were found to be considerable and very significant. Such changes included small farm holdings being sold off to industrial farmers or being developed into apartment complexes; downtown areas being renovated with new stores, small businesses and new roads to accommodate the influx of commuting city workers. All participants were excited about the changes, but a few voiced their misgivings about the wholesale development of farmlands and losing the farming heritage. Some people were skeptical about the city overflow and the consequent nightlife with the noise and violence.

Tracy, library director at MTB library located in Davenport was very voluble talking about the developments in her community:

I think we've grown a lot in the last two or three years. We've gotten some really big

industries and we have a new tobacco processing plant that was sort of a joint effort between the towns and the county as far as offering utilities for them. Um, so that added a lot of jobs....Um, we have a cheese processing plant here in [Davenport], an electronic company that also....hired quite a few positions. We have also more restaurants in town that have opened in the last 2 or 3 years and we have more slated to open.

While she thought these developments were a good thing and would provide jobs in the area, she also felt that the new businesses might be encroaching on the old small family owned businesses that had existed in town: “we have one, two, three, possibly four, yeah, four, I think pharmacies in a town of 3500...it’s great to have the added businesses in town but you can only split the population so much.” She concluded with, “I hope that we continue to see growth but I worry because of the outside influences like the economy, you know, that they may stifle that a little bit.”

Cynthia, the library assistant, was very happy at the new developments, and declared enthusiastically:

Since I have worked at the library, going on 4 years now, they have added um, I think they’ve added nine restaurants. Um, they’ve added on to a lot of businesses on the way out of town. I think they’ve had probably 5 or 6 new businesses. There some are like manufacturing. Some of them are sales, that kind of thing. But since I’ve been here [Davenport] has totally grown, they’ve added so many new businesses. They are doing a really good job of bringing new businesses into town.

Rhoda, retired nurse, was one of those who saw the development as mixed blessings. She lamented the loss of the rural landscapes. She stated that the community was a farming community, but had since lost most of the farmlands to housing developments. She said: “the farms have been sold and developed into these development houses, which has been a great benefit tax wise to the county because of the real estate tax....So it’s been a big boon to the area.” But added rather reminiscently, “there is no more farming here. So, there are people that work the industries and state offices and this type of thing. And it’s made a difference in the compaction of this community.” Rhoda felt that the influx of city commuters would only turn the community into a “bedroom community” and affect the “compaction” of the community, reducing from the sense of belonging which had been discussed earlier in another section. She also reminisced about her childhood Saturday afternoon visits to the downtown after the harvests, and was not so excited about the renovation that was going on:

The downtown area was very, very busy on Saturday after the plows were put up and the tobacco was in the barn, people came from the farms to town. But like other areas, the downtown now is dead. The downtown area is being renovated. Now...it’s turned into more offices and specialty shops and that type of thing.

Michael, sales representative, had grown up on a tobacco farm and still lived on a section of the farm. He talked nostalgically about his youth and his grandfather’s farm and bemoaned the loss of the farmlands to developers: “the tobacco industry has changed extremely over the years. And a number of things have changed. It is unfortunate that we are using up a lot of our farm land to build houses on.” He wished that the natural resources had

been used in a better way, but had offered no suggestions as to how or what: “I would like to see, you know, the um, the community use its natural resources to a better advantage.”

David and Allison Banks, the military family, had moved to an outlying small town near Davenport when they retired because they had both grown up in rural communities. So they had chosen a small rural community to live in when they retired.

David said:

When we moved down there it was the fact that it was a rural area. We...both of us grew up in small towns, rural areas. And we always lived that way. We never lived in the city. I wouldn't know what to do in the city...We found a house, a development, and built a house because we liked the area. We like the pine trees. We like the quiet and small town living.

But the rural community was fast changing, and according to David, “everybody wants progress....And that's going to increase the population and then all of a sudden the things that we are used to having, they are no longer there. And you have to try to find that balance, so that you can have the benefits without being too restrictive.” He did not like the idea of giving up the “pine trees” and peace and quiet, for a much needed development with a post office, a bank and a library; and wished there was a way to keep the balance.

One other thing that came with development that David discussed in the interview with him was taxes. He spoke scathingly about people who moved to rural areas because they wanted the reduction in property taxes, but then wanted all the amenities and facilities that came with the big towns and higher taxes:

They paid high taxes up there and they come down here and they get things, relatively speaking, low taxes, but they also don't get some of the other services that they have up there. And all of a sudden they want, well I want the same services but I don't want to have to pay for them. So you have to, and balance things back.

Janet, reference and circulation librarian, was at first hesitant in making any comments, she stated that she had not discussed the topic with many people, but finally admitted that she thought some people regretted the "changes to the rural character of the county," while others liked "seeing the development and the growth and jobs." She recalled a discussion she had had with a town planner at a meeting of different town representatives on a zoning committee meeting. She had asked what they were doing about "saving the agricultural land" so not all went into development into "malls and subdivisions"; the planner had said that it was kind of a long range plan and they were trying to plan for that, but that it was difficult as "selling his land was the farmer's retirement." Janet thought this was sad, and her words sum up the dichotomy of the feelings concerning the changing rural landscapes when she declared regretfully that:

I don't know if it's a problem or an opportunity, depending on how you want to look at it, for communities all over the county. Um, well, we need the farmland and we need, in my opinion, local crops to be grown. A lot of people who grew up in farming life, they want to stay in it but at the same time, development brings jobs and you know the rural counties....want more jobs. But the people want jobs but they hate to see the land being developed.

I had been able to observe some of the fast development and the changing landscape because of the time span between when I had first visited the communities in my search for the cases to study in 2007, and when I now went back for the actual data collection, 2008 and 2009. I observed the new businesses in town, and the sharp difference between just a few miles from town and a few miles into town. I also observed there was an increase in vehicular traffic, and a surge in attendance at the libraries. These were all corroborated by evidence from the document review and buttressed with pictures.

Back to rural migrations. Though I had made allusions to this finding earlier, I believe it deserved a heading as a sub- theme under the discussions on rural community development. This is because the movement of people back to rural areas formed the basis for the development in the rural communities. The section on rural realities and perspectives on rurality in chapter two covered the definition of rural, discussions on rural perspectives, and rural migrations. There are several factors responsible for back to rural migrations, but they have been discussed in both the introduction and chapter two. The discussions in this section are limited to the findings from the data on rural migrations and how they have affected the development in the two communities under study.

All of the participants admitted to observing the influx of newcomers into their communities, but only the librarian participants and a few of the patron participants would speak confidently about their observations and what they thought caused it, and what it entailed. Janet affirmed that the community was still predominantly agrarian but was moving more definitively from rural towards greater development:

This is still a rural community at the moment. There is still a lot of agriculture but I also know that with the expansion at...and growth of...and the high price of housing, [this] County is starting to see a lot more development, residential development and so that I think in the future, the county is going to become less rural.

She attributed the spurt in growth and development to the spillover from a neighboring county and the escalation in housing prices.

Tammy, county library director, talking about the need for a library in the western part of the county, mentioned the increase in the population in that area and attributed it to the envisaged move of a military base into the area. She said, “and it’s growing and growing because it’s in the military part and they are relocating, um, a military base there from Georgia and so, there is a lot of people coming into that area.” Cynthia, library assistant attributed the increase in the attendance at the MTB library to the influx of new comers to the area. She said they used to have only about 90 people attend “on a very good day”, but since they moved to the new location she declared that attendance had “gone through the roof” and they now average about 220 patrons everyday:

I really think that um our numbers show that there is a lot more people moving into town. It may not be to the town but our area. They may not have moved into [Davenport] but...as long as you live or work in... County, you can have a card to the library, so all these people that are moving in are living relatively close to [Davenport].

David Banks disclosed that, in the small town where they lived, the population had been predominantly older people, and mostly retirees from the military: “but the majority of

us, if not military, are military related. Ah, a lot of retirees, military retirees that have moved in there. Oh, we like it here so we just stay.” But now there were more people with children: “when we moved in our neighborhood, there was hardly any one under 55. We are starting to get younger people with children and we are seeing a lot more of that in the area.” He suggested this was probably because of the military families, as there was a military base not too far from the town.

Carol, retired librarian, revealed that the small family holdings and subsistence farming in the area had given way to industrial farming, and the small landowners had to sell off their land because they “cannot make it as the little farmer any longer.” And with the industrial farms came the migrant workers who arrived with the seasonal harvests:

Most of the work is done by migrant workers now. They have camps but they come here and do a lot of the work, the harvesting of the sweet potatoes. And we have tobacco which is very labor intensive also. And um, they have mostly seasonal workers who come into the harvest areas and then they go.

Carol’s revelation was confirmed by Tracy’s allusion to the large populations of Hispanics, but opined that there had not been a representative presence in the library because they were “transient”, and moved often according to the harvestings that took place in the large farms in the surrounding areas.

We have a lot of large farms in the area so I think the Hispanic population is somewhat transient. Sometimes depending on you know, the seasons so I feel like we have a very, well I know that we have a large amount of Hispanic population and that may be that they are just not in the area a long time.

From the data, the findings were that the upsurge in back to rural migrations to the rural communities under study was due to the following: establishment of new housing developments which brought in city commuters seeking cheaper accommodations; retirees needing more peaceful environment with lower taxes; conversion of small farm holdings into industrial farmlands with the ensuing migrant workers; and relocation of a military base.

Factoring in the library. The library was found to be a significant factor in the development that was taking place in the rural communities under study. The role of the library had become so important that developers factored in the location of a community library into making a decision on where to locate new developments. The community libraries had become foci, not just for the education of the people, but also for the development of the communities.

All participants were aware of the important roles of their community libraries, but only a few could articulate what exact role the library played in the developments observable around them. David Banks was most succinct in his statement, howbeit misinformed, about the role of the library in the establishment of industries. He stated that the “college is a prerequisite for the establishment of the industry and the library is necessary for the accreditation of the college”. He explained further that “the library provides the resources and books...the college offers whatever courses that industry wants, and they need them to get the industrial companies. Whatever that is, biomed, electronics, you name it, they will teach it.” This, of course was not the case, only the standard of the college library was considered in determining accreditation for colleges to offer any courses and not the community library.

The library, MTB was a showpiece for the community. This was affirmed by Tracy, library director, who said the community took great pride in their library and would bring “people and relatives that come to visit” around to show them their “great new library”. She went on to state that it was “a big source of pride” and thought it was also “an economic thing, to bring more businesses to the area.” To buttress her point, she narrated the story that had been used to illustrate the point while they were lobbying for the new library:

One of the stories we told is that a neighboring library, they had...a big corporation that came to their community and one of the stipulations of that corporation was, “do you have a library? We want our employees to be able to have access to a nice public library and not only do we want it to be a public library, we want it to be a nice public library that is, you know, viable for our employees to use.” And so that really does come into play, I think, with economic development.

Rhoda, retired nurse, gave another perspective on the role of the library in the economic development of the area:

When the real estate people are showing potential buyers houses around here, one of the points that they look for is the library. And that’s very important for the real estate people to be able to say, yes, we have a good library. Because that’s important to people that have children that are moving into this area. I cannot tell you that they buy the house because of the library, but they are more positive about the house because there is a library, especially if they have young children, school age children in the family.

This then corroborated why developers would indeed want to confirm that there was a library in the community or proximally located within the prospective housing development; prospective buyers needed the assurance of a local library not too far from their homes.

Tammy indicated that there were plans for a new library in the western part of the county because, though there were no “incorporated towns” in that area, the larger part of the county population lived there. And it was envisaged that there would be another ten thousand people moving to the area in two years: “and from now until 2011, um, 10,000 people will be moving, more people will be moving into that part of the county.” So there was always the need to factor a library into any form of development or growth. Cynthia had a more simplistic expression of this role of the library; it was the “welcome wagon.” She declared “lot of new people to the area will come to the library first. And um, we are sort of like...their welcome wagon for being here.” She explained further that “we have people come in all the time that say they’ve just moved to the area. A lot of times we are the first place they go to because they don’t know where to go to because they are out of the area.” The community libraries were therefore considered to be essential to the growth of the rural communities. They were strong factors contributory to the economic development of their respective communities.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the findings from the data gathered on the rural community libraries Michael T. Booker library based in the town of Davenport, and Harriet Tubman library based in the town of Covington. The data was gathered over a period of two years, using observations, interviews, artifact and document reviews. The chapter consisted

of three parts: a description of the location and background information of the cases under study, a participant profile, and a report on the findings.

The report on the findings was based on the three research questions which guided the study. The research questions were used as headings for these sub-sections, under which the themes were discussed. Research question one elicited three themes: a) affording access to information resources, b) providing engagement opportunities, and c) granting access to sacred place. Several sub-themes emerged from these which covered the areas of rural community library services and how they affected the lives of patrons in the communities.

Research question two had two themes: a) functioning as multi-purpose facilities, and b) organizing community outreaches. These also included discussions of several sub-themes, which highlighted the collaboration of rural community libraries with other agencies and institutions in the communities.

The third and last research question elicited two themes: a) nurturing an environment for learning, and b) building bridges of inclusion. The findings under these divulged several sub-themes which disclosed the role of the librarian as an educator and a leader in the community.

One theme that emerged from the data and was found to be significantly relevant to the study was the role of the library in the development that was taking place in these communities. This was discussed under the heading Emerging theme: Rural community development, with sub-headings on the changing landscape of rurality, back to rural migrations, and factoring in the library. To encapsulate these findings:

Research question 1:

- a) affording access to information resources
- b) providing engagement opportunities
- c) granting access to sacred place.

Research question 2:

- a) functioning as multi-purpose facilities
- b) organizing community outreaches

Research question 3:

- a) nurturing an environment for learning
- b) building bridges of inclusion

Emerging theme:

- Rural community development

The next and final chapter of this study, chapter five, will focus on the discussion and conclusions that may be drawn from these findings, the implications of these findings for theory, for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter Five: Conclusions, Discussion, Implications

This qualitative study explored the role of the rural community library in the education of adults in rural communities and was designed as a holistic case study. The study included two rural community libraries which were selected through mixed purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). Participants were selected through purposeful sampling, as recommended for case studies (Creswell, 2007); with maximum variation to enhance the collection of optimum data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data sources for this study included in-depth interviews of librarians and adult library patrons, and field observations with pictures. A review of documents, reports and physical artifacts helped to support the concept of rurality and to buttress the role of the libraries in the learning of patrons. Data was analyzed using a thematic analytic design which involved a detailed description of the cases under study (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995). A holistic description and analysis was utilized in order to yield extensive thematic categories for interpretations crucial to the case (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003b). The thematic analytical design combined both the inductive and the deductive approaches, since themes are derived both from the data – inductive, and from the prior understanding of the phenomenon under study – a priori or deductive approach (Bernard & Ryan, 2010).

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides a brief summary of the study, the methodology and findings. The second section discusses the conclusions derived from the findings based on the data analysis, and whether they are corroborated by the literature or make a contribution. The third section provides implications for theory and practice, and offers recommendations for further research.

The study examined the perceptions of eight library patrons to determine if and how their use of the rural community library had impacted their lives and communities, particularly in the areas of self improvement and community enhancement. Four librarians were included in the study, to obtain their perspectives, and to discover their roles as educators and community leaders. Combined, the participants consisted of 12 men and women between the ages of 35 and 78. Their educational levels also ranged from GED through two-year College to professional degrees and graduate school. There were three librarians who had MLS degrees and one library assistant with a high school diploma and training on the job. There was a full time student who was registered at the local community college, one man who worked as a salesman and six others who had retired from different jobs or professions.

The research questions that guided the study were:

1. What, if any, are the impacts of the community library on adult learners in a rural community?
2. How do rural libraries work in collaboration with community agencies and institutions?
3. How does the rural librarian perceive and enact the roles of adult educator and community leader?

Findings for this study were organized according to the research questions. Findings for research question one, what impact the community libraries had on rural adult learners, included three themes: affording access to information, providing engagement opportunities, and granting access to sacred place. For research question two, two themes emerged which

describe the role of the rural community libraries in the collaboration process: functioning as multi-purpose facilities, and organizing community outreaches. And for research question three two themes emerged which were discussed under the headings: nurturing an environment for learning, and building bridges of inclusion. Findings in this section revealed how the learning environment enabled by the librarian affected the learning of adults in rural communities; and how the learning was contributory to the awareness and development of the people and subsequently the community.

Data revealed the function of the community libraries in raising the awareness of the adult patrons, and on the community development generally. This study provided insights into the educational development materials and resources available to patrons in rural community libraries, educed information on the economic enhancement provided by the libraries, and demonstrated the leadership role of the librarian in the community.

Conclusions and Discussion

Four conclusions were drawn from the findings of this study based on the data collected and confirm what was found in current literature or hypotheses in existing theories. The four conclusions were (a) that rural community libraries are a veritable lifeline for their communities rather than just repositories of information; (b) that community libraries enhance overall growth and development for rural communities; (c) that community libraries give rural communities a sense of identity and belonging and may be avenues for building social capital; and (d) that the rural librarian is also an educator and community leader.

Community libraries are a lifeline for rural communities. One conclusion from the study was that rural community libraries were more than just repositories of information for their communities but were a veritable lifeline. The community libraries provided resources for information, research and self-development, promoted avenues for recreation, gave needed support and direct assistance- personal and technical, provided space for individual and communal gatherings, and a place for rest, restitution and community. Participants in the study were impacted in different ways and on several facets of their lives by their use and attendance at the rural libraries.

History recounts that public libraries were established to offer services that bridge social, political, and economic barriers, and they were the result of special efforts made to extend services to marginalized people (Dickson, 1986; Eaton, 1961; Gates, 1990; Harris, 1973; Johnson, 1938; Rossiter, 1962; Thompson, 1952; Tyack, 1967). Libraries were founded to assist in searching, using, and interpreting information that open up opportunities for learning, literacy enhancement, entertainment, individual research, critical thinking, and ultimately empowerment in an increasingly complex world (Adams et al., 2002). Libraries were also associated with providing a public place for learning and recreation, and offering educational resources for all forms of education; and especially for promoting lifelong learning (Carr, 1991; McCook & Jones, 2002; Taylor, Parrish & Banz, 2010). Findings from this study confirmed that there are different educational resources provided at the libraries for lifelong learning and for recreation. Cynthia recalled what a patron had shared with her on how she had used a book from the library:

And she said, you know, those are really neat. She said I got this book one

time that was um, Volkswagen Repair for Dummies. She said I took a complete Volkswagen engine and repaired it and now it works all from that book Volkswagen Repair for Dummies.

There are evidences, stated or implied, in previous research advocating the need for studies that evaluate the impact of community libraries on the lives of rural patrons. Vavrek (1995), a veteran researcher and prolific writer, concluded one of his later papers with a challenge to future researchers to measure the impact of the community library on the people. Zeigler and Davis (2008) discussed partnerships and relationships as keys to effective community development but did not recognize libraries as potential collaborators or as providing the structure necessary to harness the social cohesion that was required for development. In later research, however, Prins and Drayton (2010) acknowledge that “informal groups can use adult learning and education to achieve personal and collective ends” (p. 209). The rural community library setting promoted informal group learning which enhances the achievement of personal goals and collective group or community development as proffered by the authors. In their paper about adult education in cultural institutions, Taylor, Parrish, and Banz (2010) contended that libraries as cultural institutions contribute to learning, but they were critical of whose story or agenda was being promoted and warned that learners needed to be “critical consumers of information located in cultural institutions developing an awareness of embedded agendas” (p. 330). In more recent research by Hancks (2011), one of the findings was that libraries played a role in community economic sustainability efforts, though the researcher did admit the inability to measure the success in concrete terms. The findings from this study are able to substantiate the theory that rural

libraries do indeed have an impact on the lives of patrons and provide avenues for empowerment, for economic sustainability, and are a gateway to the world for rural communities.

The discussion in this sub-section show how the resources made available in libraries provide necessary support and sustenance for library users. If libraries are the gateways to the world as described by Gates (1990), then rural community libraries must indeed be described as veritable lifelines for rural communities. This is because more than just granting entrance to the outside world for their patrons, rural libraries have been found to offer access to resources that bestow a livelihood and sustenance to individuals as well as support and empowerment for the micro community, which enables the economic and social enhancement leading to development in the macro community. One example from this study is in the life of Juliet who learnt to make candles from books and online resources, and was a student at a community college but used the community library for access for her studies and online classes. She was also an active member in her community and used the library for some of her group meetings.

As a gateway to the world, easy internet access provided at the community library was a major breakthrough for the rural communities in this study. A librarian in the study suggested that even if there were patrons who could afford to own personal computers and could afford to pay for internet service, they still could not have such service because there was no digital service available in their area. This is a major problem for rural communities in the US (Hindman, 2000). For several of the patrons in this study, computer access was the major reason for visiting the library. For some individuals these visits had to be everyday to

check their email, fill out job applications or transact business, while others scheduled regular visits to check out or return books, conduct online research, take online classes, and keep abreast of the outer world around them.

In addition to resources, the community libraries in this study provided various means of entertainment essential to the everyday living of rural dwellers who did not have the same opportunities upon which urban dwellers thrived. Providing entertainment is a good strategy to attract patrons, as confirmed by Vavrek (2001), who suggested in an article titled “Wanted! Entertainment Director” that libraries should promote their entertainment value instead of the more traditional role of information resource. Apart from the internet and its unlimited source of entertainment - a large collection of books, several magazines, video and DVD collections - community libraries also afforded the rural patrons the luxury of artwork displays, exhibitions, author signings; and even the opportunity to meet with local or home-grown celebrities in programs organized in collaboration with local clubs or groups. Since there were barely other forms of entertainment in these rural communities the library was “the place”. This is confirmed by Balas (2007) when she expounded that libraries were now diversifying and promoting the library as a place for entertainment and social activities:

We are opening cafes, installing game machines in teen areas, promoting the use of our computers (not only for research but also for social networking activities such as blogging and picture sharing), and developing programming to appeal to people who are looking for entertainment (p. 30).

Another invaluable support the libraries in this study afforded to their rural communities was direct assistance. This direct assistance confirms the statement by Elmborg

(2002), that librarians were seeing a shift from the traditional role of simple provision of reference services to a more instruction-centered role. Observational data collected in the study confirmed this role, and in the orientation and training rural librarians inculcated in their workers because it is an essential part of their work with patrons. Libraries have been known to get busier in times of economic recession or natural disasters. The situation is escalated in rural communities because there are often no other avenues for training or assistance as is available in urban cities. Patrons who needed training in the use of computers to upgrade their job skills, or to apply for jobs or learn about new career possibilities often had nowhere else to turn but their community libraries. This was corroborated by several participants who confirmed that they had given assistance or observed others being helped at the library. Such direct assistance included help with cover letters for applications, resume writing and editing, online access or information searches; or simple basic computer literacy.

As described earlier, public libraries were established to offer services that bridge social, political, and economic barriers (Dickson, 1986; Gates, 1990; Harris, 1973). The basis of the founding was to assist in finding, using and interpreting information that open up opportunities for learning, literacy enhancement, entertainment, individual research, critical thinking and ultimately empowerment in an increasingly complex world (Adams et al, 2002). They were also associated with a community's cultural heritage as repositories to preserve the history, provide a public place for learning and recreation, and to offer educational resources for all forms of education, and especially for the promotion of lifelong learning (Carr, 1991; McCook & Jones, 2002; Taylor, Parrish & Banz, 2010). It is clear that the libraries in this study served their communities in these diverse and relevant ways.

However, the rural libraries also served as public sphere or village commons for their communities. They were usually the only public space that was available and free (Amberg, 2010; Bryson, Usherwood & Proctor, 2003; Heuertz et al., 2003; Hightower, 2004; Penland & Mathai, 1978). They, therefore, were the place for most formal and informal group meetings, hosted communal discourses, and were used by government agencies as a place of contact with the community, whereas hitherto, libraries had not been recognized as having the potential to be collaborators, or the capability to provide the structure necessary to harness the social cohesion that was required for development (Zeigler & Davis, 2008). Recent research (Prins & Drayton 2010), acknowledge that “informal groups can use adult learning and education to achieve personal and collective ends” (p. 209). By virtue of the fact that the library spaces were continually filled with community groups, the rural community library setting can be seen as promoting informal group learning which enhanced the achievement of personal goals and collective group or community development.

These libraries were “a third place” – free, accessible, safe, and welcoming, attributes that made them a gathering place or meeting point for all generations (Amberg, 2010; Harris, 2007; Oldenburg, 1989). They also offered a place to form relationships, to see and be seen, and to meet for conversations (Bryson, Usherwood & Proctor, 2003). For most participants in this study, the library was also a point of connectivity, both a space and a place. For one participant it was “a social point” while affording her an opportunity to volunteer and not “be bored to death.” For another patron who lived alone, it helped to “broaden her horizons” and be amongst other people. And for yet another patron, it was a place where she could meet people she “had not seen for years and years”, as well as a place of relaxation. These retirees

depended on their libraries for a lot, while the communities were able to take advantage of their time and expertise. According to Le Mesurier (2006), for retirees who become useful in their communities it is like a second lease on life; while for their communities they are assets, tried and proven resources to be tapped for the greater good of the community (Atterton, 2006; Brown & Glasgow, 2008; Le Mesurier, 2006; Redwood, 2006).

The rural libraries in this study, consequently, were found to be indeed a veritable lifeline for their rural communities. The libraries provided resources for information, research and self-development; promoted avenues for entertainment and pleasure; gave direct assistance to patrons in need of technical assistance; and proffered space and a place for individual and collective needs of community members. These services combine to offer an opportunity for individual, group, and community learning and development that otherwise would be unavailable in the communities. The next section describes the opportunities for community development offered by the rural libraries in this study.

Libraries enhance overall growth and development of rural communities. A second conclusion from the findings of the study is that community libraries enhanced the overall growth and development of their rural communities. In the rural communities under study, the community libraries had become foci, not just for the education of the people, but also for the development of the communities. As suggested in the literature, community libraries are a rallying point for rural communities and they help add value to the lives of the people, creating resilient, active, and confident communities (Rosenfeldt, 2006). They, therefore, have become vital components and a requirement for the growth and development of the community. Researchers have confirmed that public libraries are becoming active

economic development agents, shifting from their passive roles as just repositories of information (Barron et al., 2005; Dempsey, 2007; Hancks, 2011; McClure et al., 2000; Urban Libraries Council, 2007). This has been more pronounced in rural communities at the grass roots level where there has been a greater demand for needed assistance (Luloff & Swanson, 1990; McCook, 2004; Rosser-Hogben, 2004).

Recent areas of growth observable in rural communities included commerce, population increase, industry, and of course housing development (Henderson & Akers, 2010). The areas of growth will be discussed in this section, highlighting the role of the library in the enhancement of such growth. Current literature on rural migrations confirm that there is a reversal in rural migrations with a greater percentage of people moving back to rural areas in some parts of the world and some areas of the US (Brown & Glasgow, 2008). In recent years rural America has worked itself to the forefront of the economic recovery and therefore is witnessing growth and development in both population and infrastructure (Henderson & Akers, 2010). Rural employment growth rebounded with greater global demand for agricultural and manufacturing products and with that came a greater demand for housing developments. Developers, industrialists and prospective migrants made the location of a good library a prerequisite for their relocation to rural communities. These areas of growth will be discussed in this section, highlighting the role of the library in the enhancement of such growth.

The findings from the data illustrated that back to rural migrations as described in the literature were indeed happening in the communities in the study. The migrations to the communities under study were due to a) the establishment of new housing developments, b)

retirees needing a peaceful environment with lower taxes, c) conversion of small farm holdings into industrial farmlands, and d) the relocation of a military base.

Review of literature confirms that rural migrations have seen a great increase with the economic depression and such population growth comprises both commuters and retirees. City and urban dwellers are seeking respite from property taxes (Brown & Glasgow, 2008; Reader, 1998). They include commuters who use these rural places as bedroom communities but commute to the cities to work everyday. There are also retirees who prefer the quieter and more serene atmosphere of the rural environment. Brown and Glasgow (2008), claim that retirement migration was contributing to rural aging, and that the “percent of rural population at ages 65 and older (15 percent) exceeds that of the country as a whole (12 percent)” (p. 4). So, according to Johnson & Fuguitt (2000) older people were moving to rural areas more than anywhere else, and their migration in turn was attracting working-age people who were needed for the service, retail and construction jobs. This was corroborated by participants in the study. Of the eight participants who were library patrons, three were retirees who had recently moved back to the rural communities, four had lived in the communities all their lives and did not wish to move elsewhere, and the last and youngest was back in college but had lived in the community most of her life. One participant claimed that there was hardly any one under 55 when his family had moved into a small town after retirement, but they were now seeing a lot of younger people with children move into the area. Another participant believed that some of the people who had moved to the community only used it as a “bedroom community,” and they went to work in the cities in the morning and came back in the evening to sleep.

Another contributory factor to rural growth is the current increase in agricultural demand and the renewal of industrial farmlands in rural areas, which brought in an influx of seasonal farmhands. Rural America was reported to be at the forefront of economic recovery in 2010 (Henderson & Akers, 2010). Also, as a result of increased manufacturing activity in rural areas, workers and families were attracted to rural areas that bolstered growth and development (Henderson & Akers, 2010). Findings in this study support these reports. Although several manufacturing plants had moved out of the area, participants observed that there were new ones being established; while not as buoyant as before, there were observable positive changes taking place. Several of the participants commented on the growth in population, speculating as to why they moved to the area. Participants alluded to the migrant workers; the harvesting of tobacco and sweet potatoes, which was “capital intensive;” the “somewhat transient” Hispanic population; the relocation of industries; and the development houses, which were a great benefit to the county because of the real estate tax – all of which were a big boon to the areas.

As libraries became significant in the development that was taking place in rural communities, developers factored in the proximity of a library to the location of new housing developments. Libraries are essential for home seekers and have become a precondition for housing development and estate builders. In order to attract developers, rural communities, strove to build bigger and better libraries or improve on their services. This was confirmed by study participants who endeavored to find words to express what impact the library had on the community. One participant almost convincingly affirmed the role of the library in the establishment of industries. He claimed that the college was a prerequisite for the

establishment of the industry and the library was necessary for the accreditation of the college. He explained further that the library provided the resources and books while the college offered whatever courses the industry required for employees. As a librarian I knew that only the college library was required to be of a certain standard for accreditation; however I could understand that for rural communities where the college library was on a campus far from home, students would require the use of a community library nearer to them. Other participants thought it was an economic incentive and a great attraction to home buyers, so real estate developers looked for land in areas proximal to library locations.

Rural America could see greater growth and development in coming years because of its role in the economic rebound. According to an economic report, “rural America could lead U.S. economic gains in 2011. Stronger commodity markets and export activity have positioned rural America for sustained growth in the year ahead” (Henderson & Akers, 2010). The role of the community library cannot be underplayed with such growth in the rural communities because libraries have been found to have an influence in decisions concerning locations of industries, colleges, and housing developments.

Sense of identity and belonging. Another conclusion from the study is that community libraries are avenues of building a sense of identity and belonging in rural communities. These two characteristics have been identified as factors in increasing social capital (Balatti & Falk, 2002; Kilpatrick, Field & Falk, 2003), community libraries therefore have the potential for building social capital. Extensively discussed in chapter two, social capital has been suggested to contribute to growth and development in communities (Reimer,

2002) - the greater the social capital available, the greater the potential for growth in the community (Krishna, 2002).

The public libraries in the rural communities in this study functioned as a space and place – they were spaces, free and accessible for communal and individual uses, and a place of safety, learning, serendipity, and socialization. Therefore, they were avenues for creating an identity, a sense of belonging for the community and they have a great potential for increasing social capital for individual use or to be tapped for group or community use (Boaden, 2005; Bourke, 2005; Bundy, 2003, 2005, 2007; Drueke, 2006; Ferguson, 2006; Hillenbrand, 2005; Jones, 2006; Kapitzke, 2001; Preer, 2001).

According to Falk (2001), “The contribution of lifelong learning is seen to transform micro human activity into broader meso and macro level socio-economic outcomes in areas such as health, education and learning, use of time and leisure, and command over goods and services” (pg. 321). The community library is all encompassing in all of the areas listed for rural communities. It is the place for lifelong learning: for health information, education and learning, formal and informal group time, leisure activities, and access to all forms of resources.

Findings from the study corroborate how the community library enhanced the self-awareness of individuals, the development of a sense of belonging in the micro community of the library, and subsequently, cohesion in the macro community. On the individual level many of the participants narrated how they were able to draw on their friends, colleagues, and acquaintances within the library community and without, to accomplish one thing or another; the library was a critical support system for them. Participants described their

experiences with such words as “hit on for things,” “networking opportunity,” “core of interested people,” and one thought it was to the advantage of the community “to widen the circle” of people who had a “vested” interest and could be counted on to lend their support to the community.

On the macro level, the wider community had been influenced to make positive decisions, which primarily favored the library community but also made contributions to the larger community as a whole. Two situations exemplify how the people in the communities came together to accomplish something for the greater good of all. One was the decision in one community to build a new library, and a participant described how deeply involved the community was concerning the situation of the new library premises. This was one occasion when the community came out to support their library and voiced their preference for a library over other project priorities that were being considered by the council. The other example was when members of the same community came together to vote against an annexation of the library and chose to be a stand alone library. These examples demonstrate what has been described as “collective efficacy” (Rahn, no date). In a study designed to assess the health of communities using the concept of social capital, Rahn opined that “collective efficacy” occurs because residents believe that they can come together to realize common goals, with the conclusion that trust was a key component of social capital.

The learning and interaction at rural libraries generated a sense of belonging and built a community of trust in the people that translated to affecting the larger community. One discovery from findings in this study is that the community libraries had the potential of building social capital and indeed have built some social capital, however, the potentials are

yet to be fully and deliberately annexed and utilized for greater growth and development. This is an area for future focus and research, as it seems to be an under-realized avenue for individual, group, and community learning and development.

Rural librarian both an educator and a community leader. The fourth and final conclusion from the findings in the study is that rural librarians are more than custodians but are also seen and regarded as educators and community leaders. Rural librarians are educators and community leaders in their capacity of building resource collections, of giving reading advice, in information sourcing, in technical assistance, and in collaborating with other community agencies towards raising consciousness, building up awareness, and creating an environment that enhances the development of the community.

Indeed there is a renewed interest in the viability of rural communities with the increase in the back to rural migrations and the heterogeneity of the populations. This has been further buttressed with the current economical surge and the “rural rebound” (Brown & Glasgow, 2008; Jean, 2006). This interest also calls for attention to the social, economic, and educational structures that uphold rural communities of which the library plays a vital role. Literature suggests the need for evaluation of the role of the librarian in the viability of rural communities, and Vavrek (1995) suggested there was a need to assess the role of the rural librarian as a community leader.

With the technological advancement and the world now a global village, there is an information glut with ease of access to millions of data online. This has created a crisis and a need for sifting, and librarians have been suggested as experts equipped to deal with this problem of sorting out the relevant information for patrons’ needs (Heclo, 1994; Kuhlthau,

1999; Whitson & Amstutz, 1997). Librarians have become the middle agents and voyeurs of the information currency and have become indispensable in linking their communities to the world, giving global reach with a local touch (McCook, 2004). As the foci of the community, rural libraries provide resources and services to their expanding populations, and it has fallen on the librarian to promote collaboration with community leaders, social service agencies, educational institutions, health practitioners, and businesses in order to provide programs and services to accommodate everyone (McCook, 2000a, 2000b, 2004; Rosser-Hogben, 2004). Librarians were thereby responding to the call to step beyond library buildings and to reach out to the communities they serve, becoming part of them not only as information retrievers or readers' advisories, but also as collaborators in community development (Kranick, 2001; McCook, 2000a, 2000b). Researchers believed that librarians could make substantial contributions towards the development of effective collaborative partnerships amongst stakeholders in rural communities (Hancks, 2011; Kranick, 2001; McCook, 2001). Literature portrays or projects the librarian therefore as a resource person, an information expert, a facilitator and collaboration agent, and a mediator.

Findings from the study demonstrate that the work and duties of the rural librarian are very different from the work of a city or urban librarian. The duties are far more complex and include those of resource person, a link to the community, and a leader and mediator. The rural librarian as a resource person, more often than not, is the collection manager, the technical expert, the computer trouble shooter, and the information specialist. All of these are compounded further by financial limitations and being short-handed and under-staffed. The two areas volunteers come in useful are with circulation and shelving; and even in these areas

the rural librarian has to expend precious time and energy to train people who often come and go at will. Rural librarians are indeed more than just custodians but are also educators and community leaders.

First, as the collection manager the librarian needed to be attuned to the needs and demands of the patrons and the community served. The circulation and use of library resources and response from patrons are a great determinant of whether community needs were being met, and whether the librarian is doing a great job. Patron participants in the study attested to the astuteness of their librarians in anticipating and meeting their needs, especially in a time of great duress with the economic recession. The librarians spoke of the challenges they had in keeping their collections up to date but testified that they tried to meet the needs of their communities. One librarian described how she managed to have a balanced collection with her limited budget by rotating which department she updated every year. Another librarian explained that they did the occasional survey to find patrons' areas of need to build their collection and expand their resource base. One such survey revealed there was a demand for job information, so the library had found the means to meet that need. As resource persons, the librarians in the rural libraries under study were found to be competent and satisfying the needs of their patrons.

Second, findings from the study also show the librarian as an information specialist. At the advent of the information age and in light of technological advancement, librarians had been challenged as professionals and there was speculation that they would become redundant (Lancaster, 1985). However, with the dexterity that had sustained them over generations, they quickly adapted and turned the situation around to their advantage, having

gone from being information custodians to becoming ‘information experts’ (Eisenstadter, 1997; Jones, 1980). As information experts rural librarians catered to the needs of patrons and members of their communities of all ages, all socio-economic levels, and various educational and governmental agencies. Because rural communities were limited in their choices for other resources or other forms of access, the libraries and therefore the librarians became the “gateway” or “windows” to the world (Brown, 1998; Gates, 1990; Heuertz et al., 2003).

In the rural libraries under study, the librarians are the information experts. They sift through the myriad of available online information to determine what is relevant and needed by the patrons, especially since a number of patrons are technologically challenged. I discovered that the rural librarians went beyond the usual mandate by assisting patrons with online searches, setting up email addresses, drafting cover letters, editing resumes and filling out job applications. Patrons arrived with the expectation to receive support, direction, guidance, and sustenance, which only leaders are expected to deliver. Patrons found relief and their concerns alleviated.

Third, librarians were also found to be collaborators with other agencies and formed a link between such agencies and the community. The libraries in rural communities were usually also the meeting place for community events because they, more often than not, were the only large space that was free and open (Gates, 1990; Lee, 1966; McCook, 2004). As the libraries were usually the “public sphere” or the place for “communal discourse” in rural communities, the librarians usually were the link between other community agencies and

were often required to participate or mediate in matters beyond their immediate mandate that concerned the community.

The librarians also needed to collaborate with other community agencies to facilitate the availability of resources to the libraries, or to patrons in other facilities (ALA, 2004a; Johnson, 2004; Vavrek, 1995a). The library and, therefore, the librarian was the link between the different government agencies as well as the information center for them. People came to the library for information and forms concerning different issues ranging from taxes, divorce, medical, educational and even basic utilities. The librarian made sure forms were on hand, appropriately displayed, and knew where patrons could get them if they were not available. Such collaboration reached out to areas as far as agriculture, health, and education; and included such agencies as Department of aging, the Fire Brigade, the Job link Center, the Museum of Arts, the community college, local schools and even daycare centers, all of which were discussed in detail in the findings.

Collaborations such as have been enumerated above give the librarians extensive reach in the communities and bestow leadership responsibilities upon them. Their activities increased their visibility, according them a place and recognition in these communities. This concept was very simply stated by some of the librarian participants who felt they were recognizable anywhere as representatives of the library and the community. The findings showed how rural librarians were invested in working with their communities, so much so that they gave of their selves, time, and even money. One librarian related her role in creating a space for a community college so they could hold classes for a particular course in the library. Yet another librarian tried to downplay her role in the community by stating that she

was just a part of the community and was only giving back to the community that had given so much to the library. This was coming from a librarian who participated in a workshop organized to train 19 farmers how to use computers to enhance their farm productions, was on the county board planning the community development for the next ten years, and was often invited to speak at different public events, club meetings, and at church programs. Several patrons also recognized the important role of the librarian in their communities and were quick to acknowledge this. Several spoke about the librarian going above and beyond the call of duty.

The role of the librarian as a mediator was not so apparent, but the libraries were the place of mediation between community groups. With the growth in population and the racial diversity, and age disparities in rural communities, the libraries were the “melting pot” for all. The librarian has to use a keen sense of judgment to be impartial in the collection development, in the choice of art displays, and in planning programs and outreaches to the community. The librarian is therefore a cultural mediator and part of a synergetic force in the community.

Amberg (2010), in discussing the contribution of cultural vitality to the development of community and the role of libraries in this process, declared that:

It is not about cultural sustainability of libraries but the role of libraries in sustaining cultural vitality, which is about providing a sense of belonging, shared meaning, recognition of identity, respect for society, creativity and education. It is about ways of seeing, thinking, creating, learning and relating to each other. Libraries are uniquely placed to contribute to this development as a location where people can

come together in a “third place” after home, school or work. Since libraries, and therefore librarians, played a crucial role in sustaining cultural vitality as stated in the quote cited above, they therefore played a crucial role in the development of the macro community.

Finally, the preceding section encompassed the conclusions that were drawn from the findings of the data with discussions to buttress or situate them relative to available literature.

The conclusions were:

- Rural community libraries are a veritable lifeline for their communities rather than just repositories of information.
- Community libraries enhance overall growth and development for rural communities.
- Community libraries give rural communities a sense of identity and belonging and may be avenues for building social capital.
- The rural librarian is also an educator and community leader.

These conclusions were discussed vis-à-vis the postulations in existing literature and current theories. The next section discusses the implications of these findings for theory and for practice in the fields of adult education, library science and community development. It also consists of the final conclusion of the study.

Implications and Concluding Statement

This final section offers several implications of this study for theory and practice and makes recommendations for future research which emerged from this study and the data that

was gathered. The final conclusion presents a summary of the entire study, with a review of the purpose, the research questions, the research design and findings.

Implications and recommendations. The data for this study generated several implications for theory and practice, and elicited recommendations for future research. The data consisted of results of interviews I conducted face-to-face with participants, personal observations of the two libraries under study and their surrounding communities, a review of literature on rurality and rural perspectives, on adult learning and library mandate and services. Local newspapers were examined, library fliers, brochures, and notices were also perused and artifacts on display were photographed. All were used to support data gathered from the interviews and observations to discover the findings. The findings from this study afford a deep insight into the operational duties of the rural libraries and librarians, and enable further studies and enhanced practice.

The findings also suggest a need to address the differences that exist between rural and urban libraries. Though the study was not a comparative study of rural and urban libraries, there was substantive evidence to indicate that rural libraries played a greater role than just information resource for their patrons. Rural libraries and librarians fostered a sense of identity and community connectedness and social cohesion that went beyond the mandate for urban libraries. From my personal experience and understanding of services in urban libraries, and the two years of copious visits and observations at the rural libraries under study, I am able to suggest that rural libraries were more embedded and invested in the lives of their patrons and in their communities generally. And as a couple of the extracts from the

interviews suggested, rural librarians went beyond the call of duty to give of themselves, of their time and sometimes substance to support their patrons and communities.

Implications for theory. The findings from this study have three implications for theory. One, this study contributes to the understanding of critical pedagogy by its application to rural libraries. Two, it also fills the gap in literature in the speculations on the role of the library in the education of adults and in the development of social capital with the conclusion that rural libraries played a significant role in the education of adults, and consequently impacted the socio-economic development of rural communities. And three, the study recalls attention to rural library studies, and the findings raise questions and create gaps for additional research on adult learning in rural context in general, and rural community libraries in particular.

As discussed in the literature review, this dissertation used Freire's critical pedagogy as its conceptual framework with allusions to the concomitant paradigms of social capital and community development. Critical pedagogy, which Freire (1970) termed "problem-posing education," is also described as social change education. Freire (1970, 1985) further contended that learning is liberating and that personal empowerment and social transformation are inseparable processes (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Current literature state that learning, as a result of its liberating influence, leads to critical consciousness or conscientization (Freire, 1970, 2000; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007; Wiessner, 2001) and empowerment, which then becomes a catalyst that prompts social and political change (Brookfield, 1995, 2005; Freire, 1970, 1973; Giroux, 2004; Lather, 1998; McLaren, 1989). Knowledge increases usefulness and productivity, and an increase in

knowledge enhance the individual's capacity for social interactions and ultimately community awareness and development.

As seen in this study, libraries and librarians, as educational agents, can be catalysts in the process of conscientization, personal empowerment and social change. Studies in the fields of sociology, education, and library science have alluded to the role of the public library in the education of adults (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007; Mott, 2008; Ozanne, Adkins, & Sandlin, 2005; Rachal, 2000; Sanchuk, 2004; Vavrek, 1989). Several writers in the field of library science have speculated on the role of libraries in building social capital (Boaden, 2005; Bourke, 2005; Bundy, 2003, 2005, 2007; Drueke, 2006; Ferguson, 2006; Hillenbrand, 2005; Jones, 2006; Kapitzke, 2001; Preer, 2001); a few researchers have indicated the need for investigating the role of the library and librarian in community development (Hanck, 2011; Kranick, 2001; Lear, 2002; McCook, 2004); and other researchers expressed the paucity of current information or study on the impact of the library in rural communities in particular (Hanck, 2011; Vavrek, B.F 1995). This study makes a contribution to critical pedagogy by its application to rural libraries and the finding on social connectedness and community identity. It also fills part of the gap in examining the role of the rural library in the education of adults and the impact of the library in the socioeconomic development of rural communities. This study actually refocuses on rural libraries and draws attention back to the need for studies that focus on rural communities vis-à-vis the changing landscapes, economy, and heterogeneity of such communities.

One other aspect of this study is in the area of community development. Findings from this study attest to the role libraries play in rural communities in enhancing the

community capacity for development. Librarians have been encouraged to step beyond the library buildings and be more active participants in community building and development (Kranick, 2001; McCook, 2000a, 2000b). Studies have been rather sparse that acknowledge any direct impact of the library on development in the community but Hancks (2011) recently found that by contributing to the development of human capital libraries play a significant role in economic sustainability. A non-profit organization that is committed to the establishment of new small libraries in rural areas (“rurallibraryproject.org”, 1999), declares on its web page, “We view these local public libraries as centers of learning, community building, and civic pride.” The attestation went on to describe the work and services of a specific rural library which had been completed with assistance from the citizens and the government of the area, and went on to state that: “this cost-effective development project addresses a number of concerns of rural citizens: economic development, improved literacy, internet access, lifelong learning, stabilized population and strengthened community” (“rurallibraryproject.org”, 1999). This attests to and forms an effective conclusion to this section that libraries indeed play a crucial role in the development of rural communities.

Findings from this study suggest that rural libraries played a significant role, not only in the development of human capital but also as a factor in attracting housing development and manufacturing industries in their communities and therefore were important to the overall development of their communities.

In summary, the study elicited three implications for theory:

- This study contributes to the understanding of critical pedagogy by its application to the study of rural libraries.

- Fills part of the gap in the role of the rural library in the education of adults and the impact of the library in the socioeconomic development of rural communities.
- Refocuses on need for studies on rural communities vis-à-vis the changing landscapes, economy, and heterogeneity of such communities.

Implications for practice. There are several discoveries made from this study which may impact practice in the fields of study. Libraries used to be mere repositories and librarians were primarily custodians and information vendors. With information technology libraries have become entertainment centers or the local café or hang-out, while librarians are now information experts and computer troubleshooters. Researchers in the field of rural libraries, rural development, and sociology are becoming more aware of the significant role of libraries in the education and of raising awareness of adults and in the development of communities.

Findings from this study indicate that rural libraries are a veritable lifeline in their communities, especially with the information technology systems and the disparity between urban and rural communities, and between rich and poor people. This has been greatly compounded by the failing economy. Rural libraries have become foci for information, education, job search, entertainment, serendipity and are making significant contributions to the economic advancement of their patrons and the development of their communities.

There are several implications for practice in the fields of library science, adult education and community development which create prospects for interdisciplinary discourse. One implication that relates to all three fields is the need for cross-referencing and

co-educational understanding between the three fields of practice. This study of the library's impact on the lives of patrons revealed its influences in the areas of personal development through learning (educational) and the economic impact on both personal and community levels (community development). I believe that practitioners in all fields would benefit greatly to have some understanding of the other areas before going into the field. For example elective courses may be incorporated, for library science students that would provide a level of understanding of how libraries impact patrons' educational needs, and what role the library plays in the economic development of communities. The same concept could apply to the fields of adult education and community development. An alternative is to have some form of information sharing at conferences of the different fields that would highlight areas of support or collaboration.

A second implication for practice is in the need for specialized training for public librarians wanting to work in rural areas. This may transpire in the form of workshops organized by the ALA at regional levels. It is important for rural librarians to receive training relevant to the reality of practice in rural libraries which is significantly different from that which obtains in urban libraries; especially in the area of personalized assistance which is the biggest area of demand in rural libraries. Librarians will benefit greatly from being equipped to deal with day to day technicalities of computer freezes or breakdown; interpersonal relations dealing with patrons' needs; and the ability to train assistants, technical or clerical support, and volunteer staff. Such training may also include outreach workers, or program coordinators who may be brought in for use as and when needed. The training for support staff is particularly important for rural libraries because they are unable to maintain full time

personnel for all programs and outreaches. These trainings may be organized in a train the trainer model, with attendees at one workshop being trained to train several others, who in turn train others in their proximal localities. An alternative or complementary addition to these training workshops may be a development of an online curriculum that enables practitioners to have access to the resources or virtual classes. Also it is recommended that such specialized training be incorporated into the curriculum for public librarianship with an emphasis on the rural.

A third implication for practice in all three fields of practice is in the recognition of the library as a meeting place for all; both as a virtual space for the communities of practice in adult education, library science and community development, and as a physical place in the building where there is a conflation of all three. In rural communities the libraries are the forum for adult learning, self development, and even access for formal education. They are also the foci for community development because they are the place for building social and human capital, conscientization and community sense of belonging. This recognition may increase collaboration amongst agencies of the different fields to the greater advantage of communities served.

As described in chapter two and confirmed in this study, libraries act as custodians of history and preservers of culture. There is a need to preserve the history of the past and to document the changing landscape of ruralities, and in a practical sense the rural libraries have the potential to meet this need. Rural libraries as custodians of history can and should collaborate with other cultural institutions to digitize rare artifacts and information unique to rural areas which may then be displayed on the library web page for increased access. Given

the back-to-rural migrations happening in several parts of the U.S. as previously discussed, there is a need to preserve records of what represented the rurality of the past. There is a great change taking place in rural communities, changes in landscapes with the sale of farmlands for housing developments, there may come a time when even schools and community colleges in rural communities may be replaced by virtual colleges. Consequently, the current challenge facing rural libraries is to identify ways to preserve community history by collaborating with cultural institutions and technology providers.

In the above section, four implications for practice that pertain to the fields of library science, adult education, and community development were discussed a) there is a need for a forum for information sharing that would highlight areas of collaboration or support base for all three; b) specialized training for professionals in these three fields who work in rural areas on the realities of rural needs as different from urban needs. This could be in the form of an online resource base or virtual classes; c) the recognition of the community library as a meeting place – virtual and physical for all three communities of practice would build greater resource of social and human capital and enhance community development; and d) in view of the fast fading rural landscapes and other changes taking place in the rural communities, there is need for cultural institutions to digitize and preserve records.

Again in reiteration of the above, four implications for practice in the fields of library science, adult education and community development which create prospects for interdisciplinary discourse:

- Need for a forum for information sharing that would highlight areas of collaboration or support base for all three.

- Specialized training for professionals in these three fields who work in rural areas on the realities of rural needs.
- Recognition of the community library as a meeting place – virtual and physical, to build greater resource of social and human capital, and enhance community development.
- Need for cultural institutions to digitize and preserve records, in view of changing rural landscapes.

With the failure of the economy as we know it now, and the appreciation and growth in agricultural markets, a rural rebound has began and even greater changes are envisaged, which makes a higher back-to-rural migration predictable. There is therefore an urgent need for bigger and better libraries, for more inclusive services, and generally more attention to be paid to rural libraries. This statement transitions the discussion unto recommendations for future research to address the projected needs of the future.

Recommendations for future research. There are several possibilities for future research stemming from this study. The literature review for this study revealed a gap in the literature on the role of rural libraries in adult education. The literature presented very sparse information on libraries and social capital and none specifically related to rural libraries. Several recommendations called for research on the impact of rural libraries on the lives of its patrons and on the librarian as an educator and community leader but none before this study. While this study fills part of this gap, it lays no claims to being exhaustive but opens up a plethora of areas for future research. Further research is needed on this topic to include more rural libraries on a wider scale, and reaching farther removed libraries.

There is a need for research into the differences that exist between urban and rural libraries, a comparative study. This will afford a deeper insight into the services offered, resources available and what may be required to enhance the work of rural libraries. This may also draw attention to the deficits, where they exist, and the need for greater assistance where required, from the government, from professional bodies, and community stakeholders.

Qualitative research, and with it the ability to do in-depth studies into the lives and perceptions of individuals and groups, has opened up a new avenue of research hitherto unavailable to library research. Researchers are usually skeptical and wary of using the word impact, but I believe it is possible to determine the impact or the role of the community library in the lives of rural dwellers, or the perception thereof, as has been determined by this study. There is indication for further research to establish areas of impact which may include economic and social impacts. Levels of impact could be another topic for research, to determine whether the effect was more at the individual – micro, group – mezzo, or community – macro levels. Another topic for research could be on the medium of impact - high impact resources. This would enable rural librarians to evaluate available resources to determine areas of strength and effectiveness as well as weaknesses or failures in order to reconsider the resources being provided and possibly redistribute limited funds.

Research is definitely needed into the role of libraries in community development generally, and in rural communities specifically. Hardly any significant information or recognition exists about libraries as a requirement for the location of a housing development, nor is there any information about a link between rural libraries and the situation of industrial

factories. This seems to be the kind of information everybody takes for granted, but nobody found it necessary to corroborate or contradict. Developing an information resource base is another area where the three fields of practice – adult education, sociology and library science - need to collaborate and it is expedient to determine how. Collaboration between the fields of practice is required to investigate the areas of overlap or deficits. More importantly, research collaboration is required to reduce replication of services, outreaches and resources for rural communities where funds are limited and communities are much smaller than their urban counterparts. Such research would elucidate areas of need and enhance the work of all.

Finally, the librarian is emerging more and more as a critical member of the community. The role of the librarian as a community leader needs to be examined further. There is no doubt now as to the importance of the librarian as an educator, with information sourcing and retrieval, collection development, and personal assistance with resumes and cover letters, however this discovery needs further research. This study found that the librarians in the study acted in the roles of both an educator and a community leader, but more research is required to examine the extent of their leadership and in what specific areas do they contribute to the community. This information would help in formulating policies that guide librarians' work ethics and in the development of new curricula for library studies or in-service training workshops.

Again in summary, several possibilities for future research stem from this study.

- Research to establish area, level and medium of library impact on lives of patrons.

- Research to determine differences between rural and urban libraries to afford deeper insight and enable more substantive support.
- Research into the role of libraries in community development generally, and in rural communities specifically.
- Research is required to examine the extent of the leadership role of the librarian and in what specific areas they contribute to the community.

This chapter covered the conclusions and discussion from findings, implications for theory and practice, and recommendations for future research. The conclusions, which were derived from the findings, included the following:

- a) Rural libraries were a veritable lifeline for rural communities as they were usually the only resource for information, for personal development, internet access, job searches, and communal discourse.
- b) Rural libraries enhance overall growth and development of their communities by holding a place of pride, being a prerequisite for situation of industries, and as a precondition for location of housing developments.
- c) Rural libraries have the potential for building social capital by creating a sense of community, of self identity, and belonging and by creating the environment for the development of social capital.
- d) The rural librarian was both a custodian and a community leader in being the resource person, a facilitator, a collaborator, and a mediator in community affairs.

The discussions showed evidences of corroboration in other research literature where available.

The implications for theory and practice were also discussed for the fields of practice that were stakeholders in the rural communities; library science, adult education, and community development. I recommend that these fields of practice find forums to exchange ideas and information that will enhance their practice and to build on available resources. The chapter ended with recommendations that future research in the different fields would also benefit greatly from studies that are able to pull from the collaborative work.

Concluding statement. I chose to examine the role of community libraries in the education of adult rural dwellers because I sought to find relevance in my study to my interest in education and the library as engines for social change. The study examined how the community libraries were used by adults, and what services were provided to enhance self improvement, promote social cohesion and community development.

The study was found to be significant because rural America is undergoing a gradual but steady change, and contrary to speculations about its disappearance in modern society, there are new developments and actual growth (Jean, 2006). Observable developments include increase in manufacturing and industrial growth with an expansion of employment opportunities and the consequent influx of migrant populations (Henderson & Akers, 2010; Rosser-Hogben, 2004; U. S. Dept. of Agric., 2006). The migration trend has been described as back to rural migration (Brown & Glasgow, 2008), and the economic growth termed a rural rebound (Henderson & Akers, 2010). Rural communities therefore are becoming more and more heterogeneous, with a diversification that includes differences in occupations, age, education, race, ethnicity and ability (Lindsey, Shields, & Stajduhar, 1999; McCook, 2004; Oldenburg, 2001; Rosser-Hogben, 2004; U. S. Dept. of Agric., 2006). This change has

created a challenge for public services, educational institutions, social service agencies, and small businesses; of which the community library is included. The challenge has further been compounded by the fiscal policies that make rural communities receive less attention and resources than their bustling counterparts (USDA, 2010). With the changes in rural landscape and demography, there has been a new surge of interest and a spate of research studies in rural settings across several fields of study, and particularly in education and information (Mott, 2008; Ozanne, Adkins, & Sandlin, 2005; Prentice, 2004; Rachal, 2000; Ritchey, 2008; Roberson & Merriam, 2005; Sanchuk, 2004; Zeigler & Davis, 2008). However there is a dearth of research on how rural libraries have impacted the lives of patrons in rural communities.

Vavrek (1995) suggested there was a need to measure the impact of the community library on the people and also to assess the role of the rural librarian as a community leader.

The questions that guided this study included:

1. What, if any, are the impacts of the community library on adult learners in a rural community?
2. How do rural libraries work in collaboration with community agencies and institutions?
3. How does the rural librarian perceive and enact the roles of adult educator and community leader?

The research, therefore, looked at the questions from the perspective of library patrons and librarians only. The research design selected for this study was qualitative case study, with holistic and interpretive approach. There were twelve participants in the study, made up

of four library staff and eight library patrons. Data gathered consisted of face to face interviews of all participants, and from observations, document and artifact reviews.

The findings from this research found that a) community libraries are a veritable lifeline for their communities rather than just repositories of information; b) community libraries enhance overall growth and development for rural communities, c) community libraries give rural communities a sense of identity and belonging, and may be avenues for building social capital and, d) the rural librarian is also an educator and a community leader. Findings from this study also suggest that rural libraries played a significant role, not only in the development of human capital but also as a factor in attracting housing development and manufacturing industries in their communities and therefore were important to the overall development of their communities. The study elicited several implications for theory and for practice in the fields that were stakeholders in the rural communities; library science, adult education, and community development. I recommend that these fields of practice find forums to exchange ideas and information, and for collaboration to enhance practice in rural communities.

I believe that this study has made a contribution to filling part of the gaps that exist currently in the literature on rural libraries that encompass the fields of adult education and library research. The literature is currently visibly lacking in current research that is focused on rural libraries and their role in the education of adults, and consequently on the contribution to rural community sustainability. It is also hoped that it will engender some new interest in this area, vis-à-vis the back to rural migrations explosion that is currently

being experienced; and thus create additional gaps, therefore opening up a focus for further research.

I also discovered that the rural libraries that were studied played a significant role in the lives of patrons and in the communities, and their impact went beyond the dissemination of information to build social connections that foster community connectedness and may develop social capital.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire - Information Guide on Library Users

This survey is to assist the researcher in gathering data that will inform the selection of a few library users to participate in an interview for a doctoral dissertation.

Topic: The role of community libraries in the education of adults in rural communities.

Please take a moment to review and answer the following questions. Thank you.

Please check the appropriate box

1. Male Female

2. Age range: 30+ 35+ 40+ 45+ 50+ 55+ 60+ 65+

3. How long have you lived in this neighborhood? 2yrs+ 5yrs+ 8yrs+

4. What is your occupation? Farmer, nurse, trader, teacher, please

indicate _____

5. What is your educational level? Middle School High School Technical

2 Year College 4 Year College Graduate School

6. Have you ever attended a continuing education class?

Please indicate _____

7. For how long have you been using this library? _____

8. How far do you live from this library? _____

9. Would you say you use the library often regularly occasionally rarely

10. Why are you here today? _____

NAME:

Address:

E-mail: Phone:

Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview- Librarian

A) You as a librarian:

1. Please tell me a little about yourself: your name, your designation, a little about the places where you have worked at and how long you have been a librarian.

2. Comparing this place to some of the other places you have worked at, what would you say about the services here? The patrons? The community?

3. In your time as a librarian, have you had to use any kind of incentives to draw people to the library? Please describe such occasions and the response you received.

4. Please tell me about a particularly interesting thing about your being a librarian, not particularly limited to your time here.

5. Would you share a story of your most successful encounter with an adult patron?

6. How about one not so successful?

7. Are there any kind of interesting stories you maybe want to share, I'm a librarian myself?

B) Library services

1. What services do you provide that are unique to this community?

2. Which of these services are tailored to meet the needs of adults?

3. What responses do you receive to these services?

4. Could you describe how one of these services evolved, and has developed?

C) Collaboration with other agencies:

1. Tell me about other community agencies, organizations or groups you may have

worked with?

2. What stories do you have to tell about collaborating with interest groups in the community?

3. Could you describe to me a collaborative venture and how it went?

4. What is your perception of the community response to this collaboration?

5. Describe what resources are available for sharing amongst the agencies and institutions in the community.

D) You as an adult educator:

1. What is your perspective on adult education?

2. As a librarian, what do you perceive your role to be in the life of a patron?

3. Could you tell me a story that illustrates what impact the library may have had or been having on the lives of your patrons?

4. How do you perceive your role in the community?

5. Could you describe how you think the library has impacted this community?

6. Do you have stories that illustrate this impact that you want to share?

E) Closing:

1. Before we end the interview, is there anything you'd like to tell me that I have not asked about or something I missed.

Appendix C: Semi-structured Interview – Library Patron

A) You @ the Library:

1. Please tell me a little about yourself: your name, what you do, how long you have lived in this community, and whatever else you may wish to tell me.

2. Describe your earliest memories of going to the library.

3. Please tell me a little about this place, the people and whatever you think interesting about your community?

4. How often do you visit this library?

5. Would you tell me about a typical visit to the library?

6. What are the interests that you pursue at the library?

7. Do you usually find everything you need here?

8. Tell me about some of the programs that are presented in the library and what you think about them.

9. Tell me about other resources and or facilities that are available to you in the community?

10. Do you have some other interesting stories you wish to tell me about this library?

B) Role & Impact of the library:

1. What do you feel is the role of the library in your life?

2. Can you describe in what ways you think this library may have affected your learning; and your life?

3. Tell me about the kind of people you meet here – colleagues, friends, neighbors?

4. What do you think is the attraction to the library for different patrons?
5. What suggestions do you have to draw more people to the library?
6. If you had a say in effecting any changes in this library, what would be your suggestions?

C) Library & the community:

1. What roles do you see the library playing in the community?
2. From your perception has the library affected the community in any way?
3. What would make the library even more useful for you? For others?

D) Perception on adult education:

1. When you hear the words adult education, what does that mean to you?
2. Some people see the library as playing a role in adult education. What do you think of that perspective?
3. What roles do you think it could play?

E) Closing:

4. Are there any interesting stories you could tell me about this library and the community?

Appendix D: IRB Application

**North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research**

Submission for New Studies

Title of Project: The role of the community library in the education of adults in rural communities.

Principal Investigator Ajimadeke Majekodunmi Department Adult and Higher Education

Source of Funding (**required** information): None
(if externally funded include sponsor name and university account number)

Campus Address (Box Number) 7801

Email: amajeko@ncsu.edu Phone: 919 844 9054 Fax: 919 841 9410

RANK: Faculty
Student: Undergraduate; Masters; or PhD
Other (specify): Ed.D

As the principal investigator, my signature testifies that I have read and understood the University Policy and Procedures for the Use of Human Subjects in Research. I assure the Committee that all procedures performed under this project will be conducted exactly as outlined in the Proposal Narrative and that any modification to this protocol will be submitted to the Committee in the form of an amendment for its approval prior to implementation.

Principal Investigator:

AJIMADEKE MAJEKODUNMI _____ _____
(typed/printed name) (signature) (date)

*As the faculty sponsor, my signature testifies that I have reviewed this application thoroughly and will oversee the research in its entirety. I hereby acknowledge my role as the **principal investigator of record**.*

Faculty Sponsor:

DR. COLLEEN AALSBERG WIESSNER _____ _____
(typed/printed name) (signature) (date)

PLEASE COMPLETE IN DUPLICATE AND DELIVER, ALONG WITH A PROPOSAL NARRATIVE, TO:

Institutional Review Board, Box 7514, or email as an attachment to debra_paxton@ncsu.edu

For SPARCS office use only

Reviewer Decision (Expedited or Exempt Review)

	Exempt	Approved	Approved pending modifications	Table
Expedited Review Category:	1	2 3	4 5 6 7 8a 8b 8c	9

 Reviewer Name

Signature

Date

**North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research
GUIDELINES FOR A PROPOSAL NARRATIVE**

In your narrative, address each of the topics outlined below. Every application for IRB review must contain a proposal narrative, and failure to follow these directions will result in delays in reviewing/processing the protocol.

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Briefly describe in lay language the purpose of the proposed research and why it is important.

The purpose of this case study is to explore the role of community libraries in the education of adults in rural communities. The study seeks to determine how the library has impacted the lives of the participants.

Interviews with six library patrons and two librarians will be conducted at places designated by the interviewees. In addition there will be observations of participants' library use, and examination of library resources, artifacts and displays.

The study results will contribute to the field of rural libraries and adult education. By studying the role of community libraries in adult education the researcher seeks to find connections between rural libraries and community development through education of adults.

2. If student research, indicate whether for a course, thesis, dissertation, or independent research.
Dissertation

B. SUBJECT POPULATION

1. How many subjects will be involved in the research?

8

2. Describe how subjects will be recruited. Please provide the IRB with any recruitment materials that will be used.

A survey will be distributed through librarians, to a sample of 50 participants of which 6 participants will be selected. The professional participants will be librarians of the designated libraries.

3. List specific eligibility requirements for subjects (or describe screening procedures), including those criteria that would exclude otherwise acceptable subjects.

Eligible participants will be patrons of the designated libraries between the ages of 40 and 75, and of the low to middle income levels. They must be literate – to be able to read and understand the survey to be administered - and be able to speak English as the interviews will be conducted in the English language.

4. Explain any sampling procedure that might exclude specific populations.

This is a case study of library patrons and librarians of specific libraries who meet the eligibility requirements, beyond which there are no other exclusions.

5. Disclose any relationship between researcher and subjects - such as, teacher/student; employer/employee.

There will not be any direct relationships between the researcher and the participants.

6. Check any vulnerable populations included in study:

minors (under age 18) - if so, have you included a line on the consent form for the

parent/guardian signature

fetuses

pregnant women

persons with mental, psychiatric or emotional disabilities

persons with physical disabilities

economically or educationally disadvantaged

prisoners

elderly

students from a class taught by principal investigator

other vulnerable population.

If any of the above are used, state the necessity for doing so. Please indicate the approximate age range of the minors to be involved.

Persons with physical disabilities and economically or educationally disadvantaged persons may choose to participate, not for their specialties, but as part of the general population as would any other library patron.

The elderly participants will be included because the nature of the study includes ‘open nesters’ and elderly who fall into the age range for self education and self – enhancement.

C. PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED

1. In lay language, describe completely all procedures to be followed during the course of the experimentation. Provide sufficient detail so that the Committee is able to assess potential risks to human subjects.

The researcher will acquire the consent of each participant for a taped interview. Participants will be assured of confidentiality as described on the consent form.

2. How much time will be required of each subject?

First interview may be 1- 1.5 hours; and possibly a second interview of 1 – 2 hours.

D. POTENTIAL RISKS

1. State the potential risks (physical, psychological, financial, social, legal or other) connected with the proposed procedures and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

None Known

2. Will there be a request for information which subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive (e.g. private behavior, economic status, sexual issues, religious beliefs, or other matters that if made public might impair their self-esteem or reputation or could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability)?

No.

3. Could any of the study procedures produce stress or anxiety, or be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading? If yes, please describe why they are important and what arrangements have been made for handling an emotional reaction from the subject.

No.

3. How will data be recorded and stored?
 - a. How will identifiers be used in study notes and other materials?

Data will be stored on CDs, which will subsequently be destroyed at the completion of the research. Names in the data will be changed in the files to protect confidentiality. Identifiers will not be so specific as to be able to link subjects and identifiers.

- b. How will reports will be written, in aggregate terms, or will individual responses be described?

Pseudonyms will be assigned and reports will be written in aggregates.

5. If audio or videotaping is done how will the tapes be stored and how/when will the tapes be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

As in 4 above.

6. Is there any deception of the human subjects involved in this study? If yes, please describe why it is necessary and describe the debriefing procedures that have been arranged.

None.

E. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

This does not include any form of compensation for participation.

1. What, if any, direct benefit is to be gained by the subject? If no direct benefit is expected, but indirect benefit may be expected (knowledge may be gained that could help others), please explain.

Participants may gain greater awareness of resources available through the library. It is also hoped that the study results will contribute to the knowledge base of the field.

F. COMPENSATION

1. Explain compensation provisions if the subject withdraws prior to completion of the study.
2. If class credit will be given, list the amount and alternative ways to earn the same amount of credit.

N/A

G COLLABORATORS

1. If you anticipate that additional investigators (other than those named on **Cover Page**) may be involved in this research, list them here indicating their institution, department and phone number.
2. Will anyone besides the PI or the research team have access to the data (including completed surveys) from the moment they are collected until they are destroyed

N/A

H. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. If a questionnaire, survey or interview instrument is to be used, attach a copy to this proposal.

Attached

2. Attach a copy of the informed consent form to this proposal.

Attached

Please provide any additional materials that may aid the IRB in making its decision

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

North Carolina State University

INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study The role of the community library in the education of adults in rural communities.

Principal Investigator : Ajimadeke Majekodunmi Faculty Sponsor (if applicable) Dr. Colleen Aalsburg
Wiessner

We are asking you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to determine the role the community library plays in the education – enhancement of lives and environment, of the adults in rural communities.

INFORMATION

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in two interviews which could last 1 – 2 hours each.

RISKS

None known

BENEFITS

The knowledge gained from this study may encourage further studies in this area, thereby creating awareness of the potentials of the use of community libraries for adult education. It may also contribute to the body of knowledge about the role of libraries in the enhancement of the lives of adults in particular, and the community in general.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be destroyed at the completion of the research. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

COMPENSATION (if applicable)

Not applicable

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT (if applicable)

Not applicable

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Ajimadeke Majekodunmi, 300 Poe hall, Box 7801, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27695 - 7801.

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. David Kaber, Chair of the NCSU IRB for the Use of Human Subjects in Research Committee, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515 - 3086) or Mr. Matthew Ronning, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Research Administration, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/513 - 2148)

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed at your request.

CONSENT

“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may withdraw at any time.”

Subject's signature _____ **Date** _____

Investigator's signature _____ **Date** _____

Appendix F: Participant Observation Guide for Research

A. Situation of library:

1. Proximity to residential areas? Downtown? Schools?
2. Accessibility? Busses?
3. Neighborhood?

B. Library Building:

1. Welcoming or imposing?
2. Inviting or overwhelming?
3. Well lit? Open spaces?
4. Shelf arrangements?
5. Displays?
6. Community presence? Artifacts?

C. Opening Hours:

1. Convenience for older adults?

D. Programs:

1. Program times?
2. Attendance?
3. Outreaches?

E. Librarian:

1. Attitude? Service protocol?
2. Preferences – Book selection? Displays? Notices?