The mediating effect of civic community on social growth: The importance of reciprocity☆

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the effects of economic structural change on community social capital. The content of 156 interviews in Southern communities entrenched in the offshore oil economy, were used to investigate the consequences of industrial and civic restructuring on the social structure and social ties among local residents. The central finding is that population turnover and in-migration of workers demanded by a rapidly expanding economy enhances the density of weak tie networks within the community. However, the activation of these weak ties is highly dependent upon perceptions of future reciprocity from newcomers to the community by the entrenched members. Weak ties are important because they serve as a foundation for community members engaging in collective problem solving. Civic and social institutions can mediate the negative effects of rapid community growth shown. When newcomers are not integrated into the community, it may lead to exploitation and exclusion due to stigmatic labels.

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1. Introduction

Sociology has long investigated the causes and consequences of social change (Parsons & Shils, 1951; Tonnies, 1963). Whether these consequences are positive or negative has been a debate between sociologists since the inception of the discipline itself. Much of this investigation was spurred by the industrial revolution bringing many to inquire whether or not rapid social change is indeed beneficial for the communities experiencing it. The thinking among certain classic theorists was that rapid social change resulted in substantial disruption for community members (Freudenburg, 1984).

This debate is ongoing; contemporary research concerning industrial growth shows mixed results. Some research suggests the positive outcomes of social growth (Brabant, 1993; Brown, Bankston, & Forsyth, 2013; Forsyth, Luthra, & Bankston, 2007; Tolbert, 2006; White, 1983). These studies find that community and industrial growth often lead to increasing employment, higher wages, and other positive social outcomes. Alternatively, the social disruption thesis posits that rapid community growth will often lead to a wide array of social problems (Greider, Krannich, & Berry, 1991). Some argue that the offshore oil industry, like other extraction industries, is detrimental to regions in the long run (Seydlitz, Jenkins, & Hampton, 1995; Seydlitz, Laska, Spain, Triche, & Bishop, 1993). However, the model utilized by previous scholars to investigate growth brought upon by the Gulf oil industry has recently come under scrutiny regarding its paradigmatic focus on fluctuations of populations as negative (Brown, Bankston,

Forsyth, & Berthelot, 2011; Forsyth et al., 2007; Gramling & Brabant, 1986; Luton & Cluck, 2002). Other literature documenting the adoption of the energy industry in Canada and Australia also points to the plethora of positive and negative implications of the industry (Storey, 2001, 2010).

The offshore oil industry is one of the leading employers in the gulf area. Within 40 years since its inception, the industry provides direct employment to 41,798 residents of Louisiana. The reach of the oil industry extends even farther than those under direct employment. By 1981, the industry led to the creation of over 80 thousand other jobs servicing the extraction of offshore oil (Tolbert, 2006). With the majority of offshore oil leases belonging to Texas and Louisiana, the impact of this industry on these states' communities is unquestionable. The offshore oil industry has brought about a tremendous amount of change to the effected communities. The sheer size of the industry attracts large immigrations, as well as large exoduses from many communities. These communities have been impacted in a variety of ways.

2. Review of literature

2.1. Social growth's effect on community integration

Social disorganization literature comments on the role of social change on community outcomes. Shaw and McKay's (1969) theory of social disorganization states that societies rely on a normative consensus on common goals in order to regulate behavior while social growth will undermine this normative consensus and lead to negative communal outcomes. More contemporary research adds to this model, theorizing the imperative nature of residential stability which both allows time for residents of a neighborhood to initiate and strengthen ties with each other and allows communities to engage in informal social control (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974; Sampson, 1988).

On the other hand, social growth and societal change negatively affects pre-existing social ties between community members. Freudenburg (1984) finds that small rural communities which experience rapid growth in fact exhibit declines in the density of acquaintanceship between residents. This counterintuitive result suggests that while the number of possible ties increases, the cultivation of these friendships is not assured. In fact, rural communities experiencing rapid growth often become more homogenized due to the exclusion of newcomers from their social circles.

Community growth has a negative influence on levels of social trust perceived by residents (Brown, 2011; Hartnagel, 1979). Lowered levels of community trust further inhibit the incorporation of newcomers to these communities, and it hinders community members from forming relationships with others outside of their established social circles. Furthermore, members of the community also shy away from civic and social interaction. Finally, locals exhibit a lack of faith in future reciprocity. This lack of faith is seen between interaction with newcomers as well as with the larger community as a whole (Table 1).

The overall theme is that social growth, through population turnover and instability, has negative social outcomes due to weakened community integration and lowered civic and social interaction. These outcomes are caused by the tendency of rapid population change to lower the normative consensus, strain pre-existing and potential social ties, and lower the density of acquaintanceships. Once this happens, communities become increasingly homogenous which creates a dichotomous relationship between long standing residents and newcomers.

2.2. Social capital

Social capital is not only built upon social trust, it also builds social trust between community members and heightens the normative consensus (Healy, Hampshire, & Ayres, 2004). Social capital is often defined as the resources held in relationships between individuals or larger social entities (Paxton, 1999; Putnam, 2000). These relationships are based on trust and reciprocation (Bourdieu, 1983; Coleman, 1988) and are available to facilitate the achievement of certain ends (Rosenfeld, Messner, & Baumer, 2001).

An underlying notion on the reciprocal potential of social capital is that it "adheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons" (Coleman, 1990, p. 302). The concept is characterized as the glue that holds groups of individuals together (Pooley, Cohen, & Pike, 2004, p. 73). It has also been found to solidify group structure by strengthening group norms and sanctions, and increasing perceptions of obligation to the group (Coleman, 1988).

Coleman (1988) focuses on three outcomes of social capital that are important to this research. The first lies in obligations and expectations. He highlights the importance of reciprocation in social action between actors. He further stresses this form of social capital is reliant on the levels of trust and trustworthiness within the social network. The second is that norms and sanctions are essential for social collectivities to insure actors are perceived to be acting in the interest of the social collectivity. The last describes information channels as being avenues where actors are able to get information from relationships that will provide a basis for later action.

Social network literature has further elaborated on the importance and variability of information channels. The composition of ties within social networks has been posited to lead to differing levels of potential action and benefit. The main argument is that heterogeneous networks are better equipped for information transference than dense homogenous networks (Granoveter, 1973). Since dense homogenous networks are comprised of individuals strongly related to one another, information within them is redundant. Heterogeneous networks are not only comprised of strong relationships between actors but also weaker ones which provide bridges between social networks where actors can gain new information not available within highly homogenous networks. Thus "networks that are large in size and contain a variety of close and weak acquaintances are hypothesized as providing access to the greatest number of resources, while networks that are limited in size and diversity can constrain resource mobilization and opportunity mobility" (Zippay, 2001, p.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of sample.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Age	156	24.00	92.00	58.2244	14.51876
Sex (0 = female; 1 = male)	156	.00	1.00	.6795	.46818
Race (0 = non-white; 1 = white)	156	.00	1.00	.9231	.26733
Native to the area (0 = no; 1 = yes)	156	.00	1.00	.6731	.47060
Oil job (0 = no; 1 = yes)	156	.00	1.00	.3013	.46029
Valid N	156				

103). These bridges have been found to give actors better instrumental action (Burt, 1997; Edwards & McCarthy, 2004; Zippay, 2001).

Community level studies suggest social capital and social trust is generated through avenues of civic engagement (Putnam, 2000). Communities with high levels of civic engagement foster interaction between community members which in turn generates social capital. Social and civic clubs have often been found to be hotbeds for generating civic engagement. Furthermore, research shows that local associations increase civic engagement, thereby rooting populations to a place (Tolbert, Lyson, & Irwin, 1998).

Social capital is typically thought of as a resource for action because it "stands for the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures" (Portes, 1998, p. 6). From the community level, social capital is generated through avenues of civic engagement. Communities with high levels of social capital are argued to foster sturdy norms of reciprocity and social trust which nurture successful outcomes in such areas as education, socio-economic status, and unemployment (Putnam, 1995, 2000). Local connections established and offered in civic groups play a vital role in building civic trust and community capacities that are, in turn, linked to positive outcomes such as enhancing education outcomes and improved community safety (Healy et al., 2004). Thus, social capital is said to have a positive linear relationship with overall levels of community efficacy.

Not all outcomes of social capital are positive. Portes (1998) identifies four negative consequences of social capital: (1) exclusion of outsiders – when those outside of a tightly knit group are not allowed to gain access; (2) groups with high levels of social capital may also have high expectations for members' roles in the group; (3) these high expectations can create restrictions on individual freedoms; and (4) the potential for downward leveling norms.

However, overall the literature indicates that good community integration through civic engagement brings positive community effects through social integration. Social integration is fostered through social and civic institutions and social networks with increased prevalence of weak ties. These mediating effects lead to heightened levels of bridging capital as well as sturdy norms of reciprocity among community members.

3. Methodology

This research was conducted in Morgan City, Louisiana, and nearby communities within St. Mary Parish. Individual level data was collected using face-to-face interviews with knowledgeable informants. Respondents were selected through snowball sampling. The data gathered was then subjected to analytic induction.

Sampling was varied across locales within St. Mary Parish, Louisiana. Furthermore, St. Mary Parish is an ideal location to study societal growth. Demographically the parish has seen drastic fluctuations in total population. Population change was rather stagnant until the introduction of the first offshore oil rig in 1947, then in just 13 years the area experienced a 36% population increase followed by another 31% increase ending in 1980. In the years following 1980, St. Mary Parish experienced a population out-migration of roughly 16% (US Census Summary Tape Files).

Through snowball sampling key members of the population were selected and then asked to recommend others for interviewing who were also asked for further recommendations which developed an ever-increasing accumulation of subjects (Forsyth & Gauthier, 1991; Forsyth et al., 2007; Luthra, Bankston, Kalich, & Forsyth, 2007). The sampling process started with members of the Morgan City Historical Society and personal contacts in the community. Subjects involved in civic, religious, educational, business, political, and fraternal organizations were sought out to appropriately answer what effects the petroleum industry had on the social fabric and capital of the area. Since these groups tend to be dominated by upper middle-class families and individuals, methods were taken to attain greater class and occupational range in the sample by including working class people in the sample. Methods were also used to obtain informants from populations of specific interests, particularly minorities, to determine their perceptions of the long-term community impacts of the petroleum industry and their involvement in it. The sample size for the study is 156 respondents.

The median age of St. Mary Parish residents is 38 years and, according to the 2010 US Census, had a population that was split evenly across gender lines. The parish is 61% white. The table below gives further descriptive statistics for our sample.

Open ended face to face focused interviews were conducted to construct the social biographies of individuals and their families who have lived with the oil industry in their community. This method does pose problems since many times during data collection unique topics appear that were not anticipated early in the interview structuring process (Jacobs, 2000). However, the semi-structured element of the interviews allowed for saturation of the research, enabling the researcher to develop an ever-increasing set of sampled observations

through the interview process. The interviews/sampling proceeded until themes become salient and no new positions emerged.

The face-to-face interviews consisted of discussions with informants who were given direction by interviewers to discuss topics pertinent to the study. The semi-structured interview was in the form of a guided conversation. The questions were open ended and allowed the respondents complete freedom in answering. The respondents' perceptions on how the community and social capital changed due to the oil industry were solicited. However, the interview process was also administered in a flexible manner to address new issues as they emerged through conversation. Data was explored using of "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973), letting the respondents speak for themselves, and summarizing their perceptions through analytic induction. These conversations/interviews lasted an average of approximately 1.5 h and ranged from 45 min to 5 h.

Grounded theory provided the theoretical underpinning for this research. The research was guided by the sensitizing concept of social capital in order to gauge social change in a southern Louisiana community dominated by the presence of the offshore oil industry. From this concept themes began to emerge in the field that guided the research.

Analytic induction was used as the technique for data analysis. This method has often been used to examine social phenomena with the aim of formulating general theories or themes from the data (Becker, 1963, 1970; Cressey, 1953; Lindesmith, 1947). Analytic induction has evolved since its first incorporation into sociological research. Earlier researchers used a very strict interpretation which sought the identification of invariant properties or "universals" (Cressey, 1953; Lindesmith, 1947). More modern explanations of analytic induction refer to any systematic examination of similarities that seeks to develop concepts or ideas (Ragin, 1994). It is no longer seen as a search for universals but rather a method where the researcher is constantly redefining their question as the study progresses. In essence, researchers constantly compare and contrast incidents or cases that appear to be in the same general category with each other looking for relevant similarities among the instances of a category. If similarities are not found, the researcher must narrow the heterogeneous category. Over time this comparison leads to negative evidence; however, unlike earlier installments of analytic induction, the researcher does not reject the concept but alters it or shifts categories. The method is less interested in how much positive evidence has been found in the data and more to the refinement and elaboration of the research subject (Ragin, 1994).

Early coding of data began in the field during the interview process. As the interviews progressed, themes and key words became apparent. This early coding focused further on data collection and opened up the research (Charmaz, 2000). All 156 interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researchers. This allowed opportunity for further open coding of the data by the researchers. As suggested by Glaser (1965), open coding allowed the analysis to build ideas inductively and deterred bias in the research.

Furthermore, this form of coding helps researchers remain aware to their subjects' unique view of their own realities, rather than assume the subjects all share the same views (Charmaz, 2000; Straus & Corbin, 1990).

4. Findings

Four inter-related themes have emerged in the responses of the respondents: (1) the effects of oil on civic participation and voluntary organizations in the community; (2) the introduction of weak ties into the area allowing for new bridging capital; (3) the importance of perceived future reciprocity of incomers to integration within the standing community; and (4) the negative consequences of the oil industry on communities. The first theme highlights the participation of certain actors of the incoming population in an already well-established civic and social culture. The second theme refers to the external ties that the oil industry brought into the area that have expanded not only the opportunity structure of the residents within the community, but externally as well. This has allowed the community to maintain and expand its social capital base through the perpetuation of inter-community ties which were established when the oil companies came. The third theme points to the crucial importance of perceptions of future reciprocity in the creation or activation of social networks and social capital. The last theme highlights some negative consequences of both the social structure of the community in relation to social capital and the presence of the oil industry. These negative consequences ranged from exclusion of in-migrants to the area as well as negative views of those in-migrants.

4.1. Effects of oil on civic participation and voluntary organizations in the community

Civic and social organizations provide a setting for the generation and accumulation of social capital (Putnam, 2000). Many of the respondents were very familiar with and participated heavily in civic and community organizations. Furthermore, the respondents involved in civic organizations had social networks that required heavy involvement. This created an atmosphere of lively civic participation and high deposits of social capital for the area.

Morgan City and St. Mary Parish have always had high levels of participation in community organizations and activities. The following quote is a respondent's description of Morgan City, dating to long before the presence of offshore oil.

> 79 year old, white male, barber: It was a laid back community. When trapping was there it was a good community, everyone was like a family. People making out with what they could make out with. If I was in the grocery store business and you were in the trapping business, we would give you credit. You had regular things going on like baseball on Sundays, picnics, and boat races. The community would get together for church deals on weekends, wives had quilting clubs.

The respondents tell a tale of these communities having long standing levels of civic and social engagement.

74 year old, white male, oil service worker: Civic interest has always been extremely high in the area. People participated and gave their opinions and still do. 75 year old, white male, real estate agent: My father was a charter member of the Rotary Club. They thought they needed to have a place for the people to bring in their fish and shrimp . . . So they wanted the mayor and council in 1935 to pass a bond issue. This was in the middle of the depression. The mayor said no, stating that people can't afford a new tax. Back then the Rotary Club was not a Rotary Club. So these men got together and decided they wanted to form a civic organization. The wharf cost 50 thousand dollars and is still there today. It has probably provided hundreds of millions of dollars to businesses all because these men decided the fishing, trapping, and shrimp people needed to come to Morgan City.

Civic spirit and progressive thinking was not alien to the communities of St. Mary Parish. However, many respondents pointed to the oil industry enhancing the community level of civic engagement. This period of growth allowed for civic organizations to be more involved in the community. The following quote illustrates how population increases allowed for heightened civic engagement.

84 year old, female, business owner: [Civic Clubs] did a lot more when there were more people, because they could afford to do so since they had more support.

The introduction of the oil industry not only increased community involvement but also played a factor in opening up new avenues for civic participation. One example was the expansion of community cultural events. Employees brought in with the oil industry, primarily through white collar jobs, were accustomed to more cultural events than previously held in the area.

65 year old, white male, oil service worker: [The Community Concert] is put on by a group of community people. It is several times a year.

Interviewer: Did that start with the oil industry?

65 year old, white male, oil service worker: Yes, they were trying to bring up some type of social activity.

74 year old, white male, oil service worker: You had people that came in from the oil industry that had ideas; they had seen things in other communities that they tried to develop. They probably were a big factor in furthering the Mardi Gras krewes and civic events.

The offshore oil industry brought newcomers to the area who not only got involved in the community but placed certain demands on the community. Morgan City was experiencing a time of both demographic and institutional growth.

4.2. Introduction of weak ties into the area allowing for new bridging capital

The influx of population to Morgan City and some surrounding communities brought in by the offshore oil industry allowed for bridging capital between the newcomers to the area and the local population. The introduction of this heterogeneous population brought with it a diffusion of new information.

53 year old, white female, environmental activist: I think it just infused the town with diversity and it was wonderful, because you had people from all over with new ideas . . .I think we get in a rut and do things the same way all the time, then someone comes in and says 'why don't we do this'?

Respondents often used the word "ideas" to describe the impact of the newcomers on the area.

67 year old, white male, city employee: They brought ideas from where they came from of how things should be done. They had their religions, their traditions, and they brought a lot of that in. Good stuff fused along with the stuff that we didn't agree with.

79 year old, white male, barber: The influx of people helped these organizations build. I guess they were able to bring in new talents and educate people to new ideas.

The following is how one respondent felt the civic associations were changed by the introduction of newcomers to the area.

54 year old, white male, local newspaper editor: Yeah, I think that when the oil patch was doing so well we had people with, shall we say, global experience, because we had people coming here from management that had worked in the Middle East, that had worked in Africa, worked in Venezuela, Canada, worked all over the world. I think the club benefited from the insight and type of input leadership brought to that organization. It broadened their horizons a little bit as far as their civic goals are concerned, fresh ideas of what to do to help enhance the educational opportunities or social opportunities or whatever.

The presence of bridging capital brought in by the emergence of weak ties had a direct positive impact on community action and efficacy. Theorists often describe high levels of social cohesion between community residents leading to various positive benefits for the community and its inhabitants. Our sample proved to be no different. High levels of social cohesion lead communities to solve problems through informal channels.

61 year old, white male, real estate agent: These guys [oil field employees] had the hammer so to speak. Here is an engineer that works for an oil company that gives this guy all this business. So if he wants to do something with his children, as far as ballparks are concerned, like if they needed another backstop, all he has to do is pick up the phone and call one of his welding buddies and say: 'You got any old pipe around there that you could put together for baseball?' Then they would go out and build it for him. There is nothing wrong with that, the guy is not taking any money for himself; he was helping kids.

The introduction of weak ties to the area also had dramatic effects on the educational system. The data collected in this study points to various improvements in both the overall educational system of the area as well as its residents, according to respondents. The industry brought with it a large influx of people, creating a larger tax base from which to fund the public school system. Furthermore, individuals arriving with the oil industry not only placed demands on the educational system but also contributed in satisfying the demands.

> 77 year old, white male, business owner: The engineers and executive types that were in charge of what was going on were the ones that were making the new developments take place. I guess they were dissatisfied with what was here and were trying to change some of that in the schools and organizations. When they came in, they contributed and made it better, or different, or larger.

> 79 year old, white male, barber: Nicholls State [local 4 year college] got created by oil. . .More people were coming in, so schools had to expand. With the new wave of people coming in they asked for more subjects to be offered; geometry, calculus, and fine art.

> 61 year old, white male, real estate: Oil really helped us by offering jobs. They gave good high paying jobs. They did much to set up the infrastructure. When people make money they can afford to build schools and roads and other things. I was elected to the school board. They built the new high school in Berwick and Patterson during that time. They were able to raise a lot of money due to the jobs that were created.

> Interviewer: Did you see the school system improve as oil came in?

> 61 year old, white male, real estate: I would say it was beneficial. With my background on the school board, I can tell you when you have a lot of money it is going to be beneficial. Now you have to do the right thing with the money. . . I think the oil industry had an impact allowing the people to be able to do what they wanted to do with the schools. . .They are still doing well.

The industry brought about many positive changes to the area within education and these have remained. This led to a subsequent out migration of residents' children, which happened as a result of their heighted levels of education. The following conversation illustrates the general educational trend experienced by many of the respondents.

> 64 year old, white male, mayor: Neither one [father and mother] finished high school. My mother went through about the 8th grade. I didn't finish high school on a regular curriculum. I did go back and get a GED.

> Interviewer: What about your children?

> 64 year old, white male, mayor: I have four children. My oldest daughter is a school teacher for about 18 years. My youngest daughter graduated from college and moved to Texas. They all graduated from a local high school.

> Interviewer: Do you have any grandchildren?

> 64 year old, white male, mayor: Four grandchildren, one of them finished college and is now working as a coach. One of the granddaughters is at college. I have two other grandsons, one is a junior at high school and one is in the 6th grade.

> Interviewer: Do you feel that the oil industry had any effect on the schooling they were able to receive at the local high school?

> 64 year old, white male, mayor: I think what we saw were people moving in from places like Oklahoma, Texas, and those areas. It brought in some young people. We got a chance to see what other young people are like. I believe it was positive. I believe the education was a good one, and I think they added to the system.

This conversation illustrates many different aspects regarding the interaction between the incorporation of the oil industry in the area. It provides insight into both increased educational opportunities and achievement seen within the community. In addition, it highlights the positive impacts of the industry on the educational system by noting the effect of the oil field in bringing in individuals with more extensive educational backgrounds and achievements. The local population in many instances was simply not aware of avenues of higher education.

4.3. Importance of perceived future reciprocity to the integration of newcomers

Two incoming groups of workers were viewed very differently by the local population. This perception was heavily based on the role the incoming population would play in the community far into the future. The following section will highlight two major findings: the contrasting perception of the white collar workers as opposed to the blue collar workers by the local community and the importance that the concept of future reciprocity played in this evaluation.

The white collar workers brought in by the offshore oil industry are viewed in a positive light. These descriptions often vary significantly from those of the transient workers brought into the area during the oil boom. White collar workers are described as highly educated and upstanding citizens.

> 77 year old, white female, oil company worker: The engineers were good people, intelligent, leaders, men who knew how to get the job done, capable.

> 25 year old, white male, sheriff's deputy: Engineers obviously had a lot of schooling. The others, the roughnecks. . .They came over here only to collect a paycheck and then went out at night.

> Interviewer: What about the interaction between the two and the Community?

> 25 year old, white male, sheriff's deputy: I can just say that the interaction at first wasn't really that good until the engineers seemed to be here to make a better

living for their life and make the community better. . .They brought their families here. They tried to make a better living for themselves and their family. . .the bunkhouse workers brought in themselves and only themselves.

The majority of white collar workers who came to the area due to the oil industry planned to live within the community for at least several years. Thus, they would begin to set stakes in the community and get involved. Since many of these workers had families which they brought to the area, they also began to get involved in a variety of civic and social institutions. The following quote illustrates these workers fully immersing themselves within the community.

60 year old, white female, homemaker: They got involved quite a bit. I mean they felt like they needed to put their children in school, they wanted to get involved in church. They did everything here they would have done in their home town.

It became apparent in the responses of many of the subjects that the area benefited greatly civically and socially from the in-migration of certain individuals. These individuals committed themselves to the community, and their involvement brought various positive benefits. These benefits were tangible, such as the creation of new organizations.

50 year old, white male, sheriff: Well I think that oil created some of the new organizations that are there. Also, the Junior Chamber of Commerce, the Lions, and the Elks were helped due to the new ideas that were brought in.

These organizations integrated locals and newcomers through mutual interaction.

74 year old, white male, oil service worker: The people that did accept them would do stuff with them and the people that didn't, would do social activities without them. But eventually they merged. It just took time.

Our data also describes these workers as being very committed to the community. They did not come to Morgan City for short term employment. Instead they brought their families with them and subsequently became integrated in the community. These workers had various incentives to better the community. They illustrated this devotion by trying to better education and social organizations. They also put their money into the community and became involved in social and civic organizations.

45 year old, white female, administrative assistant: They put money into the community. They raised families here and joined civic organizations. They got involved.

This commitment was crucial to the local communities' acceptance of these newcomers. It was only after the incoming workforce, particularly white collar workers, demonstrated their commitment and subsequent worth to the general community that they were fully accepted and integrated.

Since the majority of white collar workers were buying homes in the area, and bringing their families to the area they became stakeholders in the community. These workers joined professional organizations, they entered and became involved in politics, and they served on school boards and in community organizations. This was a perceived distinction from the more transient blue collar labor force.

65 year old, white female, writer: Well the engineers, when they moved down here, their families moved down here with them. They were also givers to the community . . . they got involved in the social fabric, they got involved in the schools, they got involved in the good deeds they could do because that is where they came from. They were more liberally educated and more able to help the community.

Interviewer: Would you say either [white collar or blue collar worker] had a stake in the community?

48 year old, white male, government employee: I would say the engineers had more of a stake. Because typically they would come in and purchase a home and they had families and children in the school systems.

The perceptions of the blue collar, low skilled laborers that came in with the offshore oil industry were quite distinct from their white collar colleagues. Blue collar workers were seen as transients who came into the area solely for individual gain and did not have any interest in the overall good of the community.

57 year old, white male, Engineer: We had a lot of engineers that moved into the area. They were way different form regular oil field hands. Oil field hands, they brought the bar district. When they came in, they would have a pocket full of money and want to go in town and raise a little hell and spend some money. The engineers didn't do that; they bought homes.

54 year old, white male, local newspaper editor: There is a social stratum there and if you talk with any of the roughnecks or tool pushers, people who are really the backbone of the industry–they were the hardworking, hard drinking men. Many of them were not married. They were mostly males. The oil patch was a rough and tumble industry. That is a big difference between the management level people that were here at one time and were very vital in the community structure and the blue collar workers. They were coaching youth recreation league teams; they were leading members in the church community. It would have been an exception if one of the blue collar workers belonged to a Kiwanis Club, the Rotary Club, or something like that.

Community members saw commitment and future positive reciprocity to the community via home ownership. Blue collar laborers, on the other hand, were not perceived to be interested in homeownership and were therefore seen as transient with no positive communal benefits.

85 year old, white male, salesman: Well Bunkhouses are places where these people would come in and if

they can't find a job they would go to these bunkhouses and they would have a place to sleep and would be fed. The bunkhouse owners would try to find them a job but there is always a little money attached to it. The workers would have to pay them. We had quite a few of those bunkhouses in town. Most of the time they weren't a first class type of people. They were bums or drunkards.

These bunkhouses further isolated this group of workers from the local community and not only led to rampant negative rumors about this group but often to their exploitation.

The transition for the newcomers, whether blue collar or white collar, was not always one of instant acceptance by the locals. When the offshore oil industry first arrived many locals thought it would bring about negative change for the community. This was commonly viewed in relation to the economic structure. Shrimpers and trappers felt the industry would destroy the land and deprive them of their jobs.

60 year old, white male, clerk of court: When they first hit oil offshore there was a big problem between the shrimpers and the oil people because the shrimpers had control and use of all that water just to shrimp and when they hit oil the shrimpers just knew that that oil was going to contaminate and kill all their shrimp. So until they could educate the shrimpers on it not going to do that, there was a lot of bad blood between the oil production people and shrimping people.

Furthermore, individuals in the shrimping industry were not alone in their mixed views regarding the integration of white collar professionals into the local community. There was tension between the two groups when newcomers started to arrive in the community.

86 year old, white male, business owner: When they first came here back in the 1940s they had a lot of dissension. These people come from Texas, they start calling the French people coonasses. And there were a lot of fights going on. But then, as these French people started working with the oil community, they started mingling. They called the Texas people rednecks. Today the French people even call themselves coonasses.

80 year old, white female, business owner who moved to the area due to oil: The local community was hesitant to react at first. When we first moved in, I went and bought groceries and I could not buy milk for my children. They were saving it for their regular customers. I was really disturbed by those people when we first moved here, but then I've come to love it as much or more as my home town. We were outsiders. After a while they changed. When they saw what the oil industry did and the people that were coming in with that then they were very nice to the people that came in since they were educated people taking part in the community. But right at first they didn't.

Others expressed the viewpoint that these workers were fully integrated into the community from the beginning.

75 year old, white male, judge: Fortunately I knew quite a few of the so called newcomers. I attended meetings with them, I had them as my friends, they were invited to my home and I to theirs, I played golf with them, I fished and hunted with them. They were accepted well into the community. They were good people for the most part.

77 year old, white female, oil company worker: We welcomed them. We enjoyed meeting them. We found most of them to be really good people.

The local community shifted their views on the incoming work force when they realized the positive benefits both the offshore oil industry and its incoming work force had for the local community. These positive benefits ranged from employment opportunities to the involvement of newcomers in the civic and social activities.

Interviewer: How did the locals treat and view the newcomers?

76 year old, white male, oil field contract worker: I think some looked with a jealous eye. After a while they recognized it was a better community. There was money on the street. There is money to go to the stores so they could get bigger and better.

50 year old, white male, sheriff: Well, it depended. The engineers and better educated workers were coming in, they had great ideas. They came in bringing a lot of money. So they were welcomed in the first place. But these people were coming in with a company that brought a lot of money here and brought a lot of new people that gave a lot of great ideas and moved the community forward. And I think people saw that this was going to happen so they welcomed them. They were in situations where they needed these newcomers to come in and do things they were not able to do themselves. . .and have Morgan City progress like it did. The locals being just a few in number did not foresee the growth that would happen. Once this growth happened they welcomed the people to come in and help with that growth. And they were able to ride the coat tails of this progress. And many locals made a great deal of money from the people that came in here.

Not all respondents said it was a one dimensional relationship with the local community not accepting the newcomers. Some expressed that the newcomers were actually the ones hesitant to get to know the locals.

Interviewer: How did the locals treat or view the newcomers that came in based on the oil industry?

41 year old, white female, city employee: I think that is the worse of the relationships that existed. I think we, the Acadians were always outgoing and friendly and wanted to accept people and I think some of the people that came in were kind of standoffish. When you do this to the Acadian mentality you sometimes drive a wedge and there will never be interactions. These are white

collar workers that came in and they never successfully crossed the bridges to make long lasting relationships. In most of those cases they were very private types. My experiences have shown that you need to make an effort on both parts if you are going to assimilate into the society and in a lot of cases the guys that came in felt that this was maybe a temporary stop in their life and did not care to make the efforts and open up their hearts and form relationships.

The previous respondent states that he believes some of the white collar engineers saw this as a temporary stop in their career. This was viewed negatively since they were not actively placing stakes in the community. If the individuals brought their families with them they were seen as having a commitment to the community. Only after this commitment was shown did the local community accept them and integrate them into the community. Otherwise it was felt that there was no need for the local community to accept the incoming work force absent any benefit to the locals.

4.4. Negative effects of offshore oil introduction

Literature has documented the potential negative effects of high deposits of social capital within society (Portes, 1998). These negative effects range from the exclusion of outsiders to exploitation of certain groups. For instance, this study found that high social capital hindered the community's ability to adapt to social change. Many respondents indicated that there were a few powerful groups within the area which often stymied growth for their own gain. The exclusivity among those with high levels of social capital was seen as a negative effect for the community.

The inability of Morgan City and St. Mary parish to fully integrate and benefit from the offshore oil industry was a common theme in the research. One respondent reported that starting in the 1950s Morgan City "had the world in our hands" but squandered it. Others confirmed this assumption stating that Morgan City seemed to have what they called "a natural resistance" to change. This resistance was not limited to Morgan City but was seen in surrounding communities as well.

45 year old, white male, oil service worker: The oil companies they wanted, but the people that owned the lands around the area did not want the growth. One family still owns many of the [local] companies around the area. The Mall [built in another area] wanted to build in Morgan City, but the family wanted too much money . . . They stifled the growth of this area . . . The leaders in the community did not think right and get [various companies] the right incentives for them to stay so they left.

That is, powerful groups in the community participated in expressive action. Expressive action refers to situations where highly homogenous groups attempt to defend and maintain their resources (Lin, 1974). Typically, the higher these groups are on the social ladder, the easier it is to maintain their resources.

79 year old, white male, oil company employee: [A] bank and [some] families did not want to turn the land they owned loose. The big shopping center in a nearby town wanted to move here but they wanted help with the development of the land. They wanted the [family] to come in and pave all the roads, put all the sewage and lights. It would have cost millions of dollars then. [The family] asked for help. But the city of Morgan City turned them down. Another reason is because [a political official] hated the oil people. [They] didn't want to make Morgan City bigger, he wanted to keep it small. [They] attempted to keep the rent high to keep oil workers out. Made workers move to outlying areas.

79 year old, white male, barber: [One political official] was a guy that was very dedicated to Morgan City but was hardheaded. Morgan City grew in spite of [him] but it could have grown more if he had a vision. In Morgan City it was [a couple of families] who did not sell land. In Berwick, [a New Orleans] bank owned all the land. They took it from the farmers. The oil companies were going to come in and settle. They turned it down because they were going to take all the farm land. So they didn't let our area grow. The big shots that owned farm land stymied our area. They didn't want the oil companies to take their workers so they would not sell the land to let them come in. They were also afraid of losing their oil rights on their land . . ..Another reason for not selling the land is that the [family] didn't want any competition. They had their money in a lot of local businesses.

Another negative aspect of groups with high levels of social capital is the rejection of outsiders (Portes, 1998). The following quotes illustrate this:

65 year old, white female, nurse: I came here on weekends with my old roommate from nursing school. She took me one day to where a subdivision was just being built. She said 'I am going to take you over to where the oil people live'. I said 'They look like good homes to me.' She said, 'Oh, you don't want to fool around with those people.'

65 year old, white male, oil service employee: What pops into my mind is that [a local political official] called a bunch of the people outsiders. He didn't want them to be involved in the community. In spite of that, the local people embraced most of the outsiders coming in. I can tell you when I came here in 59; most of the people treated me as well as I ever want to be treated.

As was discussed earlier, the blue collar workers were not very well integrated into the community. A negative outcome of this poor social integration resulted in some cases of exploitation. The local community isolated themselves from the incoming blue collar workers. These workers were rejected by the local population and heavily stigmatized.

53 year old female, environmental activist: There were two areas of town; the bars and the pool halls where the blue collar workers were and the other parts of town where those people would not go. The locals knew where to go and where not to go.

45 year old female, city employee: With all the transient workers, the community really kind of shut down and closed themselves in.

43 year old male, police officer: These guys are fly by night guys, they work here a couple of weeks, make some money, then go commit a crime and hurry up and go somewhere else . . . they could be murderers, rapists, bank robbers and so on.

This labeling of the blue collar workers as morally deviant allowed many to accept or disregard their cases of exploitation. In some cases, the exploitation was attached and not questioned due to the perceptions of these individuals as execrable.

51 year old male, oil industry: Some businesses would take advantage of people . . . they would sell them food, clothes, places to sleep. They would work them all day. By the time it was all said and done they worked basically just for room and board in these bunkhouses.

90 year old male, oil field industry: The companies would give the workers drugs and alcohol on the ride back [from the offshore rig] and then put them in a drug rehab center when they got back. The drug rehab center would overcharge them for items such as clothing and cigarettes. By the time they came back in they owed them their whole paycheck.

This exploitation highlights the importance of social integration of incoming populations with the long standing community. Since the blue collar workers' future reciprocity was not perceived by the local community, they were not brought into social and civic organizations and given the opportunity to form bonds with community residents. These negative labels allowed for residents to overlook exploitation and in some cases even believe it was deserved.

5. Discussion

One of the key findings of this research pertains to the ability of civic and social organizations to inhibit the negative effects of social growth. Extant literature and research have found that social change, especially rapid social growth, brings with it negative effects for communities. There are several explanatory reasons why civic and social organizations were able to protect these offshore oil communities from the negative effects of growth. One reason may be community integration. By using civic and social organizations to bring the entrenched local population together with the incoming working population, these communities established and fostered networks and ties between both groups. These organizations countered the negative effects of growth that community disruption theories predict where residential instability undermines social ties and do not allow them to fully develop. However, these fostered networks and ties were only developed when individuals were perceived to be invested in the community. For those who were not perceived to be invested in the community, the opposite occurred.

A major variable in the local community's acceptance of newcomers and the subsequent utilization of civic and social institutions lay in the perceptions by the local community of the incoming labor force. This viewpoint was based mostly on two factors: socio-economic status and reciprocity. White collar workers were often looked upon favorably while blue collar workers were often thought of as deviants.[2] Regarding future reciprocity, the ability of the incoming workers to add to the overall good of the local community was at the forefront of this perception, and the measure of the newcomers' dedication to the community was their willingness to establish permanent ties within the community, such as bringing their families with them or purchasing a house. This finding coincides with social capital research regarding the importance of reciprocity (Coleman, 1988) as well as the psychological concept of sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Sense of community is a construct which expresses the feelings of attachment and belonging individuals have toward their home communities. One aspect of the sense of community is a reciprocal feeling of belonging to a group and the group returning that sense that the person belongs with them. A sense of belonging was achieved when the established citizenry accepted those who bought houses.

Civic and social capital institutions helped integrate the newly heterogeneous community, but the full benefit of these civic and social organizations was not achieved in all communities. That is to say, some communities did not seek out and include all members of the incoming population. Another attribute of the sense of community thesis is community boundaries, which provides emotional safety for the in-group and a sense of belonging. It was clear in our results that this boundary was only permeable to certain incomers dependent on various factors. One factor was the socio-economic status of the incoming worker which often determined whether they were incorporated in the civic life. Perhaps, even more important to this process was the foreseen ability of the incoming migrant to positively contribute to the community. Two different types of workers were created in the perceptions of the local population. Unfortunately, much like the puritans in Kai Erikson's (1966) seminal piece, the blue collar workers were stigmatized as deviants and ostracized as a form of boundary maintenance. This boundary was only successfully navigated by those who were perceived as being able to fulfill group needs and future reciprocity as sense of community and social capital theories would predict.

The community social capital impacts brought about with the introduction of the industry are still present. Individuals built organizations to gather and employ resources to introduce social and cultural institutions to the area that continue to be positive attributes of the community. This is divergent from previous literature on boom-town communities which experienced large periods of growth but did not see lasting positive effects once the industry departed (Seydlitz et al., 1993, 1995). The impacts

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[2] Perceptions of the blue collar workers as well as the transient nature of the offshore oil industry in the Gulf South greatly resemble research based on the Fly in–Fly out community in Australia (Storey, 2001, 2010).

uncovered in this study range from progressive cultural additions, such as the local auditorium, to enhanced infrastructure, such as expanded local medical facilities. Along with the macro level positive effects were also positive effects for the individuals inhabiting the area. These individuals experienced greater intergenerational mobility through increased educational and occupational opportunities. The industry brought newcomers to the area who were not satisfied by the educational quality already in place. These individuals, along with locals in the community, asked for curriculum additions in addition to other progressive programs. Enhanced educational programs gave residents of the area increased mobility. Residents expanded the goals and opportunities for themselves as well as others. One way this came through was from direct association with employment in the industry. The oil industry infused the area with a middle class. However, residents also illustrated a perception of increased worldviews during this time directly attributed to the introduction of a very heterogeneous group that brought with it diversity. Many citizens were introduced to new ways of viewing the world during this time. Many individuals had never thought of college or traveling and were introduced to them through their interactions with the newcomers. These positive individual changes are in accordance with social network literature on the positive impacts of weak ties to social networks, specifically dense homogenous social networks (Burt, 1997; Granoveter, 1973).

Yet not all impacts to the community were positive during this time. Animosity developed toward some of the powerful community leaders during the early times of the offshore oil industry. These powerful individuals had very strong ties with each other, and they used their influence to curtail or disallow industrial growth through such avenues as not selling land. Presumably they were motivated by fear of outside competition in the markets they already dominated. This finding illustrates the ability of powerful social networks, networks consisting of strong ties, to initiate expressive action or action taken for their own sake (Lin, 1974; Lin, Ensel, & Vaughn, 1981). Another negative effect was that some local businesses that serviced the larger oil companies often brought in outside menial labor to supply the industry. Some of these workers were exploited. The local community turned a blind eye to this occurrence mainly due to the social distance between the two groups based on boundary maintenance (Erikson, 1966).

The similarities between the sense of community theory and social capital have only been alluded to in this manuscript. Future social capital research in emerging communities may look to utilize interdisciplinary concepts as more refined methodological tools are developed. Psychology literature has argued that the sense of community theory (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) can be used as an operational instrument to help measure the nebulous concept of social capital (Pooley et al., 2004). This is reinforced by the various similarities between the theoretical concepts of group membership, group integration, reciprocity, and need fulfillment, among others.

This research highlights the critical importance of utilizing civic and social organizations to mediate or negate the negative impacts of population turnover. Communities which experience rapid growth should rely, if possible, on pre-established institutions or set about establishing them in order to combat processes that lead to social disorganization. These organizations help to integrate newcomers to previously homogenous communities. Furthermore, these institutions have been shown time and again to be hotbeds for accomplishing community tasks. This would allow communities increased capability to adapt to the shifting demands of rapid population growth.

Acknowledgements

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