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## A Government of Our Own: The Politics of Municipal Incorporation

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COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

A GOVERNMENT OF OUR OWN: THE POLITICS OF MUNICIPAL  
INCORPORATION

By

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Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude.

**-Thomas Jefferson**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The topic of municipal incorporation is increasingly reemerging as a topic dissevering of our attention. Metropolitan regions continue to grow and residents maintain a desire to live beyond the cities' borders. As these processes continue, we must recognize that individuals will seek to create new municipal governments that fulfill the wishes they hold for the new communities.

Theories of incorporation rests on a great deal of theorizing, but have not been the subject of numerous attempts to empirically test these theories. One treatment, however, that involved extensive testing of theories of incorporation was provided by Burns (1994). While Burns' work has received a great deal of recognition, the work displays significant flaws which limit the conclusions that can be drawn from the findings presented by Burns.

These shortcomings are taken as an opportunity to recast the research approach taken when investigating this topic. I argue that qualitative research methods offer the best mechanism to uncover the true meaning of incorporation. I use these methods to conduct several interviews with participants of an on-going incorporation effort. These interviews highlight two facts. First, people behave based on value rationality, rather than instrumental rationality. Second, people will support incorporation when they spend less time outside the community. The implications of these findings for the literature are discussed.

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# **CHAPTER 1:**

## **INTRODUCTION TO MUNICIPAL INCORPORATION**

### **The Contribution Afforded By This Dissertation**

The topic animating this dissertation is the politics of creating new municipal governments. Creating a new local government is a task many Americans have undertaken throughout the nation's history. Population growth and suburbanization provide a favorable environment in which to observe this process. The increased likelihood of observing municipal incorporation establishes greater incentives to understand this phenomenon. Understanding among public administration scholars of municipal incorporation fails to reflect the level of experience the American public has in creating new municipalities. Within this literature, the topic of municipal incorporation has been treated as little more than a fact of the nation's expansion. What one observes when reviewing the awareness of incorporation demonstrated in this literature is that many potential influences are not considered. These factors mostly involve the role of social factors in making incorporation feasible. This dissertation represents a challenge to this literature by not foreclosing the possibility that such social factors directly influence the process of municipal incorporation. Consequently, this dissertation serves to expand the intellectual boundaries within public administration. The goal for this dissertation is to address the lack of knowledge surrounding why municipal governments are created.

The failure to develop a comprehensive theory of municipal incorporation is attributable to the periodic interest exhibited within public administration. Only recently have scholars returned to the question of why individuals create new governance arrangements. The long-standing view that municipal governments exist because they are necessary to provide certain benefits to elite actors no longer appears unquestionable. With this recognition, scholars were forced to draw upon literature that had not been revisited in many years. Compounding this challenge is the fact that many public administration scholars displayed little familiarity with literature beyond their field. This dissertation will attempt to bridge findings presented in other disciplines in a profitable manner. Through use of this literature, the role of social factors in promoting municipal incorporation is addressed.

This represents a clear improvement to the practice of drawing from one's field, while ignoring insights contained in other disciplines. Most existing scholars display a clear tendency to utilize only those findings supporting the paradigm to which they are committed through their academic training. For example, Hayden (2004) focuses solely upon the role of profit in motivating developers to initiate this process when offering an account of municipal incorporation. Other studies addressing incorporation also clearly emphasize those explanations with which each scholar's training has made her familiar.

This dissertation further contributes to the literature by introducing a new perspective on why citizens undertake a very difficult process. The factors highlighted in this dissertation focus upon understanding on the role of "value-rationality" in initiating these efforts. Consideration of value-rationality stresses the value individuals ascribe to a behavior that fulfills some beliefs that structure the reality they presently occupy. In the context of municipal incorporation, value-rationality rests upon the value individuals ascribe to engaging in behavior that protects the social relationships within their community. Incorporating aspects of value-rationality into a theory of incorporation ensures that not only one perspective of rationality guides theory. Remaining focused on a single perspective of rationality when explaining incorporation is a common shortcoming within the public administration literature. By considering value-rationality, this dissertation will not further an understanding of incorporation that is incomplete. The findings presented in this dissertation allow motivations to animate behavior excluded from consideration in previous literature. In accomplishing this goal, the findings presented in this dissertation will provide a bridge to disciplines in addition to public administration.

In addition to presenting a more accurate image of municipal incorporation, this dissertation will also approach the topic using a different methodological approach. The majority of empirical treatments rely upon quantitative-deductive methods to test existing theories of incorporation. The methodological design employed in this dissertation utilizes a qualitative-inductive approach. Using a qualitative-inductive approach ensures the possibility of uncovering factors overlooked within the current public administration literature. Such an approach removes significant barriers for the emergence of a theory of incorporation that is sensitive to incentives beyond those familiar in instrumental rationality. Expanding understanding of incorporation to include a new perspective of rationality provides opportunity for a more accurate view of the process to emerge.

## **Unincorporated Communities and Modern Life**

Adding to a segment of the literature is an accomplishment. However, one may ask how significant an accomplishment that this represents. It is a significant accomplishment because of the pace of structural evolution occurring in all communities. Simply stated, the scope of change in these communities makes understanding aspects of community evolution important. Kunstler (1993), for example, argues that the scale of modern suburbanization has disrupted the structure provided by the unincorporated community. The unincorporated community, as a social institution, has long provided structure to the life of some American citizens. Because these communities contain families, businesses, and nonprofit organizations, they are significant factors in determining the quality of life enjoyed by those residing in these communities. In the competition for residents and resources, unincorporated communities face unrelenting pressure from other residential forms containing alternative community forms (Lang, 2003). Competition places upon unincorporated communities a series of concerns they must confront. In addressing these questions unincorporated communities risk undergoing a significant shift in their character. The struggle to exclude unwanted development from an unincorporated community is one example of the pressures exerted upon these communities. Consequently, the competition establishes an important set of incentives for residents to consider before they undertake incorporation.

One may ask, “What is the main competitor to unincorporated communities?” Hayden (2004) finds the main competitor to unincorporated communities is the “suburban” community. The distinction between these two institutional forms is subtle, but significant. The distinction originates with the purposes to which each institutional form is directed. Unincorporated communities were created as the by-product of individuals’ decisions where they will create a home. In effect, unincorporated communities exist because some individuals decide to locate in areas providing significant amenities. An unincorporated community does not initially exist to provide some goods, or services. Rather, an unincorporated community exists because of individuals choosing to reside in a particular area.

The modern suburban community is the creation of real estate developers and their goals. The purposive behavior, Fogelson (2006) argues, leads developers to establish a stable

residential environment in suburban communities. With the creation of a stable environment, realtors and developers possess a marketable commodity. In effect, the modern suburban community exists to achieve greater profits for developers. Some may argue, as Weber (1906) does, that suburbs have existed for as long as people wished to escape the undesirable environment found in the modern city. This perspective reduces suburban communities to residential forms simply located beyond the borders of an existing city. This reductionist view fails to reflect the most salient aspect of suburban communities. This is the homogenous social profile of the modern suburb. Since the 1970s, revisionist scholars have revisited this aspect of the suburban community. These scholars were animated with a desire to reframe the diversity within suburban communities, and they succeeded (Fogelson, 2006). The result of their efforts has been to remove many of the intellectual constraints defining suburban communities. The presence of fewer constraints enabled individuals to label any community suburban in nature, as long as they were willing to make the argument. These findings, however, do not negate the larger body of literature containing evidence stressing the demographic homogeneity displayed by suburban communities. As Fogelson (2006) notes, demographic homogeneity is attractive to most potential residents and provides developers with a tool to maximize profits.

This facet of the modern suburban community serves to establish a clear difference with unincorporated communities. Discriminating between suburban and unincorporated communities based on the purposive nature of those creating suburban communities reflects the most fundamental aspect of suburban communities. Most unincorporated communities predate the post-war era policies providing an opportunity to commodify the lifestyle found in suburban communities. These influences establish the clear distinction between suburban and unincorporated communities. Suburban communities were created in an effort to provide a desirable environment to individuals wishing to escape the central city. This motivation caused developers to locate these communities away from the danger of annexation to an existing central city. Unincorporated communities, often established years ago in America's past, did not have the benefit of being located away from the central city (Warner, 1964). Consequently, unincorporated communities face an intensified threat of annexation to existing communities.

Distinguishing between suburban and unincorporated communities based on the influence exerted by developers represents a divergence from that found in the literature. Many scholars (e.g. Horvitz, 1982 and Warner, 1968) have identified communities as suburbs if these

communities were simply located on the borders of an existing city. In adapting this perspective, suburbanization is reduced to a simple question of geography. Horvitz (1982) goes so far as to apply the label to settlements located on the outskirts of ancient Mesopotamia. Other scholars, such as Fogelson (2006), have found such a perspective to lend little intellectual clarity to the study of most American metropolitan areas.

This lack of clarity necessitated further theorizing on the difference in community forms. Warner (1968), Daniels (1999), and Beauregard (2006) all argue the feature most clearly distinguishing the suburban community from other community forms rests in residents' commitment to a lifestyle based on outward displays of consumption. Such behavior, these scholars argue, is facilitated by the ability of potential residents to visually observe which suburban community most matches their desired level of consumption. This fact holds significant consequences for the composition of suburban communities. Residents of different suburban communities may favor different lifestyles, but within each suburban community, a dominant pattern of consumption will emerge (Beauregard, 2006). The ability of residents to choose communities from which to live through use of visual cues is what facilitates the creation and existence of suburban communities. From this perspective, the difference between suburban and unincorporated communities is simply a difference in the level of outward consumption visually displayed in both communities.

The preoccupation with outward displays of a particular lifestyle makes suburban communities hypersensitive to the need to exert power over the community's character. This ensures that the suburban community is a more fertile environment in which to observe municipal incorporation. This further differentiates suburban communities from truly unincorporated communities. Both Beauregard (2006) and Daniels (1999) argue the existence of a strategy to gain a municipal government is a requisite for a community to truly be considered a suburban community. Unlike other community forms, suburban communities exist primarily for the reason of satisfying residents' desire for a particular lifestyle (Siskund, 2006). Unfortunately, this biases studies of incorporation involving suburban communities in favor of finding that instrumental rationality drives municipal incorporation. In unincorporated communities, there is no focus on satisfying residents' desires. This fact eliminates the existence of a preoccupation with obtaining a municipal government. Conducting a study of municipal incorporation in this context will be less biased in favor of confirming the fact that instrumental rationality animates

the process. Thus, this dissertation will examine incorporation in an environment objectively insulated from the bias common in the literature.

As Beauregard (2006) argues, residents of a suburban community are aware that the residential form they inhabit has a purpose beyond housing individuals. This awareness emphasizes the fact that the presence of municipal government could serve to accomplish the task of maintaining their cherished lifestyle (Siskund, 2006). Residents of truly unincorporated communities simply are not exposed to such knowledge because they do not face the same concerns. Consequently, residents of unincorporated communities must go a much different process to gain awareness of the benefits associated with obtaining municipal government. Such knowledge will often follow if the quality of life enjoyed by these residents is threatened. It is only with obtaining such awareness that residents of unincorporated communities begin the process of creating a new municipality. The need to address any threat to their quality of life is only a single step in the process of municipal incorporation. The evolution of the process of gaining awareness establishes the key difference between suburban and unincorporated communities. In suburban communities, awareness of the value associated with possessing a municipal government exists when the community is created. In unincorporated communities, however, this knowledge must be uncovered. Table 1.1 summarizes the key differences between suburban and unincorporated communities recognized in this dissertation.

In the current residential environment of most metropolitan regions, unincorporated communities are dependent upon the actions of those residing beyond their community's borders. Reliance upon these actors results from the fact that county governments will be the level of government most responsible for the identity of unincorporated communities. This inability to control their identity stems from the fact that unincorporated communities possess no power to exert control over the community through municipal statute. The inability to enforce community expectations through municipal statute serves as a reminder that the community is at the mercy of others. The feelings of powerlessness associated with this realization exert significant control over the behavior of those in unincorporated communities. Dorst (1989) finds that feelings of powerlessness are important because they challenge the identity one possesses because of living in that community.

## **Community Identity and Unincorporated Communities**

The identity attributed to residents of an unincorporated community is important because it serves as social shorthand for what outsiders attribute to that community (Hunter, 1973). Every unincorporated community represents a combination of social institutions and relationships found within that particular residential context (Beauregard, 2006). These factors structure the rhythm of life within this community which people come to recognize as providing the unique character of their community (Bendor, 1979). Dorst (1989) argues individuals can reside in any place, but will create a home only in a community whose character they value. Residents desire some manner to attach themselves to their community's character (Dorst, 1989). Such an attachment can be accomplished if a culture exists in a community that is capable of allowing residents to enact portions of the culture as a component of their identity. In enacting the identity of their community, individuals come to adopt some community characteristics as their own.

Accepting these traits as a portion of one's own identity holds significant consequences for how individuals view their community. Dorst (1989) finds that the acceptance of a community's identity as one's own causes individuals to display greater vigilance in monitoring the threats facing their community. No longer do individuals simply go home after work to eat dinner and watch television. Quite the contrary, when holding such views, individuals will devote time to reading the local newspaper, watching the nightly news, as well attending local social events (Dorst, 1989). Accepting the identity associated with residents of the community forges the ties that provide residents with the motivation to incorporate.

Dorst (1989) makes this point when illustrating the process by which residents of Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania chose to adopt a particular community character. The characteristics residents chose to adopt were associated with the community's identity as a rural haven of traditional values. Chadds Ford is widely known as the home of Andrew Wyeth and family. Wyeth's reputation is solidly grounded in painting the rural subjects of Pennsylvania's countryside. Although those living within Eastern Pennsylvania accept this identity, recognition of the community as a home for such values is not inevitable. This recognition was only possible because of significant work among community leaders to encourage enactment of these characteristics.

Adopting a community's identity as one's own can be directed to other goals, such as preserving the community in its present state (Dorst, 1989). In the early 1970s, Chadds Ford was facing severe development pressure as many families left Philadelphia and its older suburbs (Dorst, 1989). Many within Chadds Ford were initially indifferent to whether individual action could prevent these pressures from erasing the community. A few notable individuals, however, were dedicated to the idea of maintaining Chadds Ford in a form other than another Philadelphia suburb. The celebration of rural values was a way to express their challenge to the values associated with suburban development. Through the existence of a strong form of township government, this community was able to enact statutes institutionalizing these values. However, a level of government such as Pennsylvania's strong township governments is not present in states outside the northeast. In areas outside this region, one can expect individual enactment of community identity to promote an effort to institutionalize community values in a new municipality. Such action can only be channeled to this end.

As home to the Wyeth family, artists of national renown, Chadds Ford was in an enviable position to combat suburban pressures. The advantage afforded to Chadds Ford was the presence of a tradition that could blend into the identity of the community. Chadds Ford benefited as well from the existence of a level of government that was accessible to community members (Dorst, 1989). Although this community is located only twenty-five miles from Philadelphia's borders, many viewed such a path as a little bit more than a waste of time. In spite of the barrier posed by the proximity to Philadelphia, these individuals would be successful in using community identity as a vehicle to maintain the quality of life residents enjoyed.

Dorst (1989) highlights how the reinvigorated identity of Chadds Ford facilitated a wave of new activism on behalf of protecting the character found in the community. In the process of enacting this new identity, individuals were made aware of what their involvement protected (Dorst, 1989). A newly invigorated and accepted community identity provided individuals with a heightened level of awareness that encouraged residents to stop suburban encroachment of the community. In the absence of a strong community identity, Chadds Ford would not have been able to mobilize community members to oppose suburban development near the community (Dorst, 1989). The absence of a community identity would have prevented the community from achieving the goal of maintaining the quality of life engendered by rural values.



The impact exerted by community identity extends beyond the act of incorporation. Community identity has also allowed unincorporated places to draw upon residents of the community when confronting challenges to the community. Chadds Ford, an unincorporated community in southeastern Pennsylvania, provides an example of how community identity facilitated civic activism. This example also demonstrates how civic pride initiates a process that can contribute to residents undertaking the act of municipal incorporation. In this instance, community identity was an important facilitator of significant action.

## **Dissertation Overview**

Recent history provides a number of examples in which individuals undertook the effort to create a new municipality. However, a majority of these efforts have not met with any noticeable degree of success (Burns, 1994). This dissertation does not address the question of why efforts do or do not succeed. That is another question for another research project. Even fewer efforts provided in-depth analysis in an attempt to gain any insight into why individuals in unincorporated communities undertook these efforts, or how these efforts could be justified to others. Consequently, the process of municipal incorporation has been shrouded in misunderstanding. In this dissertation, I will attempt to further knowledge of why individuals in these communities undertake this very difficult process. I discuss the theoretical approach used to address this topic in more detail in Chapter Two.

In the third chapter, I will develop an argument why empirical treatments of municipal incorporation must be revisited. This will involve significant consideration of the mainstream theories of municipal incorporation found within the literature. This argument emphasizes the shortcomings underlying the findings forming the backbone of the literature. Reviewing these shortcomings ensures they will be made known to those who will engage in future research on this topic. In the process of developing this critique, I discuss the modeling choices animating the studies most cited within the literature. The critique is justified and explained. Within this dissertation, the conclusion is drawn that the discipline must not blindly accept the findings presented in mainstream treatments of municipal incorporation found within the literature. Special attention is paid to the implication this has awareness for the current literature. The lack of support for accepted theories provides reasonable grounds for doubting the fact that

incorporation is realistically portrayed in the literature. These shortcomings are taken as a sign to develop new methods to investigate the topic.

I take the fourth chapter as an opportunity to explore alternative strategies to investigate the process of municipal incorporation. An alternative strategy is found within the tradition of qualitative research. The benefits and costs associated with this strategy are discussed. I find that the questions associated with empirical models based on available data justify the use of a qualitative-inductive research approach.

The fifth chapter details consideration of the responses generated during in-depth interviews conducted with those involved in an ongoing incorporation effort. The responses generated through this activity provide a wealth of insight into the process. Undisciplined analysis of these responses could have generated many different pictures of the process of municipal incorporation. However, focused analysis of this data uncovers two very interesting facts about the process of government creation. The first theme uncovered during interviews is informants' descriptions of why they felt their involvement was justified. Many involved in the effort to incorporate a new town felt their involvement was justified because their environment faced a significant threat from outsiders.

The sixth chapter also involves consideration of responses collected during the interview stage of the project. This chapter, however, focuses on the determinants of citizen effort reported by those supporting incorporation. This is the second theme uncovered during analysis of the interview responses provided by interviewees. The responses provided by these informants stress the role of "value-rationality" in determining the extent to which individuals will contribute to incorporation. The main insight is that individuals contribute more when they are subject to fewer sources of information originating from outside the community.

The final chapter involves consideration of the impact associated with these responses. Special attention is paid to how these findings should inform future research into why incorporation efforts are undertaken by community residents. The import of these findings for the literature is discussed within the context of individual incentives. Special attention is placed on the role of value-rationality in animating municipal incorporation. The consequences of this fact for future research are addressed.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

The literature surrounding municipal incorporation emanates from a number of different disciplines. The diversity in background of those producing the literature prevents making more than a few generalizations about these studies as a whole. However, some characterizations about the portrayal of incorporation can be made. First, across the literature individuals are viewed as becoming involved because they wish to minimize the potential harm to their community (Burns, 1994; Krause and Sugure, 2006). Second, this group of studies also reflects a strong recognition of how individual agency structures the process of creating a new municipality (Niccoliades, 2006). Beyond these generalizations, there are few commonalities displayed across these studies. A review of the major findings contained within the literature will provide an opportunity to reconstruct collective understanding of incorporation.

### **Community Character and Incorporation**

Unincorporated communities have long existed within most metropolitan regions in the United States, while fulfilling a residential niche within the regions (Bendor, 1978). This niche establishes an identity for the unincorporated community that differentiates it from other communities, as well as defining the community in the minds of residents. Community identity will serve residents in evaluating whether future change in community form will be acceptable to them. The niche most easily fulfilled by unincorporated communities is the provision of a residential environment for those wishing to escape either significantly urbanized or suburbanized communities (Hayden, 2001).

In effect, these communities establish a haven in which one may insulate him or her from life in more developed communities. Both Hayden (2002) and Beauregard (2006) find this fact structures the activities observed within each community's border. This influence results from the more intimate scale of life in unincorporated communities (Beauregard, 2006). The intimacy of life facilitates the existence of an environment with which residents can be familiar. Certainty in knowledge about the community creates a situation in which residents possess a strong idea of

what the community represents. Through this attribute, unincorporated communities possess a stack of residents capable of becoming involved in management of the community's character.

Because of the smallness of unincorporated communities, the existing economic and residential activity is capable of being influenced by residents. This scope of activity also ensures residents will not be overwhelmed by the prospect of becoming active in community affairs. It is this fact that provides residents of unincorporated communities with a unique opportunity to display substantial efficacy in managing the community's character. Siskind (2006) argues this opportunity accounts for the residents' increased ability to organize for political activism in defense of the residential environment they value. The question that must be answered is what initiates activism among residents. Hayden (2006) argues that unwanted development, which holds the possibility of changing the community's character, provides the strongest incentive to become engaged in defense of the community's identity.

Upon responding to unwanted development, residents must confront the question of how to protect the community. Through social interaction with neighbors, a rough consensus among community members will emerge (Siskind, 2006). The risk to the community requires a response. Awareness of the need to respond will initiate the development of a strategy to achieve the goal of protecting the community. The emergent strategy will be developed within the context of the fewer rewards available in unincorporated communities. The smallness of these communities creates fewer economic resources capable of being mobilized for use in protecting the community's character. Thus, any strategy developed will rest on an extensive pool of personal resources possessed by residents. To prevent the community from becoming unrecognizable to existing residents, those involved must use these resources to their fullest impact. The consequences of failing to develop a strategy to protect the community's identity are significant. One consequence as identified by Fischel (2002) is that unwanted change to the community will cause property in the community to decline in value. The decline in property value places the community firmly on a path of encouraging additional unwanted change. This has the consequence for communities of facilitating relocation of unwanted land-uses to the community. A result, Siskind (2006) argues, will be that residents will increasingly feel less ownership of their community.

A lessened sense of ownership will diminish the quality of life enjoyed by residents because the community will no longer reflect the goals held by those actors. An attendant

consequence will be the reduction of wealth contained within community prosperity. Uncertainty about the future of the community will cause individuals to pay less of a premium to reside in that community (Fischel, 2002). Both because of a decline in satisfaction with the quality of life and property values, residents are encouraged to undertake action to arrest the influence of any change. As Beauregard (2006) finds, only through some action can the community's identity be maintained. The degree of uniqueness displayed by each unincorporated community heightens residents' sensitivity to community change. This heightened sensitivity will animate residents to secure some means of protecting the community (Lassiter, 2006). The statutory power inherent in a municipal government will provide the power. Through this path, a more recognized community identity will encourage the initiation of an incorporation effort. This originates with the existence of an environment in which residents of an unincorporated community will display a greater vigilance in protecting their community from unwanted change.

### **Economic Opportunity to Create New Governments**

Threats to the community's identity are not the only motivation increasing the likelihood of witnessing an incorporation effort. The narrow range of economic opportunity housed within unincorporated communities is also found to encourage incorporation. The influence exerted by economic opportunity exists primarily through individual self-interest. Lassiter (2006), Burns (1994), and Bendor (1978) all find that interest in increasing economic opportunities located within unincorporated communities furthers the likelihood of incorporation occurring. The incentive to undertake incorporation will not rest in obtaining municipal taxing powers that can facilitate economic development to increase the opportunities enjoyed by residents.

Certainly, unincorporated communities are not alone in attempting to further economic opportunities. Unincorporated communities, however, do face a different logic when attempting to attract new firms. These communities are driven primarily to further the number of firms operating within the confines afforded by the community (Burns, 1994). The attractiveness of these firms is a lessened consideration than in communities with a more developed economic base. Dorst (1989) argues that this stems from the fact that most unincorporated communities house little economic opportunity other than tourism-related activities. Consequently, selectivity in deciding which firms to invite is not an advantageous trait.

Before residents can begin to immerse himself or herself in the role of economic booster there is a hurdle to overcome they first must possess the capacity to offer some incentives to relocate to potential firms. Tax-abatements and development grants both represent tools that are closed to unincorporated communities because of the lack of a municipal government. The absence of municipal powers to encourage economic development is important because it denies these communities the opportunity to create a development strategy consisting of more than the good intentions of a few wealthy residents. Without possessing a municipal government, development is relegated to a scale of activity that would not generate significant economic opportunity (Teaford, 2004). In effect, unincorporated communities face little chance of attracting significant development because their effort cannot offer attractive benefits to any firms. Lassiter (2006) argues that residents of a community in such a state will recognize the futility of trying to attract new economic opportunity.

In attempting to overcome this problem, residents are confronted with the fact that possessing a municipal government would be advantageous (Burns, 1994). With this realization, many will become supportive of an effort to achieve this status. The impact exerted by the desire to obtain economic opportunities for the community gives rise to a decision to incorporate, not a simple desire for a new level of government to further complicate residents' lives. The consequence of hoping for economic growth is born out of a desire for wealth to achieve goals held by both individuals and the community, as a whole (Siskind, 2006). It is the channeling of this desire into action that promotes incorporation. The constant pressures of development within the metropolitan region create a need to reassure most residents that the unintended consequence of contributing to negative and unchecked change will occur in their community (Fischel, 2002). Given the sophistication associated with most residents, this requires more than an easy commitment to maintaining the values they cherish. This will require making a credible commitment through the creation of government structures capable of institutionalizing the preferences held by these existing residents (Fischel, 2002). Incorporation of a new municipal government provides the best form facilitating credible commitment to these individuals, in addition to promoting further economic growth.

The result exerted by a heightened desire for new economic opportunities exerts a positive influence upon the incidence of municipal government creation in unincorporated communities. The influence exerted by economic growth can serve as an opportunity to achieve

a community's goals, but only if individuals are willing to work to achieve these goals. Residents of these communities, however, will need to work to establish a sense of exactly what the new municipal government will be attracting through use of the powers provided by the new government.

### **Government Incorporation as Constitution Drafting**

The desire to create a new municipal government does originate solely from a desire for either protection of a community identity or promotion of a business climate. Creating a new municipality has also been found to emanate from the attempt to commit a community to a particular set of values (Lewis, 1991). In creating a new municipal government, residents are reducing the freedom with which one can transform property located in the community. The new municipality will enact various statutes that preclude certain land-uses from locating in the community. Preventing displacement by creating a new municipal government, in this manner, serves to commit a community to a particular path favored by existing residents. In effect, various actors commit the new municipal government to the provision of a particular package of public goods that residents most desire (Heckathorn and Maser, 1990). This also explains how municipal incorporation is understood as an instance of drafting constitution (i.e. a municipal charter) institutionalizing majority preferences.

In the campaign to create a new municipality, those leading the effort must attempt to gain support from politically efficacious residents (Burns, 1994). The requirements for support within the community will involve residents in a discussion of what requirements each hold for the new municipality. Communicating with one another about the goals for the new government works to ensure awareness of the effort is continually stimulated in the minds of community residents. This process also works to ensure the new municipality will reflect the median participants' view of what the community should encompass (Heckathorn and Maser, 1990). Through this requirement, residents can be assured that the new community will not institutionalize an extreme set of policy preferences. Actors, being required to negotiate over government form, must display flexibility in their expectations for the charter's composition in order to create a new government (Fischel, 2002). This will involve the difficult task of considering the exchange between elite actors when creating a new government because these

individuals' involvement provides the clearest path to achieve their own interests. The process of drafting a constitutional charter can serve as an opportunity to reconcile tensions and concerns among elite residents. As Burns (1994) notes, however, in most instances incorporation is focused on obtaining certain public goods.

The conclusion to be drawn from studies portraying incorporation as an instance of constitution drafting is that the community is committed to a certain cause of action. Consequently, in drafting a municipal charter a community exchanges a degree of freedom for certainty about its future. Placing emphasis upon the attempt to minimize uncertainty in incorporating a new municipality understates the complexity of this process. It does emphasize the individual incentives facing residents when considering the methods for protecting the new municipality's composition. The difficulty with such a perspective is that it portrays actors as reactionary beings, which try to mitigate the evolution of their community (Hayden, 2003). The extent to which this accurately reflects the behavior of these individuals is a question best saved for future research. The impact of this perspective rests in illustrating that municipal incorporation is seen as institutionalizing policy choices capable of protecting the community from some anticipated evils associated with outsiders. It is this promise that incorporation holds for residents that heightens the likelihood of observing incorporation. While incorporation is seen as a way to protect from the prospect of anticipated change, threats that are more obvious have also been found to prompt incorporation.

## **Urbanization and Government Creation**

Encroaching urbanization and suburbanization represent direct threats to the quality of life provided by most unincorporated communities (Hayden, 2003). Gillman (2003) notes these two forces comprise what we know as metropolitan sprawl. Unlike the prospect of future change, encroaching sprawl provides an undeniable threat to the community's composition. This attribute is what causes sprawl to become a positive influence on incorporation. Lewis (1997) finds that encroaching growth will force residents to address how quality of life can be maintained in the face of continued sprawl. Recent treatments of sprawl all display recognition that an overwhelming majority of metropolitan areas display traces of this force (Beauregard, 2006). This fact ensures that residents of unincorporated communities will be forced to search for a process capable of facilitating reconciliation of their community lifestyle with encroaching



sprawl. Unincorporated communities are unable to address this threat because of the absence of municipal power. Hayden (2003) argues that the performances displayed by residents of unincorporated communities are not reflected in the areas impacted by sprawl. The replacement of what they value with what they dislike is not a possibility that is easily dismissed. Thus, residents contemplating incorporation do so in an effort to prevent deterioration in their quality of life.

Deterioration of the quality of life residents enjoy is not the only mechanism through which sprawl promotes incorporation. Gillman (2003) argues that sprawl creates a larger social network within the unincorporated community. This establishes an environment in which residents of unincorporated communities are forced to deal with additional neighbors. The impact on their life is to increase the number of people with which each residents must interact. Gillman (2003) argues residents of smaller communities will feel discomfort with the larger social network emerging within the community. Before the scope of the social networks becomes too overwhelming, residents of unincorporated communities will attempt to constrain further sprawl. Incorporating a new municipality is the only certain path to achieve this goal (Hayden, 2002). Through the emergence of a larger social network, sprawl further encourages municipal incorporation.

Existing threats to one's community will serve to make residents more sensitive to any new threat posed by increasing sprawl (Beauregard, 2006). This sensitivity will drive individuals to pursue municipal status for their community. In this situation, residents are reacting to an observed threat, not the perception of a future threat to their community's character.

## **Government Creation and Community Attachment**

While the logic underlying the finding that sprawl promotes incorporation because there is a potential decline in quality of life, other motivations do exist. A resident's attachment to the unincorporated community in which he or she lives also promotes incorporation. This attachment is best observed in residents' adoption of an identity as community resident. According to Lassiter (2006), residents will express the fact they reside in a community by enacting certain aspects of the community's identity. By accepting the identity of a community member, residents

are making a statement that they feel part of the community. They are expressing an attachment to their residential environment. It is these residents who Hayden (2002) finds are a necessary ingredient in facilitating municipal incorporation. Before individuals can adopt the identity of community resident, they must possess some sense of what areas and activities comprise the community. Consequently, residents with this pool of knowledge possess a more informed view of that community. With this level of awareness residents are better able to evaluate the costs and benefits associated with increased development, or annexation, to their community. Dorst (1989) finds that only with this group of residents can facilitate incorporation because they can place the efforts' requirements in context.

Residents with such an extensive knowledge of their community gain this information through the daily conduct of their lives. Navigating the community makes the community's institutions known through the acquisition of free information. Repeated interaction with these institutions further solidifies one's attachment to the community through structuring his or her activities around local institutions. Beauregard (2006) argues that such involvement in the community will work to invest residents with a sense that they contribute to the community's character. If conflict over the current character of the community is not present, individuals will continue to feel they are playing some role in comprising their community (Konvitz, 1985) Emergence of a sense that consensus is evaporating creates unease about individuals' role in structuring the community. Unease about their role, Siskind (2006) argues, will create a desire to protect the community because this entity reflects one's involvement in the community.

The concern with protecting a cherished home environment provides residents with ample motivation to monitor affairs within their community. The monitoring of events enables residents to engage in behavior to achieve the goal of creating a new municipal government (Siskind, 2006). From this perspective, city incorporation is seen as originating with the hope to maintain a community deemed a significant component of one's identity. The insight presented in the literature does not rest in finding individuals will work to protect their communities. It has been long understood that they will. Rather, the insight offered by this literature stems from an emphasis on the manner in which residents view the community as a reflection of their lifestyle.

## Conclusion

To address all factors prompting incorporation in a single treatment would be impossible. Together the influences discussed above represent the most significant factors found to prompt municipal incorporation. While these influences do not represent the entirety of knowledge on this topic, they do reflect the backbone of the literature on incorporation. The influence exerted by each of these factors works through the hope of residents to achieve the goal of creating a new municipality. In some situations, residents hope to protect their community's character or composition. Other residents may desire to commit the community to a certain program for future development. Regardless of the actual goal, each of these factors animates incorporation by facilitating rational behavior among residents. Common to all these factors is the mechanism of instrumental rationality. Weber (1978) defines instrumental rationality as behavior directed toward accomplishing a goal advances their quality of life. Each of these factors encourages behavior through this mechanism. In this way, one can fairly characterize the literature as emphasizing instrumental rationality in prompting municipal incorporation.

One may question if this type of rationality is the only influence prompting incorporation. This is a fair question to ask since the factors discussed above only address a narrow range of influences animating those involved in initiating incorporation. Within the literature addressing the existence of unincorporated communities, one observes that scholars find other factors shape the character of unincorporated communities. Consequently, it is fair to question whether these forces also prompt incorporation in any manner. Unfortunately, the mainstream literature does not include consideration of whether these social factors prompt incorporation. Beauregard (2006) argues this stems from the fact that scholars only potentially understand creating a new municipal government. There simply is too much uncertainty about why incorporation is initiated, continues, and what participants hope to obtain from this activity.

To remedy this fact would require adoption of a new perspective toward incorporation. It would require investigation of how individual-level influences work to prompt incorporation. This stands in contrast to most treatments (e.g. Burns, 1994) of incorporation that only reflect the importance of environmental influences with which each individual scholar is familiar. For example, Fischel (2002) accounts for incorporation solely upon the quality of residential environment in unincorporated communities because he is familiar with how this factor shapes land values. Daniels (1999), in an effort to understand government creation, considers only the

community type found in each unincorporated community attempting municipal incorporation. A fact further limiting the strength one can attribute to the factors discussed above is that they rest on few empirical studies. Given that the factors described in this chapter were predominantly identified in historical studies relying upon documentary evidence, empirical testing is needed to clarify whether these factors are at work in all incorporation campaigns.

Burns' (1994) work represents one of the first steps in correcting for this problem. This accounts for a major reason why Burns' work looms so large in the literature. It is also a part of the reason why it is given greater attention in this project. In the next chapter, I review and review the strength of Burns' work. I find that the work displays significant shortcomings that limit the conclusions that can be drawn from the work. In effect, I argue that the findings drawn by Burns cannot be upheld with the same degree of confidence with which Burns asserts. The impact of this finding for the literature, and collective understanding of municipal incorporation, is discussed. The question of whether empirical analysis of municipal incorporation can proceed is addressed in this context. I identify serious shortcomings in studying this topic through use of empirical analysis, and find that a better strategy is needed to provide insight into the topic. I then use this as a justification for conducting qualitative research into the question of why individuals contribute to creating a new municipal government.

Investigating the topic of municipal incorporation is needed to add depth to the public administration literature. The literature has been one-sided in advancing a view that emphasizes positive freedom. Such a view holds that freedom is secured by the absence of any governmental constraints upon individual behavior (Strauss, 1987). From the perspective of the literature, freedom is primarily exchanged for the provision of public goods. Thus, the public administration literature presents an image of actors as trading positive freedom (freedom from governmental constraints) for some material benefit. To allow the absence of governmental mechanisms requires compliance by individual citizens and some trade-offs. If the trade-off for reduced levels of freedom is significant, the literature holds individuals will support the creation of new public policy. Citizens can also suffer a reduction in their freedom because the commonwealth requires this sacrifice. This view of freedom though widely supported in the literature, is not the only view.

An alternative conceptualization of freedom does exist, although neglected by public administration scholars. This view rests on the concept of negative liberty (Strauss, 1987). This

concept holds that freedom can be achieved through institutionalizing the prohibition of certain behaviors. In effect, freedom is achieved because another's ability to limit the individual's pursuit of happiness is constrained through statute. Through investigating the topic of municipal incorporation, expanding the discipline's view of freedom can be accomplished. This rests in answering the question of why individuals attempt to create a government, which will necessarily constrain their behavior. Incorporation, through institutionalizing community form, may prove to be an instance in which residents find that government constraint serves to achieve freedom through negative liberty. The answer to this possibility holds the potential of reframing understanding of freedom within the discipline of public administration.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **CRITIQUES OF PREVIOUS STUDIES OF INCORPORATION**

#### **Introduction**

One study holding prominence within the literature on incorporation is Nancy Burns' (1994) work. Burns' work represents the most cited treatment addressing incorporation. Given the importance assigned to this work within the literature, reconsidering the strength of this study is highly justified. The validity one can attribute to Burns' study must be evaluated in the context of the limitations contained within the work. Burns' (1994) work deals with the creation of new local governments including both special district and municipal governments. Consequently, the work does not deal exclusively with the creation of new municipalities. This chapter contains a critique of Burns' work resting on evaluation of the methodology and theorization in the work. This level of attention is justified because the work has exerted such significant influence upon how the process of incorporation is understood. Addressing the weaknesses of this work enables one to reconsider the extent to which the literature portrays this activity. In emphasizing both the methodological and theoretical aspects of Burns' work, it becomes clear that the literature is limited in its reliance upon this work.

The limitation created by reliance upon this work creates a necessity for scholars to address incorporation from initiation of an incorporation effort. This is required because Burns, as well as others, construct their theories of incorporation upon strong assumptions about the manner in which incorporation efforts unfold. In approaching the topic from its beginning in one context, one maximizes the likelihood that he or she can identify flaws in the practices of previous scholars and correct for them. Scholars must engage in such activities in order to prevent duplicating past mistakes.

The first task in overcoming the weaknesses associated with reliance upon Burns' work is to draft a theory of municipal incorporation. Burns presents an empirical model that includes a test of a theory of incorporation success, not a theory of why incorporation is undertaken. Beauregard (2006) argues that slippage in what one tests as a theory of incorporation is one reason why knowledge of the process cannot be advanced. This concern is attributable to the fact

that the empirical findings presented by Burns do not adequately test the theory she presents to account for the motivation of residents to incorporate their community. The findings Burns presents capture the influence of factors beyond the theory she presents. Consequently, future scholars of incorporation must attempt to construct a theory that addresses the motivation to incorporate, not why such efforts succeed.

The second task necessitated by reliance upon Burns' work is the need to construct a theory amenable to conceptualizations of rationality beyond instrumental rationality. Burns discusses incorporation in a manner that reflects her focus upon the ability to provide benefits through particular institutional structures. To improve knowledge of incorporation, these intellectual chains must be escaped. This second task can only be accomplished with more investigation into the topic of incorporation using different approaches and by linking studies from across different disciplines.

### **Shortcomings in Burns' Portrayal of Incorporation**

Scholars that are familiar with work originating beyond their discipline are those able to accomplish improvement in current theories of incorporation. These scholars can fill this role because they are aware of knowledge surrounding this topic. The current literature stemming from either public administration scholars or political scientists is especially neglectful of much work in other literatures (Siskind, 2006). Scholars within these traditions simply do not display a familiarity with the insights embedded in the literature of other disciplines. The first consequence for public administration scholars is developing a tendency to overstate the newness associated with suburbanization (Beauregard, 2006). Familiarity with the literature provided by public administration and political science does afford some benefits in accessing unfamiliar literature. The opportunity to bridge unfamiliar literature rests in the assumptions about municipalities held by these scholars. At least in the modern era, public administration scholars have viewed municipalities as purposely-constructed residential areas. Such residential forms are entities meant to institutionalize various policy and lifestyle preferences (e.g. Burns, 1994; Oliver, 1999; Logan and Molotch, 1987). For residents of unincorporated communities or areas, this literature places attention upon consideration of what could be gained through the incorporation of a new

municipality. In this way, the effort to create a municipal government can promote stability in what is provided to denizens.

Thus, one can understand this branch of literature to present an image of residents highlighting their concern with the value of goods and services that could become available following incorporation. This literature holds that it is the perceived value of these goods and services that determines whether individuals will be involved.

The topic of this dissertation is the political process of incorporating a new municipality. At the onset of the project, an initial review of the literature was completed. One fact easily uncovered from this exercise is that Nancy Burns possess the respect of many researching this topic. The level of respect attributed to this work requires possessing a familiarity with the findings she presents. The familiarity, however, has not been reflected in an awareness of the shortcomings contained within the work. These shortcomings do not negate the work. Rather, they call into question some insights produced by Burns. Before discussing these shortcomings, the strengths of this work are reviewed. The intellectual respect assigned to this work is found to have a solid basis. Burns proffers several important insights into the process of creating a new government. This fact should not be understood to imply that there are no grounds upon which to comment on the work.

### **Burns' Theory of Government Creation**

One of the strengths displayed by Burns is the attention paid to the incentives animating individuals' involvement in creating new local governments. Emphasis upon the individual incentives animating initiation of the process provides several useful advantages. First, emphasis upon individual-level incentives helps to promote awareness that individuals undertake these efforts to obtain some goal. Second, the emphasis upon individual involvement highlights the exchange that must accrue among residents if the effort is to proceed. In conjunction, these two advantages allow Burns to analyze which type of actor is most responsible for the initiation of the effort to create a new municipality. What Burns (1994) finds is that those actors driving this process are individuals who possess both the greatest amount of monetary resources and political efficacy within the community.



This finding allowed Burns to reach a fundamentally important conclusion about the nature of municipal incorporation. Whereas others view the emergence of new municipalities as the sum of an organic process, Burns (1994) finds local governments are the result of goal-oriented actors. Such behavior promotes recognition that municipal incorporation exists because one group of actors' behavior is animated by instrumental rationality. This encourages recognition that unincorporated communities, while predating any incorporation effort, are heavily influenced by efficacious actors responding to instrumental rationality. However, it should be recognized that Burns does display a heavy bias toward supporting the logic of individuals responding to instrumental rationality.

This fact may hold some consequence for the conclusions that can be drawn from Burns' work. As Gillman (2004) notes, the highlighting of individual incentives in Burns' work promotes a focus upon the material benefits capable of being provided by government. This establishes the consequence of predisposing political scientists and public administration scholars to accept Burns' work because the work drew upon concepts widely discussed among these scholars. Acceptance of the work was so strong that among this group, Burns' work became widely accepted as the definitive empirical treatment of municipal incorporation.

In spite of any potential bias, Burns' work remains an important contribution to the literature. Another reason for its importance rests in the finding that not all incentives display uniform influence upon individuals' decisions to actively support incorporation within a community. The differential impact exerted by these incentives gives rise to a rough schema suitable for use in characterizing those supporting incorporation. To be precise, Burns (1994) finds two types of actors are vital in creating a new municipal government. Burns finds evidence that common to both types of actors is the ability to engage in strategic behavior. The difference between the two types of actors rests in the resources each group of actors can devote to any incorporation effort.

The group of actors identified by Burns (1994) consists of developers and business owners interested in creating a municipality to subsidize the costs of furthering their interests. For example, owners of light-manufacturing plants may wish to establish a new government to assist in subsidizing infrastructure provision for a new plant location. These individuals will contribute more on behalf of creating a new municipality because they possess knowledge of what their involvement will provide. The second type of actor stands in stark contrast, as these

individuals possess few resources to commit to the incorporation effort. These individuals display a less developed idea about how they stand to benefit from supporting incorporation. This originates with the fact that these actors respond primarily to the opportunity to insulate their community from some negative influence approaching their community. This group is responding based on self-interest as well, but do not respond to the opportunity to minimize business costs. In both instances, we observe a focus upon achieving some goal. This commonality ensures these actors are not too unlike one another.

The potential benefits associated with creating a new municipal government influence both types of actors. Each group's involvement is channeled through different causal paths encouraging support of incorporation. Further influencing the decision to become involved in supporting an incorporation effort is the likelihood that involvement will contribute to the success of the effort. If involvement does not appear to contribute to the success of the effort, both types of actors will refrain from further support.

The point at which each group reaches the conclusion that further support is unwarranted is vastly different (Burns, 1994). In effect, these actors are different in the extent of their involvement, not in the substance of the goals held for their participation. Burns finds that business-owners display a greater willingness to support incorporation in their community. This trait stems from the fact that these actors possess a greater pool of resources to commit to incorporation. Business-owners also stand to benefit more directly from such involvement. Residents, on the other hand, possess neither of these traits. Consequently, their involvement threshold is much lower than that displayed by business owners and developers.

Both groups can offer one another advantages in achieving the goal of creating a new government. Without the support of business-owners, residents do not possess the resources needed to birth a new municipality. Burns (1994) attributes this to the fact that residents have other commitments to which they must direct their wealth. Business-owners and developers often find that their efforts to create a new municipality are questioned by many community residents. Residents can be co-opted by business-owners in an effort to alleviate such concerns. In effect, residents can offer business-owners with the capacity to legitimize developers' messages that incorporation will benefit all community residents, not just developers. Burns (1994) argues that residents can also provide developers with the critical mass needed to achieve the public support for incorporation. While these groups display significant differences, it should

be remembered that both are responding to instrumental rationality. It is this finding that provides Burns' work with its importance.

### **Limitations in Burns' Work on Government Creation**

The findings contained within Burns' work ensure that it should be familiar to all scholars interested in incorporation. Burns' (1994) work is a vital and important step in constructing a theory of local government creation because it is the first to rest on significant empirical evidence. Although it is an important piece of the literature on this topic, there are several clear difficulties with Burns' work. First, Burns (1994) does not allow for the possibility that unincorporated areas do not display a uniform level of attractiveness for those responding to the individual-level incentives promoting incorporation. Second, Burns' (1994) work does not allow any influence to be exerted by social factors as a motivator in creating new municipalities. Third, Burns (1994) does not differentiate among the different communities within each metropolitan region. This difficulty leads Burns to produce a research design containing an ecological fallacy that limits the strength of the generalizations Burns offers.

The consequence of these shortcomings is significant because they require consumers of Burns' work to give serious thought to the impact exerted on their understanding of the topic. Blindly accepting Burns' conclusions without engaging in such thought encourages other scholars to duplicate these mistakes and to produce more flawed studies. The first two shortcomings lead to a situation in which the success of local government creation is couched primarily in terms of unrealistic assumptions about human behavior. Failing to acknowledge that not all unincorporated areas display the same level of suitability for incorporation understates the importance of several explanatory factors. Proximity to existing municipalities or infrastructure establishes areas in which the rewards of incorporation are potentially more significant. Consequently, these areas will be more likely to house an incorporation effort because the payoff in these communities is demonstrably greater.

Another cause of the absence of uniformity in encouraging incorporation across communities rests in the existence of a social environment unique to each community. Lang (2003) argues that every community possesses a range of social factors that reflects the area's history. These communities work to shape the cognitive filter through which residents create a

reaction to various stimuli within the community. Since De Tocqueville, there has been recognition that diversity in thought across communities is an inescapable hallmark of society (Bender, 1978). Both factors lead to the conclusion that communities, regardless of type, cannot be treated as displaying a uniform level of attractiveness for incorporation. One must recognize the differential logic animating incorporation across communities at risk of incorporation (Fogelson, 2006).

The second shortcoming rests on Burns' decision to couch discussion of the topic in the language employed by economists. This ensures that Burns' work is marked by a heavy emphasis upon the material benefits one can obtain from supporting incorporation. Consequently, Burns fails to proffer an explanation that addresses the role social factors play in creating a new municipality. Metropolitan growth encourages an inexorable redefinition of most American counties. Social influences within these communities establish a network in which such change is judged and evaluated. It is through these social connections that residents attribute meaning to the evaluation of these communities. Burns' theory of municipal incorporation is a response embedded in a wish to maintain identifiable communities threatened by growth.

The first two shortcomings in Burns' work originate with a deficiency in conceptualization. In effect, Burns fails to think about municipal incorporation in a manner that transcends her academic training. The third shortcoming contained within Burns' (1994) work emanates from a series of methodological decisions structuring the work. Burns estimates a regression model to evaluate the strength of the theory she presents. It is in estimating Burns' model that significant methodological shortcomings are committed.

### **Methodological Limitations of Burns' Work**

If Burns' (1994) findings are to be verified, an effort must be directed toward estimating a model that improves upon Burns' strategy. The task then becomes one of generating and estimating a model that reflects limitations in available data, as well as the logic contained in the theory. Only through such stages can one prevent spurious results from being interpreted as support for Burns' theory. The first step in improving upon this work requires respecification of

the model to be estimated. Constructing an improved model requires some consideration of what alternatives would insulate future work from duplicating the same shortcomings.

The first instance in which Burns (1994) commits a modeling mistake rests in Burns' unit of analysis selection. This choice ensures that the findings presented by Burns contain an ecological fallacy. King (2002) defines an ecological fallacy as an error committed when one draws conclusions about a unit of analysis from data measured at another level. Such a problem exists because the analyst misinterprets his or her model results to draw conclusions that do not reflect the level of analysis she is addressing. In this case, Burns attempts to draw conclusions about the creation of new municipalities in unincorporated communities using data measuring these variables at the county level. This error is the result of Burns measuring variables at the level of randomly selected counties, rather than in identifiable unincorporated communities. Burns (1994) justifies this decision because land beyond an existing municipality represents a single pool of unincorporated land. This decision is highly questionable because it does not reflect the importance typically attributed to the existence of an unincorporated community. From Burns' perspective, however, community is not important when undertaking incorporation. This stems from the fact that people are concerned with land values and public services, not handshakes and community events. Burns is implicitly arguing any unincorporated place is at risk of undergoing an incorporation effort.

From the perspective of Burns' theory, treating any area beyond a municipality as providing the same set of incentives to actors as an unincorporated community is unjustifiable. Unincorporated communities provide a greater range of incentives than unincorporated areas because of a community's unique character and boundaries (Burns, 1994). From this theory, one cannot support treating unincorporated areas and communities as synonymous. In spite of this fact, Burns measures variables at the level of all unincorporated territory located within a county. There is no effort to separate either entity when collecting needed data. The desire to empirically test a theory of incorporation drove Burns to make every effort in developing a database facilitating evaluation of her theory. In constructing this database, Burns is forced to apply the theory beyond its limits. Burns does not offer a theory of county development, but rather a theory of local government creation. The use of all unincorporated territory in each county as the unit of analysis in Burns design gives rise to the problem of an ecological fallacy. This results from the

fact that Burns draws conclusions about unincorporated communities based on a dataset generated at the level of all unincorporated area in a single county.

This fact creates a strong argument for believing that Burns' findings are flawed. Simply stated, drawing conclusions about communities from a higher entity facilitates furthering an image of incorporation that is inaccurate. The difficulty originates with the fact that counties often hold more than one unincorporated community with their boundaries (Siskind, 2006). Measuring data at the level of a county does not allow one to isolate the relationship between explanatory factors and the existence of an incorporation effort in a single unincorporated community. Thus, such a practice prevents one from accurately measuring indicators of the causal mechanism that are hypothesized to motivate incorporation. The manner by which individuals are projected to contemplate incorporation is reflected with great imprecision. The lack of precision at this point allows for spurious results to be misinterpreted as support for one's theory.

Treating either unincorporated territory in a county or smaller unincorporated area, as the proper unit of analysis is problematic. The decision to follow this path extends Burns' theory beyond the boundaries established in her work. This is significant evidence that there are some grounds for doubting the validity of Burns' findings. Questioning the work on this basis is not supported by only this shortcoming. Within Burns' work, other decisions are present that prevent an adequate test from being conducted.

Improving upon this choice is obvious, but would be costly to implement in future research. One method of improving upon this practice would be to use unincorporated communities as the unit of analysis. Some might object that such a strategy is unrealistic. Achieving this level of specificity in collecting data at the level of unincorporated communities is facilitated by the current set of geographic information systems (GIS). Current GIS packages allow for the collection of data at the level of each unincorporated community through the use of publicly collected data. The United State census Bureau collects data for a range of variables for a majority of unincorporated communities facilitating collection data at this level (Census Bureau, 2004). The fact that the Census Bureau provides a data range conducive to use with modern GIS packages furthers confidence that better methodological decisions can be achieved. Consequently, one can argue two things. First, one can argue that such a path allows the collection of data that is more congruent with the theory Burns details. Collecting data based on

Census Bureau data would facilitate a very stringent test of any theory of incorporation, not just Burns' theory. This path would prevent any intellectual slippage in the hypothesized relationship between explanatory factors and the motivation to incorporate a new municipality. Second, the use of this data also encourages one to insulate results from being influenced by the inclusion of unincorporated territory within a data set from weakening any relationships that may be observed.

Utilizing a unit of analysis other than the unincorporated community is not the only aspect weakening Burns' findings. An additional shortcoming rests in the choice of model form Burns employs. Burns estimates a standard linear regression model. The use of a standard regression model holds several implications for how one understands the presence of municipal incorporation in unincorporated communities. First, use of this model form implies that the presence of an incorporation effort can be treated as a continuous dependent variable. This requires that one treat the presence of an incorporation effort as an event that can occur more than in a single instance in each unincorporated community. Such a view is unrealistic given the established view within the literature that incorporation is a process that proceeds as a campaign that displays many potential outcomes. Estimating a standard regression model would treat each outcome as a separate effort. To accept this position would be highly questionable. An incorporation effort is one process driving to a goal yet defined. The presence of many different perspectives on the ultimate outcome of incorporation within the county does not indicate that there is more than one incorporation effort. Treating the process as a continuous dependent variable overlooks this fundamental aspect of incorporation. In so doing, one allows for the possibility that models being estimated reflect why incorporation efforts succeed, rather than why they are undertaken.

A better decision would be to operationalize the presence of an incorporation effort as a dichotomous dependent variable. Such a strategy would reflect the fact that incorporation efforts are either being considered or underway. It would prevent the misspecification of the model through the inclusion of a variable capturing other influences or processes. If one accepts this argument, it is clear that a logit model would be most appropriate for estimating any model of incorporation. Logit models are the only choice to use when estimating a model including a dichotomous dependent variable.

The decision to estimate a logit model in the context of municipal incorporation initiates more difficult choices. Estimation of a logit model engenders some further difficulty for scholars because of the nature of the process. The frequency with which one observes municipal incorporation requires one to use a special form of a logit model. Municipal incorporation is an event that occurs very infrequently. Hayden (2002) goes as far as to argue that the infrequency of incorporation is partially responsible for interest in the topic. Using a very expansive definition of an incorporation effort, one can identify the creation of slightly over two hundred possible instances of incorporation since 1992 (Census Bureau, 1997). This number involves unincorporated communities, as well as unincorporated territory and housing developments that incorporated. Consequently, this number would involve applying the theory to areas in which Burns theory does not apply. Counting incorporation efforts in these forms would increase the number of efforts observed. However, the consequence would be to apply Burns theory to unchartered territory.

Given the emphasis upon applying theories of incorporation to unincorporated communities, including other residential forms would be unacceptable. Remaining focused on unincorporated communities undeniably lowers the number of efforts which could be potentially included in any dataset. Applying this standard to the new municipalities created since 1992, would reduce the number of incorporation efforts to sixty-seven occurrences (Census Bureau, 1997; Census Bureau, 2007). This furthers the difficulties associated with estimating a model of municipal incorporation. It also prevents the use of a standard logit model from being used to analyze the relationship between the observance of an incorporation effort and key explanatory variables. A standard logit model would require observance of at least eighty positive instances of a phenomenon to provide unbiased and accurate estimates (Long, 1997; King and Zheng, 2001). The likelihood of obtaining this number, even if one includes instances occurring in areas beyond unincorporated communities in a randomly selected sample, is miniscule.

To identify incorporation efforts in unincorporated communities to enable empirical testing, severely limits the number of positive instances one can identify. Even including efforts in residential forms other than unincorporated communities cannot increase the number of observations to the level needed to use a standard logit model. To generate the number needed for a standard logit model would require selection on the dependent variable. Such a choice would eliminate any benefits associated with random sampling of cases. It would do so only to



allow estimation of a standard logit model. The main consequence would be to limit the generalizations that could be drawn from any results that would be generated. However, all is not lost if one limits units of analysis to unincorporated communities, and makes wiser modeling decisions. That decision would be justified upon the basis of estimating a model that most matches Burns' theory. Estimating a model reflecting this reality of incorporation appears impossible until one considers acknowledging the infrequency of incorporation.

The better strategy allows for the use of the unincorporated community as the unit of analysis. However, accomplishing this through the use of statistical procedures to ensure the infrequency of the event does not provide useless estimates. It can be assumed that not all two-hundred seventeen instances of municipal incorporation since 1987 would be included in a single dataset. Consequently, one can assume that randomly selecting from among unincorporated communities would produce fewer observations than needed for use with a standard logit model. The number of observances requires the use of a modeling strategy that can provide accurate estimates in spite of the infrequency with which incorporation occurs.

King and Zheng (2001) provide the only modeling strategy of preventing such influences from limiting the insights that can be drawn from this analysis. The method is termed the Rare Events Logit Model (or ReLogit model). King and Zheng (2001) have developed this technique to estimate logit models when there are too few observances of an event to allow use of a standard logit model. ReLogit models estimate unbiased and accurate indicators in instances where there are as few as twelve positive observances of a dependent variable in a single dataset (King and Zheng, 2001). This technique ensures accurate estimation of indicators through utilization of all auxiliary information related to the influence of each variable upon the frequency rates associated with each positive observance of the event (King and Zheng, 2001).

This attribute of the modeling technique proves a valuable tool in analysis of events that occur very infrequently (King and Zheng, 2001). The infrequency of municipal government creation clearly justifies the use of ReLogit models in estimating a model of municipal incorporation. As the only modeling strategy capable of generating accurate estimates in light of the infrequency with which municipal incorporation occurs, this model should serve as the basis of empirically analyzing the process. Burns did not use this technique, and as a result, is part of the reason why Burns' findings should be reconsidered. Burns use of a standard regression model is clearly a suboptimal choice given that more appropriate choices are available.

## **Possible Conclusions about Burns' Work**

The fact that ReLogit models provide accurate indicators in spite of few positive observances provide for a stricter test of municipal incorporation than does Burns. Use of a Relogit model provides for a stricter test of these theories, which is an improvement upon the strategy displayed in Burns' (1994) work. Given this fact, the decision to use this technique in future research is clearly justified by the reality of municipal incorporation. No treatment of government creation involves any claim that this process occurs very frequently, or even frequently. Quite the contrary, most treatments (e.g. Siskind, 2006, Beauregard, 2006, Hayden, 2001) argue that the process of government creation occurs very infrequently. Thus, one could place greater trust in any estimates generated with use of this technique. In such a situation, the use of a rare-events logit model is the proper choice for use in testing theories of incorporation.

Evaluating the enhancements necessary to improve upon Burns' model and generate greater support for the findings generated by the activity leads to one conclusion. The conclusion is that collection of more refined units of analysis and adoption of proper modeling strategy techniques cannot be profitably accomplished. These advances would require too much effort to justify their pursuit. Consequently, one must conclude that new approaches to analyzing municipal incorporation are required. The path established by Burns (1994) is simply too fraught with methodological difficulties to eliminate any doubt that this literature accurately captures the nature of incorporation. The alternative methodological strategy possessing the greatest possibility of providing insight into incorporation lies in the use of qualitative research techniques. Use of qualitative techniques will provide a clearer understanding of why incorporation proceeds.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **QUALITATIVE APPROACHES TO MUNICIPAL CREATION**

#### **Introduction**

The fact that empirically testing a model of municipal incorporation is difficult to accomplish without severely limiting the strength of any findings suggests a question. That question is: “How can one gain insight into why individuals engage in the campaign to create a new municipality?” One cannot look to previous empirical approaches contained within the literature because these studies display undeniable shortcomings. The record of evidence presented in these studies is shrouded in doubt because their flaws limit the conclusions presented. The inability to provide a clear record of support for existing theories of incorporation has significant consequences. The first is that the literature is unable to provide a clear account of why individuals undertake the process of creating a new municipality. Such a void in knowledge of municipal incorporation prevents the development of theories that facilitate vigorous testing of models addressing incorporation. This is the reason previous findings must be revisited and forgotten if knowledge is to be advanced.

One explanation for why the literature has not facilitated development of a comprehensive theory of incorporation is that research reflects only the perspectives of scholars. These works do not address incorporation using the language familiar to participants in the process. Burns (1994) and Fischel (2003) discuss motives to protect a community, but employ language reflecting the abstract goal of furthering one’s self-interest. The pursuit of one’s self-interest may appear to proceed in a manner similar to mechanisms detailed by scholars. However, one cannot be assured that this pattern of results does not represent some aggregation of factors that is misinterpreted as support for existing theories. The absence of indicators reflecting how participants view the process of incorporation is a serious shortcoming. It prevents the logic, as participants will respond to it, from influencing in the work of scholars developing theories of municipal incorporation. The consequence is that the models estimated by scholars fail to establish a clear record of statistically significant empirical findings. Estimating these models does not provide clear support for these theories because they do not reflect the reality of municipal incorporation. Scholars involved in empirical testing possess no indicators

that reflect how residents view the process. This fact ensures scholars operate from the intellectual basis of the literature, not from a participant's perspective. It is not hard to understand the mixed empirical record, in light of the fact that a forging perspective was hoisted upon the evidence of incorporation.

The reliance upon past scholarship to construct an explanation of municipal incorporation provides a significant opportunity to misconstrue incorporation. The failure of empirical testing to confirm existing theories illustrates that additional basic analysis or theorizing, is needed to clarify collective understanding of the process. The most accessible path to gaining such knowledge rests in attempting to reconstruct the process through accessing the insight of those involved in an ongoing incorporation effort. Only through the experiences of those involved in an incorporation effort can insider understanding be reflected in empirical models and constituent indicators. An oft neglected, but suitable tool for collecting more insight into the motivations and considerations driving individuals participating in the process exists. Incorporation evidences greater nuance than portrayed in current treatments, establishing this alternative approach as a vital technique to further knowledge of incorporation.

To avoid duplicating past modeling mistakes, participant understanding must be collected and analyzed. Only through accessing the understanding of those intimately involved in the toil associated with creating a new municipality can the process be reconstructed. Extracting information directly from participants prohibits focusing upon factors perceived by scholars to have some influence upon the likelihood of observing an incorporation effort. This activity allows for scholars to focus attention upon factors participants respond to when involved. In this manner, the task of collecting data from participants prevents analysis of incorporation from being shrouded in misunderstanding.

One must consider how this goal can be accomplished. In focusing upon the need to gain participant understanding of incorporation, it becomes clear that the only tool capable of providing insider knowledge originates from within the qualitative research tradition. Qualitative research methods are especially capable of enabling explication of the causal chain animating participants in any process (Van Mannen, 1981, Miles and Huberman, 1991, & Spradley, 1979). In this case, this would involve the influences generating the incentives to support municipal creation in an unincorporated area. Qualitative methods allow for the reconstruction of any social process by which individuals respond to some stimuli. The use of

these methods will facilitate the generation of an incorporation theory capable of gaining empirical support through empirical testing. Before a testable theory can be generated, scholars must compile a record of participants' awareness of what incorporation represents. Spradley (1979) notes the benefits associated with qualitative approaches originate from the introduction of participants' understanding in any study. This attribute will increase the likelihood of correcting for the absence of such awareness within the literature. It is an improvement that rests only in the path of qualitative research.

Common among previous attempts to explain incorporation is the fact that they suffer from a limited intellectual foundation. The emphasis upon discussing this process in economic terms reflects observations that do not replicate the motivations animating participants. This is important because it prevents scholars from modeling unacknowledged aspects of the process. These factors exist because they animate participants' behavior, but are rarely acknowledged in scholarly theories. Qualitative research methods offer a path to collect the understanding of participants in a manner that promotes a more refined analysis of what individuals argue is structuring their involvement. The qualitative research tradition allows for inclusion of the "unstated" knowledge held by participants in scholarly theories. From involvement in an incorporation effort, participants draw some conclusions about whether their behavior is justified. This insight is required if the process of incorporation is to be understood within the scholarly community. As Spradley (1979) and Miles and Huberman (1994) argue, the qualitative research method offers the best opportunity to uncover meaning through conducting in-depth interviews with participants.

While this method of collecting information about incorporation involves a great deal of effort and cost, it reconstructs the unvarnished views of those involved in the process (Miles and Huberman, 1991, Spradley, 1979, and Van Maneen, 1989). In spite of the costs associated with conducting in-depth interviews, the information collected through this technique is insulated from reflecting preexisting views on incorporation (Lofland and Lofland, 1999). It is important to prevent forcing an academic paradigm, such as new institutionalism or economic rationality, upon the process of municipal incorporation. Conducting in-depth interviews with incorporation supporters enables the perspective of participants to be presented in this project in the language recognized by those individuals.

Through management of the questions asked to participants, researchers are able to focus an interviewee's recollection upon key aspects of the phenomenon of interest (Spradley, 1979 and Weiss, 1993). In addition, interviewers may also uncover further insight into topics that the scholar does not anticipate being significant before conducting research. Such awareness might be uncovered as participants express what they felt while involved, hoped would accrue from their participation, or their level of personal satisfaction with the consequences of their effort. Such personal reflection from participants will add depth to any theory scholars may construct. In-depth interviewing, with a set of focused but flexible questions, provides scholars with a sure opportunity to extract answers to such considerations. It also provides the opportunity to uncover unanticipated insights known only to participants. However, participant understanding of any incorporation effort can only be extracted if one is willing to make several assumptions about those being interviewed (Spradley, 1979). On their face, these assumptions may appear to some as clearly unjustifiable. Such concern is overstated as those working within the qualitative research tradition provide significant evidence that the assumptions are easily met. After some consideration, it becomes clear these assumptions are not unrealistic but very understandable, given the constraints facing those researching incorporation.

The first assumption any scholar must make about participants is that each actor is fully capable of communicating meaningful answers to an interviewer's questions (Spradley, 1979 and Weiss, 1993). This assumption requires one to assume that participants' answers are constructed in a way that reflects their experience in the process. It requires the researcher to refrain from discounting the responses each interviewee provides. While this assumption rests on a measured view of participants, it can be questioned. Several possible barriers exist that preclude participants' ability to express their understanding of the process during in-depth interviews. Underlying all of the threats to participants' ability to communicate personal insights to an interviewer is the impossibility of ensuring interview questions that encourage responses that capture the understanding participants possess. Weiss (1993) finds the clearest threat to an interviewee's ability to communicate their experience in a meaningful manner stems from scholars asking unclear questions.

Questions become unclear when they prevent recognition of what the interviewer is asking. As Van Maanen (1988) notes, this originates as the consequence of poorly drafted questions. Poorly drafted questions do not provide interviewees with a sense of what aspect or

perspective\ of the phenomenon the interviewer is attempting to access. In effect, poorly drafted questions present respondents with indeterminate stimuli to which they are expected to respond. Interviewers may simply be unable to ask questions participants can interpret in meaningful way. Questions demonstrating this flaw are usually so unclear they do not provide participants with a verbal stimulus or referent that can be accessed in their participants' minds (Weiss, 1993). In this case, that would imply questions are so unclear they do not allow the interviewee to link the question to their action on behalf of incorporation. One ensures this situation when they include in questions language that is imprecise, vague, or unfamiliar to participants (Weiss, 1993). To make interview questions useful, care is needed to include language in each question meeting the communicative needs of the participants being interviewed. Weiss (1993) argues that achieving this task requires pretesting each question to a smaller pool of individuals similar to those who will be interviewed.

The assumption that questions can provide a useful stimulus is further threatened when the respondent is unable to provide meaningful responses to novel or unfamiliar questions (Spradley, 1979). Simply stated, interviewees may be asked questions that tax their own self-awareness of their involvement or focus them on unanalyzed beliefs. With such questions, respondents are simply prevented from engaging in meaningful expression of their personal awareness of the object being studied. The inability of participants to offer any insight on their support for incorporation can be prevented by interviewers when drafting interview questions. Creating questions is a very involved process requiring interviewers to operate outside their expertise to anticipate how others will view their questions. Weiss (1993) notes this requires interviewers to employ clear language, to anticipate respondents' emotional responses to questions, and to focus attention upon topics of interest. If questions touch topics involving taboo or even unfamiliar topics, the interviewee may react negatively by not offering any response. All possibilities are potential difficulties that must be avoided. The interviewee's reaction to taboo topics might be driven by confusion, or negative emotional reactions to the subject referenced in the question. Such a problem requires the interviewer to draft questions that minimize topics that might be interpreted in such a way by interviewees (Weiss, 1993). The process of drafting questions, if successful, allows the interviewer to create a situation in which failed questions are less likely to emerge. As Van Mannen (1988) notes, this can only be accomplished with a great

deal of effort and time. The effort is justified by the fact that the payoff associated with such research techniques is significant.

## **Question Quality and Responses**

Following scholarly advice regarding question quality is not the only mechanism one can use to determine the quality of interview questions. The perspective of those with a similar position in the environment can be employed to determine question quality (Spradley, 1979). Using these individuals to verify question quality is referred to as insider verification (Weiss, 1993). Insider validation of interview questions does not rest on a well established set of principles. Rather, insider validation of interview questions rests on the familiarity of those holding extensive knowledge of a particular interview setting. Spradley (1979) notes that familiarity with a setting allows insiders to evaluate questions on the basis of understanding derived from continued involvement in and unmediated knowledge of that setting. The insider's evaluation of a question originates with their "common-sense" understanding of the question facilitated by filtering question stimuli through the localized meanings that individual acquired while in the setting (Weiss, 1993). This activity is useful because it allows the researcher to put potential questions before those who can offer responses similar to those who will later serve as interviewees.

The interviewer should see a negative evaluation of any question he or she authored not as a condemnation of their ability to author questions; such a negative evaluation should be seen as an opportunity to remove any barrier to understanding the questions that the interviewer has drafted (Spradley, 1979). In this situation, the opportunity should be taken to remove the difficulties informants have identified within each question. When an informant renders a positive evaluation of a potential question, the interviewer should view his or her question as facilitating collection of useful interview responses. The vast insight held by informants who are familiar with the interview setting clearly provide a valuable method of determining whether questions are both useful and appropriate (Spradley, 1979). Failing to utilize these individuals when authoring questions is to invite misunderstanding, which will impact the process shaping interview responses.



Question wording is not the only concern facing those utilizing in-depth interviewing to collect data. The second assumption scholars must be willing to make when involved in interviewing is that the participants being interviewed will provide accurate and truthful responses (Spradley, 1975). Some researchers, who are more sympathetic to quantitative analysis, are naturally suspicious that all or even most participants can be truthful in their responses. This challenge to in-depth interviewing often originates with a concern that respondents will not be sincere during each moment of an interview. Such a view is not unfounded given the fact that humans are self-interested. This, however, is not unlike the task confronting those engaged in research on public opinion through conducting attitudinal surveys among anonymous respondents.

Each individual interviewer must devote some consideration to the question of whether interviewee responses can promote trustworthy information (Weiss, 1993). It is a simple question of whether the researcher is willing to accept the interviewee's responses as evidence, or will mistrust this type of data. Further complicating this question is the absence of any practical advice on how one should answer this question. Only the individual can make this consideration for himself or herself. As Weiss (1993) and Spradley (1979) both note, there is no absolute answer to whether an interviewee can be trusted entirely. The researcher's position on this consideration must reflect his or her epistemological position and paradigm when conducting research. If one is willing to accept the responses provided by interviewees as truthful, then in-depth interviewing is a valuable method to gain insight (Miles and Huberman, 1994). One's position on this question cannot draw from any consensus position on a proper research design or epistemological stance (Spradley, 1979). Rather, she or he must make a personal decision about whether to use interviews when collecting information. The interviewer must make this decision with the knowledge others may question it from very different intellectual positions.

### **Identifying Potential Interviewees for Inclusion in the Study**

It is clear that attempting to explain the process of municipal incorporation becomes more tractable with the use of in-depth interviews. This is especially so given the poor record of findings detailed earlier. Consequently, using in-depth interviews to collect data was the path selected to foster a better understanding of municipal incorporation in this dissertation. The

failure of empirical testing to aid understanding of the topic required exploration of alternative avenues to gain this insight. Upon making this decision, the next task to facilitate data collection through interviewing was to select participants for inclusion in this study. Only by selecting qualified and useful participants can data be usefully applied to analysis of incorporation efforts (Weiss, 1993 and Spradley, 1979).

The individuals invited to participate as interviewees must be selected based on their ability to offer some improvement to the data presented in any study (Strauss and Corbin, 1999). The first hurdle to overcome in ensuring the usefulness of those included during the interview process rests in establishing who can offer insight into the process of interest. The first step in accomplishing this rests in identifying a pool of potential respondents from which individuals will be drawn. Constructing a pool of potential interviewees requires the scholar to draw some conclusions about which individuals are able to offer the greatest insight into the process being investigated (Strauss and Corbin, 1999, Weiss, 1993 and Lofland and Lofland 2002). The interviewer must first interview these interview candidates. Consideration of the research question will establish which individuals can explain the process from their individual vantage point within that context. Questions of position, tenure in position, proximity to the locus of action, extent of participation, and other factors work to remove some individuals from consideration as potential interviewees (Strauss and Corbin, 1999). Such a fact requires the interviewer to determine whether each potential respondent is in a position to have this knowledge of the interview setting being investigated. Those removed from consideration at this point of the interview stage are simply understood as not possessing the familiarity needed to serve as a credible informant on this process.

The difficulty of conducting interviews ensures that care must be taken to avoid including those individuals who add little intellectual depth on the topic of interest (Strauss, 1975). Duplication in responses generated from interviews will ensure little extension of the knowledge drawn from this process. Again, the costliness of conducting these interviews requires interviewers to discern which interviews duplicate insights of one another. The next step in creating a potential pool of respondents is to identify the interview context from which individuals will be selected (Strauss and Corbin, 1999 and Weiss, 1993). For the present case, a single context was chosen to serve as the initial setting in which to conduct interviews with those involved in municipal incorporation.

Conducting interviews in a single setting establishes that this work emanates from a single-case study. George and Bennett (2004), in their work, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, argue that utilizing a single-case design offers many benefits to researchers. First, single-case studies offer the advantage of allowing researchers to obtain many observations (George and Bennett, 2004). The key to successfully utilizing a single-case study rests in employing a case design that matches the goal held for that research project. Yin (2003) presents five rationales for utilizing a single-case study design. The first reason to employ such a design rests in testing a critical case of a well-formulated theory (Yin, 2003). Use of a single case, in such an instance, is directed at establishing whether all aspects of a theory exist in a context in which there is the greatest possibility that the theory will be strained. A second logic in justifying the use of a single-case study is provided by examining an extreme case of a particular phenomenon (Yin, 2003). With this rationale, the single case design is justified based on the event's infrequency.

Yin (2003) posits a third rationale. He argues that a single-case study can be used to examine what a representative case would be (Yin, 2003). Such a justification is premised on a case study's ability to represent the unchanging nature of a particular phenomenon. This justification allows the researcher to analyze the most common aspects of some event. The fourth justification proffered by Yin (2003) focuses on the "revelatory" case. Justifying a single-case study on this basis rests on the fact that a particular case provides researchers with unusual access to a phenomenon (Yin, 2003). This access is noteworthy because it affords the researcher the opportunity to explore the topic from a vantage point not commonly available. The fifth and final justification rests in conducting a single-case study of a context that extends over some period of time (Yin, 2003). Use of this rationale rests on the continual monitoring of the particular case over a period of time in which much could occur.

The question one may consider is which rationale is used to justify the single case presented in this dissertation. The case introduced later in this chapter is justified based on the case being a revelatory case. Before introducing and justifying this particular case, the logic of employing a single-case study is detailed. A revelatory single case holds the significant possibility of uncovering many aspects of the incorporation process that were previously unknown in the literature (Yin, 2003). This occurs because one is investigating the topic at a level of detail unfamiliar to those interested in municipal creation. Incorporation, as a scholarly

topic, has been founded upon a great deal of scholarly theorizing, as well as macro-level empirical analysis. This fact prevents such work from addressing the individual-level incentives in a form other than as an aggregation of these motivations. Scholars project aggregate motivations upon those supporting incorporation. They do not address efforts from the perspective of individuals and their unique perspective. Engaging in a revelatory case study corrects for this deficiency by ensuring proximity to the phenomenon.

A revelatory case study encourages scholars to investigate the topic with hope for accessing the minutest level of detail (Yin, 2003). In the context of municipal incorporation, this possibility allows scholars to follow promising insights, unfounded hunches, or newly uncovered questions when interviewing participants. Flexibility in selecting questions to ask while interviewing ensures interviewers can act upon their informed intuition. It also allows scholars the opportunity to revisit certain aspects of the causal path structuring the phenomenon. Thus, scholars can revisit any topic when they become aware of uncertainty in their knowledge of it. Such an advantage furthers the likelihood that the scholar will be able to contribute to the literature.

While the use of a revelatory case is beneficial in contributing to the literature, it is only so if one selects the case wisely. George and Bennett (2004) argue that in selecting a particular case for study one must determine if it will be an instance of an embedded or holistic case. This requires the researcher to determine whether they will draw components of the process or the whole unit for study (Yin, 2003). For this dissertation, a case was selected to provide access to a number of individuals actively involved in an incorporation effort. This could only occur in a setting in which one is guaranteed access to participants. Siggelkow (2007) finds that a case providing some special opportunity to study the topic is one basis for justifying a particular case. In selecting a case, unusual access to individual participants was taken to be a very valuable attribute. Thus, in selecting a case, care was devoted to identifying a context in which this access was ensured. Eisenhardt and Gradner (2007) argue that case selection should proceed because there is an opportunity to obtain vivid examples of the relationships and structure of the concepts being studied.

## Setting Profile

The community selected to provide the interview setting was Ruskin, Florida. Ruskin serves as a suitable seedbed for interviewees because the majority of the community's residents are involved in the process of incorporation. This ensures that this particular community will provide unusual access to the topic being studied. Consequently, Yin's requirement that the cases selected should possess some unique attribute that promotes study of that context is met. In this dissertation, the involvement of Ruskin's residents provided the opportunity to comprehend the fundamental meaning of Ruskin's incorporation effort. The community's attention was focused upon the question of whether the toil of creating a new government was justifiable. Such a fact provided fertile ground in which to conduct in-depth interviews because of the attention paid to this topic. The focus upon incorporation within the community establishes an environment that ensures the existence of an undeniable source of knowledge of incorporation. The extreme availability of information promotes a climate in which individuals can become informed without exerting an amount of effort that would dissuade them from supporting incorporation (Weiss, 1993 and Spradley, 1979). In this dissertation, the utilization of a single-case study served to provide an extraordinary opportunity to dissect incorporation. The ability to dissect the process enabled the acquisition of the meaning participants associate with the effort. This stems from the fact that conducting a single-case study in one context is an example of a focused field study. Miles and Huberman (1987) note that conducting focused field studies in one setting offers the advantage of making participant knowledge particularly accessible to investigators. This was achieved by selecting Ruskin as the interview context.

Another reason for selecting Ruskin to serve as the context from which to observe an instance of incorporation is the community's uniqueness. Ruskin is a community in which one would expect to obtain a prime example of an on-going incorporation effort. The community displayed a preexisting social structure and faced severe development pressures from extensive suburbanization. Both attributes create a vivid example of the pressures found to urge residents of unincorporated communities to undertake the creation of a new municipality. In regard to this particular context, Ruskin demonstrates several characteristics that would lead one to expect the likelihood of observing likelihood of observing incorporation to be very low.

The effort to incorporate Ruskin did not benefit from the existence of wealthy supporters. Thus, there was an absence of individuals capable of contributing extraordinary resources to achieve incorporation. This fact prevented Ruskin from being a very likely context in which to observe this process. Yet, there was an on-going effort proceeding within the confines of the “tomato capital of the world.” The presence of an effort in an unfavorable context holds the distinct possibility of affording new insight into the process by which municipal governments are created. That the event is occurring where the literature holds it should not, is noteworthy. Consequently, any results generated from conducting analysis in this setting should offer insight into the topic that would not otherwise have been uncovered.

### **Selection of Interviewees**

Upon identifying a pool of respondents and the context in which they are located, a scholar must then winnow those who do not display the characteristics associated with the topic of interest. Effort must be taken to exclude potential interviewees who have little association with the effort. Potential respondents must display a key trait that signifies that each can provide useful insight into the phenomenon being studied (Strauss and Corbin, 1999). This requires the researcher work to establish some mechanism capable of acting as a screen to identify the traits reflecting the level of awareness he or she desires. If this schema is appropriate, the interviewer will be better able to obtain a pool of respondents who possess the insight they desire to include in the study (Weiss, 1993). In this case, the screen used to identify potential initial interviewees was participation in the group supporting this effort.

Weiss (1993) argues that winnowing the pool of potential interviewees to a single interview context must then be followed by identification of a group of initial interviewees. Narrowing the pool of interviewees is simply not enough to facilitate the conduct of in-depth interviews. In the interest of fully utilizing all available research time and resources, each interviewer must attempt to involve respondents who can provide the greatest insight into the incorporation process (Strauss and Corbin, 1999). Interviewees should further maximize the likelihood that interview data will rest on the most extensive base of knowledge. Weiss (1993) argues that such a goal requires the researcher to conduct initial interviews to prevent misdirection of future questioning. It is a simple fact that not every potential interviewee can be

included in any study. The scholar must select interviewees in a manner maximizing the intellectual yield provided by each interview (Weiss, 1993). The surest path to make fullest use of all available interview time is to select those individuals displaying an obvious awareness of the setting characterized by both breadth and depth.

After identifying the community of individuals engaged in the Ruskin incorporation effort, further steps were taken to select those who would be included in the initial stages of the study. This next step required the interviewer to select participants displaying the greatest understanding of incorporation for inclusion in the initial wave of interviews (Spradley, 1979). Such individuals must be included to prevent grounding further understanding on an interviewee's shallow awareness of the process. Individuals who can further study of incorporation in Ruskin must be able to offer insight into why the process was initiated. While the community was home to a number of individuals involved in the incorporation effort, many held only a superficial awareness of the process and its meaning. Discussion with individuals intimately familiar with the process highlighted that proximity to the incorporation effort was the key determinant in whether one held insight into the incorporation of Ruskin. In this study, the threshold for identifying these individuals was whether they held a formal position with the incorporation effort. Positions in the effort were available to those supporting incorporation, and reflected a range in responsibility for the incorporation effort. Regardless of which positions individuals held, each position provided further awareness of the process. Holding a position with the effort did not establish a hierarchy of knowledge among respondents. Thus, it was not the case that those who held a leadership position within the effort or community possessed greater knowledge.

There are additional requirements for use in identifying interviewees. Breadth in responses is needed from interviewees to ensure those being interviewed are familiar with a majority of facets about the topic. An interviewee, who cannot provide insight to most aspects of the phenomenon of interest, will be incapable of providing responses spanning the existence of the event (Weiss, 1993). While an individual may be an expert in a particular aspect of the event being studied, he or she may not possess an understanding of how that information contributes to the whole process. In effect, breadth of knowledge works to ensure that the interviewee is able to connect facts together, enabling reconstruction of the larger event. The result of not requiring breadth of knowledge from interviewees will be to acquire responses reflecting only a small

segment of a phenomenon (Strauss and Corbin, 1999). Breadth in knowledge ensures that the image of incorporation presented in this dissertation links facts to one another. Collecting such interview responses will allow the researcher to recreate the phenomenon in a manner that informs collective understanding of the topic by allowing the provision of vast detail. Spradley (1979) notes breadth of knowledge among interviewees promotes expertise of one aspect of an event, which can aid understanding of the phenomenon as a whole.

Selecting from those who held a formally recognized position with the incorporation effort encourages collection of interview data demonstrating breadth in the responses offered by interviewees. An environment in which few responsibilities are formally assigned to a single member characterizes the Ruskin incorporation effort. Consequently, the culture of this incorporation effort emphasizes that everyone should perform tasks as they are needed. However, this expectation is upheld only if an individual has the time to pursue these tasks. The fact that everyone is expected to address tasks as they emerge ensures most individuals are more familiar with the task of incorporation. Within the context of Ruskin, very few members of the effort are sheltered from what the campaign is facing and accomplishing. Thus, those drawn from this context display a breadth of knowledge guaranteeing responses will extend beyond a single aspect of the topic.

Breadth in interview responses is not the only attribute hoped for when conducting interviews. Depth in responses is an additional requirement for selecting the initial group of interviewees (Strauss and Corbin, 1999). Displaying awareness of how an event touches a range of subjects is important and useful, but only if familiarity with the topic extends beyond a superficial understanding. While breadth of knowledge is important, being very familiar with the components of the process is equally important in ensuring quality responses are collected during interviews. Obtaining such responses requires the researcher to involve individuals possessing vast understanding of how their activities affect incorporation. Inclusion of those with only a superficial understanding of the topic will cause the interviewer to engage in dealing with those who have little likelihood of offering significant insight. Ignoring the depth of responses interviewees provide encourages a situation in which interview data offers little insight reflecting the complexity of the phenomenon of interest (Weiss, 1993). Such a failure would cause an interviewer to squander valuable time and effort. This would impede the construction of an account of why incorporation proceeds in this dissertation.



In the present case, an effort was made to ensure significant depth in responses. Keeping interviews within the single setting provided by Ruskin serves as the primary method of facilitating depth in responses used to structure this dissertation. The Ruskin incorporation effort is a tightly connected network of neighbors, clients, family members, and friends. Given the social connections among these individuals, many of those involved have gained a vast amount of knowledge through social relationships. The social bond between many of the supporters ensures each interviewee possesses a perspective richer than that afforded solely by their own involvement. Ruskin's incorporation effort also demonstrated the ability to promote depth in responses by providing a highly involved cadre of supporters. This group of individuals lent support to any actor involved in the drive to incorporate Ruskin. Consequently, many of the individuals actively supporting incorporation assisted in performing a range of functions within the group. Through the performance of a range of tasks, each supporter acquired greater knowledge of the effort. Because these individuals are not insulated from exposure to informational by-products associated with their involvement, they demonstrated greater depth in their responses.

Individuals were further identified for inclusion in this study based on a two-stage process. Necessity and caution dictates such a procedure. This strategy was necessitated by practical reality, not by scholarly expertise. The first stage consisted of selecting individuals upon the basis of their service in a leadership position with the incorporation effort. There are a number of individuals serving in some formal capacity with the incorporation effort. This group is far too numerous to allow interviewing in this single study. To make the process of developing a pool of interviewees manageable, a small number of interviewees was selected from this pool of potential respondents.

The number of people selected for inclusion at this stage was ten individuals. This number was selected in order to heed Weiss' (1993) advice that the initial pool of interviewees should be small enough to be manageable. These ten individuals were supporters who participated as coordinators of the Ruskin incorporation effort. This pool of interviewees holds a further benefit recommending them for inclusion at this stage. This group of interviewees was selected for inclusion because each actor became involved in supporting incorporation at an early stage. Their early involvement with the incorporation effort works to establish in their minds, greater wealth of knowledge relating to the effort. This ensured these individuals possessed an

awareness of the incorporation effort that not only displayed depth, but also spanned the history of the effort itself. Such information was vital in reconstructing how community residents came to the realization that incorporation was needed to protect their community. The effort to collect interviews centered upon these actors because of a desire to obtain an insight into what incorporation represents. Recreating these expectations is vital for injecting the perspective of those involved in future theories of incorporation.

While these individuals are qualified to offer insight into the process by which the incorporation effort was initiated, they may face some limitations in either understanding or memory. Spradley (1979) recommends interviewees should only be removed from consideration after they have shown a severe inability to access their memory. Focusing upon individuals, who are more involved in supporting incorporation, heightens the contribution of interviewees in succeeding interviews. The initial group of interviewees accomplishes this by initiating the interviewer in the language used by those intimately familiar with this setting. The responses achieve this contribution by removing all barriers in language that prevent outsiders from acquiring an insider's understanding of the phenomenon of interest.

It is upon structuring the language used by participants that research may continue. At this point, the second stage of selecting interviewees emerges. The personal insights offered by individuals outside the leadership of the effort, or not at the upper echelon of the effort's leadership, are noteworthy. The contribution afforded by this group rests in the fact that their perspective encompasses an alternative perspective on achieving incorporation. While these individuals do not include the most involved persons supporting incorporation, they do contribute breadth to the insights drawn from this interview setting. Interviewers must be realistic in their expectation of how many people can be involved from a single context at each setting. Time and financial constraints simply make it impossible to include every individual capable of providing some insight into incorporation.

Drawing a more manageable pool of secondary interviewees for inclusion within the interview schedule was completed through use of theoretical sampling (Weiss, 1994; Strauss and Corbin, 1997). The use of theoretical sampling requires inclusion of those who can provide a needed insight into the process. The need originates with the emergence of an absence in understanding or identification of a previously unknown factor. Through this logic, theoretical

sampling serves to enable manageable selection of interviewees by focusing the interviewer upon individuals who can contribute specific knowledge.

Theoretical sampling requires that researchers include participants in the study based on their likely contribution to the study (Anselm and Strauss, 1970). This should not be understood as implying one samples individuals until they collect an answer for which they are desirous. What theoretical sampling implies is that as one becomes aware of a shortcoming in this or her analysis, they search for individuals who can address that deficiency. The interviewer will attempt to identify only those individuals who can provide insight into that specific absence in their study (Strauss and Corbin, 1999). They do so by involving other interviewees, or their best judgment. The interviewer does not casually select interviewees until some interviewee broaches that topic. It should be remembered that this is feasible if one accepts the commonly held position presented within the qualitative tradition that data analysis and collection should proceed simultaneously (Strauss and Corbin, 1999). To accomplish this, the researcher must be an expert in the insights uncovered in previous interviews. If previous interviews do not address a particular topic, the researcher's search to identify individuals who can address that topic begins. If knowledge is to be advanced, individuals offering new insight must be involved in the study. This process of selecting individuals to address neglected topics will continue until the researcher feels there are no fatal absences within the data acquired for the study.

The researcher cannot extricate himself or herself from the research setting until she or he feels there are no absences in understanding of the topic. They must recognize the need to go back and acquire more information from alternative interviewees (Strauss and Corbin, 1999). The process of adding participants will continue until the researcher determines the data acquired cannot be advanced by adding more interviewees. When this is accomplished, the researcher can rest. He or she may proceed in analysis of the responses. The researcher can have some confidence that these responses will contribute to a fair representation of the process under investigation.

The interviewer's judgment is not the only method of identifying any missing components within the interview data collected. Succeeding interviewees will be in a better position than the interviewer to know what material the researcher needs in order to present a realistic portrait of the topic. Facilitating identification of conceptual validity requires later interviewees to be asked if previous responses have gone far enough in informing the researcher

about the process. According to Strauss and Corbin (1999), this process can be as minimally involved as asking if a response is similar to an interviewee's understanding of the process. In other instances, however, the interviewer may ask informants to evaluate the validity of another's portrayal of the process. When the interviewee knows of a difficulty with the researcher's understanding, he or she can recommend how the interviewer can correct this deficiency (Weiss, 1993). Spradley (1979) finds interviewees will often suggest to interviewers inclusion of a particular person in order to obtain needed insight into the process. In this manner, interviewee recommendations provide another method of facilitating theoretical sampling. Only in this instance, the logic of theoretical sampling originates externally of the researcher's sense of the data. In this project, the logic of theoretical sampling did benefit from insiders' perspectives on incorporation. During the interviewing conducted for this project, many instances of theoretical sampling occurred. Without such a tool, the understanding of incorporation would be much less.

Individuals from within the community, but not formally part of the incorporation effort, were also included during the latter portion of the interview schedule. These individuals were included in the study to provide a veracity check on the responses provided by incorporation supporters. Weiss (1993) suggests inclusion of such individuals to ensure that participants do not misinform the interviewer. These observers of incorporation in Ruskin were in a position to know if formally recognized members of the effort provided self-serving responses during the interview process. This group of observers accomplished this task through their knowledge of both the interview setting and incorporation effort. To identify which outsiders to include, these individuals were also identified through theoretical sampling techniques.

This benefit justifies their inclusion in this study. Their status as outside observers of the effort allowed for the exclusion of responses that did not reflect the commonly accepted view of the process. In this way, inclusion of these individuals added to the quality of analysis being conducted for this dissertation. The opinion of these individuals served as a valuable method of validating the information collected from earlier interviewees. Use of this source of verification increased confidence that this body of interview data can be trusted when presenting an interpretation of incorporation. Reliance upon outsiders to verify insight of participants is not a panacea.

The claim these individuals can contribute to the study must be evaluated in light of the previous interviews and the likely diversity in responses they can provide the research project (Strauss and Corbin, 1999). Similar to the process of selecting participants to interview based on an estimate of the benefit provided by each, inclusion of outsiders must rest on the probable extension of the data each additional interviewee can offer. In some instances, individuals were determined to offer new insights beyond what had been previously uncovered in earlier interviews. Such observers of the process were asked to participate as an interviewee to gain their view of previous responses. Other individuals were determined to have no way of extending knowledge of incorporation in Ruskin. There was little apparent reason why these individuals should be included within the study, they were not asked to participate.

### **Collection and Storage of Interview Data**

Interviews were collected through two different means. The first method employed to collect interview responses consisted of face-to-face interviews with those identified as incorporation leaders. This group of ten individuals was recognized as having a great deal of information surrounding incorporation. The total time spent interviewing this group of participants was roughly twenty-three hours. The information they possessed often extended as far back as the effort's inception. To make the fullest opportunity of interviewing these individuals, the researcher conducted in-person interviews. This interview format was seen as affording significant benefits because the interviewer could record both verbal and nonverbal communication from each interviewee. Both forms of communication were anticipated to be important in developing a precise understanding of the incorporation effort. Spradley (1972) and Weiss (1993) both find nonverbal communication to provide a great deal of insight into what each interviewee is thinking. Upon conducting an initial collection of interviews among this group, however, it became clear the nonverbal communication captured during interviews added little to understanding of incorporation.

In-person interviews were recorded with a digital recorder. Each interview was recorded to ensure that no piece of any interview was lost during the collection process. Many researchers, such as Weiss (1993) who are familiar with interview research, find they often cannot record every detail of a conversation while engaged in note-taking. The inability to record every detail

creates significant doubt as to whether the most important details are recorded. Without recording each interview, it may be the case the researcher misses something of value (Weiss, 1993). Weiss finds he tends to record details that resonate with scholarly preconceptions of what is occurring within an interview setting. To avoid such a tendency, Weiss (1993) determined each interview should be recorded as a check against such intellectual bias. To enable the use of the digital recorder, each interviewee for this project was asked if he or she would object to being recorded during their interview. No participant refused to be recorded during their individual interview after being assured their identity would not be revealed.

This group of interviews was conducted through use of a standardized set of questions. This core group of questions is presented in Table 4.1. These questions were authored with the intention of standardizing collection of participant understanding of the effort as a whole. The questions were directed at prompting all interviewees to recreate what incorporation was intended to achieve and required of initial supporters. Asking this standard group of questions was done to ensure the study could proceed on the strongest intellectual foundation possible. Such a strategy prevents asking unique questions in separate interviews and comparison of participants' understanding of the topic. Constructing an understanding informed by the perspective of all informants displays the benefit of establishing the effort's meaning and the language employed to convey this meaning among participants. Both types of information was required from each interviewee to further the likelihood subsequent interviews would not prevent reconstruction of the incorporation process.

The second wave of interviews was not conducted in the same form as those conducted during the initial wave. It became clear that in-person interviews would offer few benefits for use during later interviews given the lack of benefits associated with face-to-face interviews and the costs of traveling to Ruskin. Consequently, later interviews were conducted through telephone conversations. Weiss (1993) notes conducting interviews over the telephone is a useful technique for acquiring information when the interviewer faces serious constraints in either time or resources. Weiss (1993) further argues that if the interviewer works to establish a connection with each interviewee, the quality of responses collected through phone interviews will not be diminished. In effect, telephone interviews can create a climate in which respondents provide the same level of detail associated with in-person interviews (Spradley, 1979). This later group of

interviewees was also ensured their identities would not be revealed during the reporting of this study's findings.

The number of individuals interviewed through this method is thirty-five. The interviews spread over a span of about eighty-six hours of telephone conversations. These interviews were conducted over a ten-month period spanning from June 2006 to March 2007. There was no uniform length of time displayed by this group of interviews. The range of questions asked of these individuals varied as theoretical sampling was utilized to include individuals capable of informing the interviewer about various topics related to incorporation. Theoretical sampling also prevented one from asking these individuals a standard group of questions. Rather, the body of questions asked of these interviewees was targeted to the specific insight each interviewee was thought to provide. This ensured many individual interviewees were asked only a small number of questions targeted to some aspect of their personal involvement in the incorporation effort.

All records of the interviews were transferred from a digital recorder to digital audio files stored in an MP3 format. This was done for both those involved in the initial wave of interviews and succeeding interviewees. Upon completing each interview, the file was transferred to a common hard drive. Every interviewee was also informed that digital files of their interviews would only be held for a period of five years. This practice was done in an effort to assure these interviewees their responses would not be used for purposes other than those described when they were asked to participate in the study.

### **Analyzing Interview Data**

The socially constructed aspect of municipal incorporation suggests the optimal manner to capture the full reality of the process rested in in-depth interviewing. The purpose of collecting data from those involved with incorporation is to obtain the meaning they attach to this act. The method of analyzing these responses in a manner consistent with this goal is found in open-source coding. In *You Owe Yourself A Drunk*, Spradley (1972) sets forth the guidelines for using this method of analysis. The main traits associated with open-source coding to conduct analysis are that the researcher not ascribe hidden meaning to interview responses and respect the language employed by informants.

Spradley (1972) developed these guidelines within the context of a study attempting to recreate the meaning homeless and alcoholic men associate with their station within society. This method analyzing interview data, Spradley (1972) argues, does not require researchers to transform any of the responses collected. Rather, open-source coding, as practiced by Spradley, works directly in the language that interviewees provide. In this way, analysis is conducted that retains the form of the culture recognized by those involved in incorporating Ruskin. This attribute of open-source coding is beneficial because it ensures analysis will display the authenticity associated with in-depth interviewing. The authenticity often establishes confidence among all consumers of research that any findings possess some validity (Spradley, 1972). Promoting confidence in the analysis presented in the project is an attractive aspect of this type of analysis.

Spradley recounts many different techniques used to analyze interview data in different works. These techniques, Spradley (1979) suggests, can be placed on a continuum representing the amount of meaning the researcher must ascribe to each interview response. At one of the spectrum, researchers ascribe little more to each interview response than what is reported (e.g. Weiss, 1993). Scholars employing this type of analysis treat interview data as evidence that needs little explanation of analysis. This view often encourages interviewers to simply report what interviewees report to them during a particular interview session. In effect, the interviewer acts as little more than a reporter. At the other end of the spectrum, that representing grounded analysis, scholars dissect each interview to distill the underlying meaning of what was said (e.g. Strauss and Corbin, 1999). With this form of analysis, the interviewer eventually transforms interview responses to reveal the deeper meaning of the topic being studied.

At some point between these two extremes is open-source coding. Open-source coding does not attempt to uncover or anticipate any hidden meanings within interview responses (Spradley, 1979). Rather, open-source coding requires the interviewer to work with the common form of each response when analyzing interview data. The interviewer assumes that the cultural meanings transmitted by each interview setting are communicated in each interviewee's responses (Spradley, 1972). As a result, this form of analysis does not require the researcher to engage in any transformation of interview data. It simply requires the researcher to report statements that appear to encapsulate what was deemed important from the interviewee's perspective as a member of the interview setting.



Open-source coding facilitates analysis of interview data in a way that does not dilute the meaning of each response. This is an important attribute in two ways. First, the relative transparency of analysis allows others to review the researcher's conclusions when research findings are presented (Miles and Huberman, 1991). Each reader can simply look at a piece of interview data and the researcher's analysis to determine if he or she can accept the researcher's conclusions. The transparency of analysis displayed by open-source coding is clearly beneficial to those presenting findings unanticipated within the literature. Grounded analysis does not display such transparency. Consequently, the results generated through use of this method of analysis are heavily dependent upon a reader's willingness to accept the researcher's analysis as presented in the final research report. Analysis generated by application of grounded analysis is more likely to receive the scrutiny of others (Strauss and Corbin, 1997). As Miles and Huberman (1991) argue, the tendency to encourage further scrutiny among consumers of research can distract from the findings presented in a study. This added scrutiny may prevent the researcher from communicating the worth of the findings contained in his or her study. Open-source coding does not face such difficulties, and this is clearly an advantage when presenting one's findings. This attribute makes communicating research findings less difficult when communicating to those operating beyond the borders of the qualitative research tradition.

The second beneficial attribute displayed by open-source coding stems from the fact that analysis based on this approach presents responses without mediation (Spradley, 1972). Open-source coding requires each interviewer to directly present responses in the language emerging from within each interview setting. When presenting their analysis, the interviewer does not import language found in the scholarly literature. In this manner, open-source coding comes closer to presenting the cultural meanings participants transmit in the language they use. This is important because it speaks to the purpose of conducting the research. In conducting an interview, the researcher is attempting to discover what an event means from the perspective of those familiar with that phenomenon. It is precisely the point of conducting interviews to obtain an understanding premised on direct knowledge of an event or setting. In this sense, an emphasis upon maintaining the original language found in interview responses encourages cultural meanings to be more accessible. In effect, open-source coding furthers progress toward achieving the goal of uncovering the meaning of any phenomenon. This allows creation of a climate in which interview transcripts are not transformed to reflect mediating cultural meanings

presented in academic literature. Retention of the original form displayed by interview data provides fewer barriers to convincing others of one's conclusions. Such an attribute is clearly beneficial when presenting the results of in-depth interviews.

In the present study, open-source coding was used to analyze the responses of those involved in or familiar with the Ruskin incorporation effort. Those pieces of interview responses identified as important or interesting are presented. Analysis of these responses is often presented immediately following the presentation of each portion of interview data. No effort was made to engage in abstract analysis of each response. Analysis of each response is straightforward, while retaining the meaning known to interviewees. Furthermore, the interviewee's language is presented as it was communicated during the interview in almost every case. Only in those instances where the interviewee was unclear or using unrecognized words, was the response transformed. It should be noted that this was done to prevent transformation in the meaning of responses.

It should be remembered that only a small portion of interview responses are presented in the analysis that follows. Many insights were uninformative or redundant. As a result, a majority of interview data is not included in the analysis. What does follow is analysis emphasizing two major themes that emerged from the interview data collected for this study. Each theme receives individual treatment in a separate chapter. In presenting analysis of each theme, only the clearest and most precise responses are provided.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THE MOTIVATION TO INCORPORATE RUSKIN**

#### **Introduction**

Ruskin is a small agricultural community in central Florida, a community that displays a rather unique character from neighboring communities. The community is located within close proximity of the Tampa-St. Petersburg metropolitan area. In comparing Ruskin to its neighboring communities, one quickly confronts the fact that Ruskin does not display the same traits as proximate communities. Ruskin, unlike other communities within the metropolitan area, is focused upon the practice of raising tomatoes. Ruskin's claims to uniqueness, heritage, and sense of identity all reflect the community's involvement in ensuring a supply of tomatoes to America's supermarkets. Most neighboring communities display only a commitment to maintaining a favorable residential community for individuals forced to commute to other communities for work. A handful of communities go so far as to make a commitment to ensuring the availability of housing within an environment capable of providing the day's most desirable consumer goods. After some brief observation, it is clear that few other communities in Hillsborough County display a similar commitment to the practice of agriculture. Agriculture is practiced within the county, but only in that portion of the county falling outside of any existing community. In its strong commitment to tomato farming, Ruskin represents one community deeply affiliated with agriculture.

The commitment to agriculture suggests a package of linkages to agriculture as an economic activity that makes the way of life in Ruskin unique. The commitment to practicing agriculture is not a recent trend, but an influence that can be traced to the formation of Ruskin. From its inception, the community served as the center of tomato growing within the area. With the development of refrigerated railroad cars and the interstate system, community leaders began to proclaim the community was "the tomato capital of America." Given tradition and marketing efforts by community leaders, tomato farming came to structure life within the community and define what residency in the community meant. Festivals championing tomato farming and associated ways of life commemorate membership within the community. The linkage to tomato

growing and associated enterprises became a part of the community's historical legacy and image among area residents.

The historical legacy of raising tomatoes has created a situation in which individuals clearly recognize the activity as part of the community's identity. The process of planting, harvesting, and shipping tomatoes introduced an undeniable metric in the life of area residents. Consequently, tomatoes and Ruskin simply go together in most people's minds. As part of the community's identity, tomato growing has become the basis upon which many judge their quality of life in the small community. These activities promote a higher quality of life within Ruskin that works to establish a very favorable residential environment for citizens within the Tampa metropolitan region. This network of meanings and relationships works to constrain what is considered appropriate in Ruskin by linking an enjoyable lifestyle within the community to the activity of tomato growing.

The commitment to raising these crops extends beyond Ruskin's image to how the community is interpreted. Tomato growing has shaped the physical development of the community. Ruskin is not a densely constructed community; rather, it is characterized by a pattern of low-density development. A majority of buildings within the community share a distance of over twenty feet with neighboring buildings in an attempt to ensure they would not impede agricultural activities. For example, Ruskin's produce distributors possess large lots to allow produce and farm trucks to enter their lots for shipping trucks. Agricultural supply stores follow a similar logic in maintaining large parking lots. Even industries not directly committed to farming display a singular logic. Banks and insurance offices, for example, are located upon the edge of town to help farmers from having to contend with traffic that would lengthen any trip into town. In an effort to maintain equality of scale, many residential lots in the community are purposely large. Emphasizing larger lots further cements a scale of construction consistent with the facilitation of agricultural pursuits.

In this way, the physical aspects of tomato growing have shaped the environment surrounding Ruskin. The activity has influenced the social character of the community as well. The impact of tomatoes upon the social fabric ensures that this community is far different from neighboring communities. In neighboring communities, one sees unrestrained construction and absence of community. In these areas, one observes community leaders attempting to reconcile existing residents to the unceasing arrival of new residents trying to quench their demand for

Florida homes. Many of these leaders tout the desirability of living in Florida. They acknowledge the attraction of Florida in their attempts to facilitate the wishes of their community. In speeches and public documents, community leaders argue that the demand for homes could advance the interests of the community. In effect, facilitating development could serve to further the goals held by a majority of each community's denizens. Such a package of development and attendant benefits, however, would only accrue if a community displayed a willingness to accept some change. Consideration of the benefits and costs associated with this course of action have driven many residents to see development and social evolution as a proper course of action for their communities. This stands in stark contrast with those residing in Ruskin. In Ruskin, residents are trying to maintain a commitment to an agriculturally-based way of life and attendant community activities. This stands in stark contrast to neighboring communities where residents are encouraging developmentally-based progress. In local media, the observation that neither Ruskin nor neighboring communities want to emulate the practices of Tampa is clear.

### **Incorporation to Preserve a Lifestyle**

Ruskin residents are under no illusions that their way of life is consistent with the lifestyles practiced in neighboring communities. Since Ruskin is not currently an independently incorporated community, it is also clear the forces of modernity face fewer barriers in the drive to shape life within Ruskin. If evolution reaches the community, Ruskin will no longer look toward agriculture as a way of life, source of community pride, or seedbed for social networks. Such a state will accrue as the result of tomato fields being plowed asunder in an effort to build new homes. As the progression of modernity moves toward Ruskin, residents are becoming alarmed that the worst-case scenario of unfettered development would be fulfilled (Montgomery, 2006). In local community forums and institutions, residents came to express their concerns that every asset attributed to Ruskin is threatened. Residents began to question whether their favored way of life could be maintained in such a hostile environment. Many individuals concluded that this unique way of life would not survive in an environment favoring development. The conclusion led many residents to conclude that a new lifestyle would be imposed upon their sleepy community. Such a development, from their perspective, was unneeded, unwanted, and

undeserved. As consensus among Ruskin residents emerged around this point, they began to ask what could be done to prevent such an environment from emerging in their midst.

Residents were confronted with the realization there was little to do within the context of their status as an unincorporated community. As an unincorporated community, Ruskin was at the mercy of the Florida legislature and Hillsborough County to protect their agriculturally-centered way of life. Desiring protection of their community, residents of Ruskin did not find a sympathetic ear in either outlet. Office holders at both levels argued the county was growing and that Ruskin simply needed to meet its responsibility in accommodating the demand for Florida homes (Jameson, 2006). The next step confronting Ruskin residents in the defense of their lifestyle was to challenge development before the state planning commission. This path, while providing a barrier to residential development, did not provide any guarantee whether Ruskin could sustain the agricultural activity residents value. Given the lack of any method of ensuring the community's traditional linkage to remaining an agricultural community, residents began to search for any tool to insulate their community from modernity. Incorporation was posited by as the only path to accomplish the goal of maintaining a linkage to Ruskin's tomato growing past.

Upon introduction of this option, it became clear that many residents possessed little knowledge of what incorporation would accomplish in the pursuit of protecting Ruskin. Many residents simply were not sufficiently aware of the process of forming a new municipality to conceptualize what the process would require. What did incorporation mean to Ruskin's residents? Media treatments recounting residents' views suggest incorporation was seen as the only tool left to protect the community (Montgomery, 2006). In media treatments, many residents were portrayed as viewing incorporation as a magic bullet for protecting Ruskin. While discussing the incorporation option, the media also suggested many saw this option as very complex and almost impossible to accomplish. Expert testimony reinforced the view that these measures would be overly complex. From this point in the history of the effort, there are few materials capable of shedding light upon how these arguments would affect individuals and their decision to undertake incorporation. Such a lack of knowledge prevents researchers from answering the question of whether the decision to pursue incorporation represents one occurring as a rational response to the threat facing their community, or simply an emotional response to an undesirable change. To understand the process in this community, one must understand how residents of Ruskin proceeded when initiating this process. To reconstruct such an

understanding, in-depth interviewing was undertaken with many residents involved in the process of incorporation.

The question of what incorporation represents to residents of Ruskin is an important one. The implications for the incorporation effort arising from different motivations hold the potential of defining the availability of certain resources. If such motives stem from social concerns it may be the case people will give more to the effort. If the motivation for incorporation stems from a profit-based model, resources might be less forthcoming as individuals calculate the costs and benefits associated with every contribution. One person who was interviewed during this effort is Paul, a former outreach officer for the incorporation effort. Paul, although no longer an active member of the effort, was present at many of the initial meetings of residents considering the process of incorporation. Consequently, Paul was in a valuable position to shed light on these motivations. His proximity to the opening efforts to organize the community in support of incorporation provides Paul with a unique understanding of the preliminary interpretation of incorporation. Paul is similar to his neighbors in that he could be considered a member of the upper-middle class because of his education level and profession. He works in a neighboring community as an insurance salesperson and possesses a master's degree. Additional characteristics influencing his place in the community are his age (forty-six) and marital status (he is married with children). Both characteristics are very similar to those displayed by a majority of residents within the community. Together these characteristics support the view Paul is an individual who possessed the ability to observe and understand the initial incorporation effort and communicate such understanding.

When asked about the initial effort to organize the incorporation effort, Paul focused his recollection on the people and mood surrounding it. What was memorable about the effort? He recalls, "people in Ruskin were just shocked into action. They were woken up to the need to do something, anything." Paul's answer uncovers an important aspect of the effort to incorporate. His answer draws attention to the role of surprise in motivating people to action. In this response, we find evidence people were driven into action because of the emergence of a new threat to their community. People acted because something so unusual appeared at the border of their community. As Paul recounts, "the fact we were talking about it told us something." People responded in this way because they knew the threat was real, not something to dismiss, even if

they possessed little knowledge of what to attempt in an effort to maintain their community. The initial path of resistance was up for debate as Paul recounts:

*We had no idea what to do, after the county and state became a deadend. Someone, I forget who it was, mentioned that we could become a city. But we really hadn't had any idea about this.*

Incorporation was something introduced to the conversation upon a first meeting to determine what to do. Initially we see in this answer that uncertainty surrounded this course of action, as only a few people possessed any awareness that incorporation was something to which they could avail themselves. Their awareness of the options available to the community was limited to only a few participants. Paul notes: “we heard it, but weren't really sure what he was putting up. After he gave us some idea, it sounded like something that could be good for us.” From his perspective, individuals were receptive to hearing any discussion that held some promise for maintaining Ruskin's current structure.

Paul's insight into what happened when incorporation was mentioned indicates a need to educate residents in order to create some awareness of what incorporation means. Paul's response implies the citizenry did not have a full awareness of the topic and needed to receive fuller information to become informed about the attendant consequences this course of action would entail. When asked what happened after the participants first heard this suggestion, Paul remembers the process involved constructing a portrait of what needed to occur. He states:

*People began to ask questions. They wanted to know what incorporation was, what we need to do, and how we started. The guy, who brought it up, said he knew it meant forming a city, but didn't know much else. People began to talk about how being a city was different from what we got, and we talked about it for a while at that meeting. People started to say that it would mean a whole lot of new taxes, elections, and some new government workers. But we weren't really sure. We did become clear about the fact that being a city could let us say what could happen around town.*

In this recollection, one sees participants readily hoped for more information despite a lack of knowledge relevant to this topic. The willingness to pursue any option reflects a thirst for information related to what could be done. Paul's response highlights how the focus of initial meetings served as a conduit for some vague awareness that forming a new municipality implies additional responsibilities as well as new benefits. At initial meetings, the thirst for knowledge was unable to overcome the lack of clarity on what would be required of residents if they



undertook such a path. The simple desire to know about these options would have to serve as the basis for further investigation into the process of incorporation.

At the onset of the process, the threat to Ruskin drove them forward in an effort to gain knowledge. Citizens were not significantly informed about what incorporation, an expression of community action, would require. Paul recalls:

*It took a while for us to get informed about what we would have to do. When we got caught up to speed, we saw that this would take a lot of effort from everyone. It just seemed that we would have to volunteer our time and money. After that, we had to ask if it was worth the whole mess. That's when we started talking about why we had to think about this.*

### **Community Identity and Incorporation**

Thus, we see that the threat was perceived as so real that people were willing to make a significant commitment to incorporation. Residents were so focused on achieving their goal that they were able to overcome very significant barriers to exercising control over their community. From Paul's insight, we see that the process of incorporation had to be introduced into the minds of Ruskin's residents to allow this task. As soon as these individuals gathered such knowledge, residents began to think about the consequences of either action or inaction. The extent of the responsibilities required was not clear. Underlying this discussion was a willingness to question whether such an effort was needed, whatever the costs. Those involved in the discussion were forced to evaluate the justification for their actions. Collectively, these individuals needed to construct a group awareness of the effort and the identities of those involved.

Insight into the justification of incorporation is valuable because it illustrates the paradigm structuring involvement in the process. What animated the drive to city creation? Paul provides an interesting insight into the motivation when he explains how people came to think about the process. He notes:

*People started asking why we were doing this. The first answer was a need to. To what? No one was really all that sure. After a little more discussion, though, everyone agreed that we needed to protect Ruskin, tomatoes, from the outside. What didn't we like about the outside? The outside, its appearance and the people. They were different. They were different even though we didn't say how, we just knew it.*

From Paul's statement, we see that individuals within Ruskin started to equate those residing beyond the community's limits as carriers of change. These individuals were seen as comprising a group of people distinctly different from those residing within Ruskin. The focus on difference could be either rational or emotional in nature; which factor is at work holds huge consequences for the manner in which the effort is conducted. Paul's perspective sheds light on which motivation is driving the incorporation of Ruskin.

When asked what differences existed between Ruskin residents and outsiders, Paul draws on his expertise with the effort to illustrate any differences. He provides a detailed list of characteristics distinguishing these individuals from Ruskin's denizens. This list emphasizes the individuals' bond to the community and its way of life. In this case tomato farming provides a powerful social construction establishing identity for residents and meaningful social interaction within the community. He states:

*People from outside of town are different. We know them because we work with them in other towns and meet them in Ruskin's state park. So we know them. One thing that's gonna stick out about these people is the cars they drive and the clothes they wear. These people from the rest of Tampa seem to have money, easy money from something. In Ruskin, most individuals have to work to get their money, so we don't dress like these folks. We don't have the money to match those folks. We just don't. What we have is a little less, but nothing to be ashamed of. We have hard work, but it's honest work. Those people don't have to suffer through hard work. They can spend whatever they need to get what they want from life. We can't. A person with money can be a dangerous thing, and that was what we worried about.*

The main difference between individuals from Ruskin and those from beyond it can be traced to group levels of individual wealth, Paul argues.

The emphasis on differences in wealth is a theme that has found expression in past treatments. Paul's description of these individuals reflects a theme that is found in Hunter's study of social enclaves. Hunter (1973) found residents of an identifiable enclave or community, will come to identify themselves in terms of contrast to those living beyond their community. Paul's recollection centers on a contrast involving differences in wealth. In the minds of area residents, their community has conferred a special status to their neighbors and selves that make them unique or noteworthy. It becomes an identity supporting uniqueness. In some instances, community identity becomes the only means by which residents of disadvantaged or challenged communities can claim that their worth is equivalent to those residing in more advantaged communities. Hunter (1973) argues that a logic of uniqueness represents the most available

method for residents of working-class and middle-class neighborhoods to overcome status differentials between their home community and wealthier areas. Paul's answer denotes an awareness of the fact that agricultural activity is not engaged in by many privileged individuals. Rather, most Ruskinites are forced to earn an "honest days living with their backs," Paul asserts. In response to the outward display of wealth encouraged among outsiders, many in Ruskin argued it did not represent privilege among an imagined leisure class, but outright graft. Paul's emphasis on wealth represents community recognition that a source of conflict between residents of Ruskin and "outsiders" originates in the wealth differential between these two groups.

Given the obvious importance of this type of characterization, Paul was asked what such differences imply for Ruskinites involved in the incorporation. Paul recounts:

*"Outsiders have money, and that's fine. What's the purpose of money? Its to buy things that the family wants, or neighbors have. That means they will buy things. If they come to Ruskin that's gonna mean bigger houses and yards, more cars and less trucks, and its gonna mean trendy clothes for the kids. What is also gonna mean is that kids from Ruskin will work less because they will want to fit in with these new kids. In short, all their buying will lead to a huge transformation of what people want from life here. That's not good. (Such a) emphasis on buying is just not how farmers live. It's really outside the way they live. The farmers in the community will face an environment that becomes less friendly to their concerns and hopes. As an example, consider ag trucks headed through downtown to the wholesalers. Right now everyone realizes that this has to happen. No questions asked. If the rich folks move into town, that's gonna change.*

Paul's views represent a single perspective on the source of incorporation. From his point of view, the motivator is the huge difference between residents of Ruskin and outsiders from different communities. It is a difference born out of divergent economic activities and resultant levels of wealth. Do other individuals, who were involved with initial efforts to incorporate Ruskin interpret the consequences of such differences in a manner consistent with Paul's views? Lacy, another individual involved in these efforts, is also able to shed light on this topic. She is a farmwife, in her mid forties, and the mother of two children. Lacy's position in life makes her representative of others in Ruskin. She has been active in many civic groups and volunteered a significant amount of her time to less permanent community organizing efforts as well. Lacy did not occupy a formal leadership position within the incorporation effort, but was very heavily involved in the initial meetings leading to the formation of the incorporation effort. Her bonds to Ruskin were cemented by being a life long resident, extending back to her first job being at the local Dairy-Freeze. Over the course of her life, Lacy has maintained a strong bond to the

community. Her linkage to the community drove Lacy to “keep up on things in Ruskin.” Although she did enroll in a community college for two years and has worked for short time periods in jobs outside of Ruskin, her bonds with the community make her one of the most community-centered residents.

Lacy’s most striking memory of the initial discussion of incorporation centers on the awareness of an ever-evolving residential environment within Ruskin. In this response, we see a participant of the process drawing upon the consequences of change for the lifestyle of Ruskin. Change, in her eyes, possessed a capacity to remove the uniqueness found within Ruskin’s borders. For both informants, change simply threatened to erase the special character of Ruskin from the area’s collective memory. She states:

*“People had just been made aware their community was facing change. That made them angry. All these people knew what Florida was and what it had started to become. For these people the thing that caused Florida to change was at their doorstep and they were mad about it. They needed to know what could be done about this, because many of these people had no idea. People were so mad that they needed to do something, but they didn’t know what. All they could say was that they were angry and ask each other what to do.”*

In her response, Lacy lends some support to Paul’s assertion that individuals were acutely aware they faced an undeniable challenge in the form of modernity. Lacy, unlike Paul, is less certain of the mechanism to accept this challenge. Her response draws upon the simple fact that residents had little idea of what could be done to maintain their way of life. However, both participants display a glaring recognition that ignorance of the mechanisms to resist modernity was the biggest challenge facing the preservation of Ruskin. One clear point of departure between Paul and Lacy stems from her recollection of the initial efforts to protect Ruskin. She elaborates:

*“We were just sitting around at the restaurant talking about what could be done to save our homes and someone mentioned the fact that we could pressure our state representatives. Half of our representatives were Republican, and we thought they would be in our favor, but someone said no. They said the Republicans were in the backpocket of developers and that developers would tell them to force growth on us. The Democrat was no better, people said, because they would want some lower-income people to have houses in Ruskin. Neither option was anything we wanted a part of. It just was something that did seem consistent with the town.”*

Lacy's responses place more emphasis on the role of politics in allowing an externally focused political system to have a voice in how the community's identity is maintained. In the perspective that Lacy and her friends held, other residents of the metropolitan region were able to influence how Ruskin would exist within the status quo. Ruskinites were not alone in shaping the community because of the existing political arrangements in Hillsborough County. From her response, we see participants at the initial organizational meeting considered how politics would influence the strategy designed to accomplish the end of sustaining Ruskin. In the end, Lacy expressed her conclusion that state and county politicians would not be useful in protecting the community's form or the identity associated with living in Ruskin. Both parties and all politicians were simply seen as being controlled by outsiders pursuing their own interests and capable of overwhelming a community interest in maintaining Ruskin's agricultural identity. Lacy's insight echoes a finding provided by Burns (1983) that neither political party can reliably be expected to champion the status quo in a community because both include constituencies which value growth and expansion at times. Even though different constituencies value sprawl for very different reasons, there still is a variable level of commitment displayed within parties for protecting existing communities.

Most scholars view incorporation as a means for citizens to shape their community. Lacy's recollection about the emerging discussion of incorporation does reflect scholarly views of municipal incorporation. Her recollection of the initial meetings focuses not so much on the process by which participants defined what incorporation meant for residents, but rather displayed a focus on what it would do for protecting the existing character of Ruskin. Participants were focused specifically on how incorporation could be put to good cause in the effort to protect Ruskin. Lacy recounts:

*"I think George K. (a former attorney in town) was the first to mention that we could become a city. I don't remember how we got on it at the time, but he did say that we would become a city. The people there thought this sounded like a good idea, a real good idea because being a city would allow Ruskin to say what could happen here. We could tell people no if we didn't think what they wanted to do was a good idea because it would hurt our homes and families. That made a lot of people think that this was the only way to protect our slice of Florida."*

Obtaining the power to define the character of Ruskin was seen as important, Lacy remembers. With only this power could residents require newcomers or outsiders to

acknowledge the status quo in Ruskin. In this perspective, a view is expressed that the differences between residents and outsiders stem from how each group would define Ruskin through the formal power of municipal government. Lacy's understanding of the discussion centers upon the fact that incorporation could provide the community with a method of maintaining Ruskin's current structure. Participants of the initial meetings came to understand incorporation as the sole way to formally define the character of Ruskin. The application of these powers would allow residents to prevent an alteration of image fostered by outsiders.

Lacy reports that such a focus on institutionalizing current features of Ruskin stem from awareness of outsiders' impact on it. Why were these individuals so feared by Ruskinites? Lacy argues, "these people have really different ideas than us. It creates a chance that they will tell us what the future will bring here." The ability of these people to reshape Ruskin is a problem because, as Lacy notes, "Ruskin represents such a small group of people in this area." Lacy's explanation does extend to other issues in addition to concern with social differences. She also recalls the fact that people involved in the process overestimated the ease with which incorporation could be achieved.

Although Lacy recounts the collective effort to grow awareness of what incorporation implied for the process of protecting Ruskin, it became clear there was little understanding of what this path would require. In her words, consensus held that incorporation required "a whole lot of money and time." Given the clear emphasis upon money and time, it is important to discern if any of the individuals involved with the initial effort felt incorporation was impossible or out of reach. "All the people there just thought we could do it, that we just had to work to get it done," Lacy remembers. From her statement, we see that individuals, at least initially, felt that the community could meet any requirement or overcome any burden through incorporation.

Although many scholars assumed such feelings animate initial attempts to incorporate, only Warner (1968) was able to provide empirical evidence that supported such interpretations of these efforts. In his treatment of the incorporation effort within Roxbury, Massachusetts, Warner (1968) finds that many participants expressed feelings similar to motives animating those involved within Ruskin. Are such feelings a tendency to confirm the myth of exceptionalism, or a simple overestimation of community consensus toward action among one's neighbors? Warner (1968) argues residents of Roxbury displayed a tendency to believe that the exceptionalism of the community would allow them to repel the efforts of Boston to annex it. Lacy remembers that

her fellow residents “knew we could do this, if we just gave it a shot.” However, did anyone see such a stance as realistic, or did they bow to the realities of the situation?

The feelings expressed by Lacy are not unusual. Lang (1993), in his treatment of suburban sprawl, emphasizes that individuals display a tendency to overestimate the ease with which these efforts can be undertaken. Paul lends further support to the view by noting the people holding it were “people used to getting things done.” Thus, he supports Lacy’s view by explicitly mentioning, “most people at the meeting thought this would be real easy. They thought it would be as easy as saying they wanted to be a city.” These views are common among individuals who contemplate incorporation because of their social roots in local society (Warner, 1968).

Individuals with this level of efficacy tend to express confidence in the community's ability to respond proactively to any threat to change Ruskin. These individuals living on the fringe of the metropolitan region can be understood as having an ability to pay the costs associated with organizing the community to undertake the challenge of creating a new municipality. Many individuals living on the border display two important traits that promote this view. First, they display a commitment to participate in the economic activity dominating that area. This commitment highlights the need to change for those in areas that do not participate in that activity. Second, they display the level of wealth needed to support commuting as a lifestyle trait. The ability to absorb the costs of commuting from Ruskin to another community illustrates a capacity to provide monetary resources to the incorporation effort. Those who reside in Ruskin for economic reasons are more likely to have the social linkages upon which they can mobilize support for any social effort (Fischel, 2002). Such participants also tend to be highly educated. High levels of education establish that a person has more knowledge applicable to being able to accomplish their political needs. They have to waste fewer resources to undertake the action and face fewer problems in taking action. These traits promote a belief that community action can meet the goals individuals hold for incorporation.

Paul confirms this insight noting that those involved in the effort had “either passion, money, or connections.” When confronted with the actual costs of incorporating an unincorporated community, people are simply confronted with a set of costs that are much higher than anticipated. In most contexts, incorporation of a new municipality consumes a great deal of time and resources. The advantage in resources held by these individuals is something

recognized by Ruskinites, although they may overstate their impact. The interesting question is how these individuals came to conclude these costs were not prohibitive for those involved in Ruskin's incorporation effort.

## **Overcoming the Costs of Incorporation**

Neither Paul nor Lacy possess any vivid recollections about how these denizens came to evaluate the level of effort involved in incorporation. Another resident, Milton, does have a vivid view of how the costs associated with incorporation were considered among these actors. Milton is one of the community's valued and cherished tomato farmers. Milton is forty-four years of age, married, and possesses a high-school education. He is also a life-long resident of Ruskin who has been involved in the community's chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the Ruskin Historical Society (RHS). From a demographic perspective, Milton is typical of the adult males living within Ruskin. His membership in both groups, however, does provide him with a more participatory profile than a majority of fellow residents.

Milton's property lies on the southeast border of the community. The location of his property makes it a more desirable site for greater residential development. Consequently, Milton more than other residents, has faced pressures to sell his land, and thereby facilitate further development. Milton, unlike others in this portion of Hillsborough County, has not been tempted to sell his land to developers. He feels a responsibility to maintain his land to "protect (his) family's property for his sons and daughters." It is this responsibility that he feels prevents him from selling the property. Milton articulates an image of development that recognizes the costs associated with incorporation. It is a view stressing the realization that incorporation was an effort involving great expense. He notes:

*"When this thing was discussed among us, we just didn't have much idea about what it would entail. We just didn't have any idea. We knew we wanted to protect our farms and community. What they didn't tell us is what it would take. That would come out in leaks, slow leaks. The first leak was that the state needed to approve the incorporation that we just couldn't say "Hi, were a city." That was a big deal. Then we got an idea of what hoops the state would want us to go through. That was the second leak. The third leak centered on the support that we would have to drum up within the city to get this done. We would have to get people on board for this and it wasn't clear that the newcomers in town would say this was alright. So it just kept coming out while people were worked up, and every time it did the fever they had for making a city did not go down all that much. It went down some, but not that much."*



In Milton's response, we see the process of becoming informed about the costs of incorporation was long. In this excerpt, we further see that individuals initially possessed little knowledge of the tactic. We also see overcoming such information deprivation was something involving great lengths of time. How did participants acquire this knowledge over time? Milton recounts the people who brought this knowledge were "people from the groups within town, people who had connections to the outside." They held a position that provided more opportunity to benefit from the knowledge of others. Thus, we see that the initial exertion of becoming informed about incorporation costs were born by those readily able to access information about this process. The ability of individuals to benefit from membership in civic organizations or other social institutions is one manner of decreasing the costs associated with creating a new city. Milton notes participants "felt they could use this information to advance the cause." The effort to use these advantages was something "that went on for a long time," he recalls. However, one must wonder if such costs can be maintained over a long period. The ability to mobilize these resources speaks directly to the feasibility of the incorporation effort. If unable to meet these costs, can one expect the effort to succeed or be continued? If the costs can be maintained, what impact would this have upon the ability to create a new municipality? Only by gauging the perspective stability of this contribution can one draw inferences about whether the effort would be impacted.

Milton recounts the discussion of how such costs were to be continually subsidized by actors and institutions other than individual residents of Ruskin. He states:

*"After some time, the meetings became little more than a time to groan about what we needed to become a city. First, people thought it would be easy, real easy. But as time went along that didn't hold. People started to say that there was more to do than want the thing. What was needed was to get the issue before the politicians. What people said is that we have to have votes, we had to have studies done, we have maps made and other things. Someone asked what the point was. He said "Is this something we can do after work, cause if it ain't why are we talking about?"*

From this response, we see Milton paid attention to the discussion surrounding whether a band of citizen activists could meet the costs of incorporating Ruskin. He did so to determine the effort's realistic likelihood of success. Milton recalls that, "I (he) wanted to see the chances of it before I got all in." The group's lack of awareness about the challenges confronting residents was a concern for many individuals, not only Milton. Misestimating these costs creates the

possibility people could rush into an effort of which they have little awareness. It would then become an effort to which they would later devote many resources with little hope of success. Alternatively, these individuals could reach a point at which they would wish to leave the campaign. Making this decision without the benefit of such information could hamper the cause of preserving Ruskin or maintaining the status of the community. Milton recounts that “people began to really question who could pay these costs or meet these requirements.” The answer to such considerations would help residents in this community decide whether to undertake supporting the effort. The question also forces participants to determine why undertaking this effort is justified. Only by being clear about the reasons for undertaking such an effort can individuals draw a reasonable conclusion about the justifiability of the incorporation effort. The insight provided by such thinking becomes a clear pathway to clarify knowledge of the effort’s feasibility.

Often individuals involved in an incorporation effort conclude that a contribution is needed because they wish to protect their communities or homes. This finding has been established in communities found in metropolitan contexts as varied as Boston, Charlotte, Philadelphia, Seattle and Denver. Do the incentives animating those residing in these cities find a parallel within Ruskin? Lacy, at a later meeting of concerned residents, recounts how people reached the conclusion that incorporation was necessary for their community. She recites:

*“We just sat around when someone asked: ‘Why are we doing this?’ After that people began to say how they just wanted Ruskin to stay the same. You know, this place may not be much, but it’s someplace that people liked. They liked it because it was theirs. We felt that if we didn’t try to make a city, it wouldn’t be our’s, it would be someone else’s. We knew the outsiders didn’t want tomato farms. That was all in the papers for years. What they wanted was nice houses not too far from either of the cities. We had that here in Ruskin. Not only are we close, but we have a state park here and lots of land. This makes it nice here. These people could bring their way of living to this community. That wouldn’t let us stay they way we are, we would have to change. We have had some people move to new houses in the community. These people were good people, but they just didn’t fit in here. They bought homes that didn’t fit, they drove foreign cars, and built pools in their yards. These people started to get involved and demand change within town. I am in the PTA and we saw them come in and demand new taxes for school. A lot of other people had the same dealings with these people.”*

Lacy’s recollection of events leads to the conclusion that those involved in the incorporation effort did so to maintain some stability in the community’s character. From Lacy’s perspective, we see individuals concerned that the arrival of newcomers and residential

development would cause Ruskin to become another province of Tampa Bay's wealthy. In her response, she shows an acute awareness of the consequences associated with additional development. From the perspective taken in this response, we observe individuals holding views too divergent from existing residents. Others interviewed for this study also recognize the impact newcomers could have upon Ruskin; however they place less emphasis upon the difference in lifestyles than these individuals.

### **Incorporation, Naiveté, and Taxes**

How did these other individuals understand the motivation to undertake incorporation? Other participants involved in the process saw incorporation as a way to maintain a commitment to Ruskin's social fabric. Let us consider the view held by Mitch, a fifteen-year resident of Ruskin. While Mitch is not a lifelong resident of Ruskin, he has come to participate in community affairs through his involvement with several community organizations, in addition to serving as a teacher at a local middle school. Through these activities, Mitch has been exposed to the values comprising life within Ruskin. He has assumed many traits associated with an identity as a committed resident. While somewhat different from the typical resident, there is significant reason to believe that his views have been shaped by the community in a manner similar to that of life-long residents. As Mitch stated early in one interview, "I was not raised in Ruskin, but I have started my family here." "My children, my wife, and I all have a strong bond with Ruskin and I try to help maintain these bonds to Ruskin," he adds further.

Mitch's recollection of how the group discovered the motivation to incorporate focuses on other concerns. His recollection draws upon the assumed consequences associated with the relocation of additional developers. He states:

*"The initial drive to incorporate was surrounded by a naiveté. It was so unrealistic. But as time went on, these people became aware that they simply could not will the city into existence. It was remarkable to see the realization cross their faces. At that point, people started to ask what justified all the trouble. Many people simply had no affection for developers and the change they brought. The consequences associated with these people were thought to be directly related to the goals and policies they would hoist upon Ruskin. In many people's eyes, this would engender too much additional tax revenue. That was a big problem in their eyes, because it would threaten the farmers. They could simply not afford to pay high taxes."*

How can we understand Mitch's statement? Can we interpret this recollection to contradict Lacy's view? The response put forward by Mitch revolves around the perceived need to sustain the current costs of providing government within Ruskin. Before considering incorporation, many residents felt life in this community required few resources be committed to governing institutions. Incorporation would surely raise the costs associated with residing in Ruskin, but not nearly as high as could be expected if developers were able to pursue their interests free of restraint. Is it possible for one to argue that this passage provides evidence that participants were involved in incorporation to maintain current tax levels? To take such a position overlooks the focus of Mitch's response. Such an interpretation would overlook Mitch's recollection that the impact upon farmers was collectively seen as a reason to incorporate Ruskin. Awareness of the need to maintain current tax levels reflects the fact that farmers were the residents most vulnerable to collection of additional taxes. Recognition of the impact upon farmers stems simply from the group's awareness of the role farmers play in maintaining Ruskin's social fabric. Ruskin as the center of Florida's tomato farming industry would not be possible without these farmers. Many involved with incorporation were painfully aware of this fact. Do we find further evidence in any of the interviews that the concern with taxes represents an effort to maintain the community's lifestyle? Yes, additional support is offered by Milton who made continual reference to the fact "farmers would always yell about how taxes would drive them into bankruptcy." The observation that those involved with incorporation possessed an awareness of the impact development could exert on farmers supports an interpretation that citizens can act to protect their cherished way of life.

Walker, another long-term resident of Ruskin, contributes further support for the perspective that fear of outsiders moving to the community originates with a desire to protect the community's lifestyle. When asked what is special about farmers, Walker stated simply "they make the place." With this response, Walker is attributing to farmers responsibility for the character of Ruskin's residential environment. Farmers are seen as the primary reason why the community has emerged in the form one observes or enjoys today. Walker adds further that farmers "ensure Ruskin doesn't have a Wal-Mart or McMansions." Such institutions create a situation in which the lifestyle within Ruskin would be at risk of being overwhelmed by modernity. An individual's pattern of interaction with other citizens, in the wake of massive modernization, would undergo great transformation from those observed currently in Ruskin.

Human interaction would be different because people would be drawn within the orbit of social institutions different from those associated with the existing farming community. The social fabric would be reconstructed in a way reflecting new norms and emphasizing different priorities.

Milton provides further insight into the importance of farming oriented social institutions to Ruskin. He recounts:

*“In this town, you know everyone, even though this may be bad sometimes. You see these people when you go the extension office or the supply store or even church. That makes everyone well within reach, even though you really don’t have to go out of your way to see these people. That just makes it easy to keep in touch. If you didn’t bump into people around town, or couldn’t expect to you would have to try to keep track of them. Some people would get cut off the Christmas card list because you don’t have enough contact with them when you have to (send them).”*

From Milton and Walker, we see recognition of the fact that farmers give rise to the social forces structuring Ruskin. Warner (1963) argues such a record of influence exerted by a particular occupation upon a community is common, becoming socially and economically institutionalized within it. Tomato farming has been so institutionalized within Ruskin, as evidenced by the fact that it comprises a key economic activity in the community. The impact of localizing an occupation within a single community rests in structuring the community’s social activities around that particular industry. Institutionalization of an economic activity creates a situation in which local institutions, both social and economic, reflect the needs of that industry by providing the infrastructure and services demanded in that community.

While Ruskin is not a municipality, it reflects this logic by supporting several private non-profit organizations that provide services and the infrastructure needed to support tomato farming. Organizations meeting these needs create a social network capable of sustaining those engaged in the occupation, as well as connecting the broader community to that activity. Such observations give rise to a question that must be answered. The question is why people feel the need to protect such relationships. One reason, seen in these responses, is individuals act to undertake the protection of a community and its main industry because of their desire to maintain the community’s social environment. The need to protect a key industry could also surface from economic motives, but such a motivation would not clearly maintain the quality of life associated with the community.

## **Concluding Thoughts on Justification for Incorporation**

The decision to undertake an incorporation effort is difficult. It requires individuals to determine why they feel the need to respond to proposed threats, in addition to determining the extent to which they will work to overcome these threats. Only by drawing upon this bond to the community do we find individuals able to make a decision. In Ruskin, one's bond to the community focuses upon the role of agriculture. The impact exerted by Ruskin's agricultural character upon this decision is made clear by the individuals interviewed for this study. In making this decision, these individuals are not simply responding to economic incentives to incorporate their community. They are also responding to the need to protect their identity as residents of a farming community. In responding to the influence exerted by these social bonds, denizens are reflecting upon how they view themselves as members of the community.

The image presented by individuals included in this story also highlights the fact that people will display varied responses to these bonds. Not every individual will view their identity or position within the community, as something worthy of a great deal of work. In rendering such a decision, these residents are implicitly evaluating the benefit of these bonds. Often these decisions will hinge upon the benefit these individuals derive from the linkages to others within the community. Linkages to the community force them to recognize what they derive from being identified as members of their community. In this case, individuals were forced to reflect upon the consequences of being identified as a resident of Ruskin.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **THE INTENSITY OF SUPPORT**

#### **Introduction**

Upon determining why one would become individually involved in incorporation, another question emerges. One must question to what extent these individuals will sacrifice on behalf of the incorporation effort. It is an easy and simple matter to state one's support for the incorporation of Ruskin. Simply stating your support for a difficult community effort entails little sacrifice by any single individual. Noting support costs little, and is an example of a "cheap commitment." It is cheap in the sense that the commitment requires little from its maker. It is more difficult to make a commitment of a significant amount of resources to an effort. When stating why they are involved can one expect individuals to state they are doing something more than making a "cheap" commitment to the incorporation effort? Is simply stating a positive attitude toward incorporation more than a form of easy commitment, which does not force the individual to make a significant contribution to the effort?

The significance of the contribution is an important factor in determining if the act is, in itself, a sincere effort. If a contribution is significant, or represents a sacrifice of a non-inconsequential amount of resources, it is sincere. The sincerity of one's support for incorporation is of fundamental importance in illustrating his or her belief in the effort. Only by gauging the extent to which an individual gives to the effort can one determine if his or her support is based on something more than an easy commitment. When individuals are seriously committed to an effort we can expect to see their attachment to the effort reflected in the resources they donate on behalf of building a new municipality. Among individuals, we can understand these resources to denote their willingness to support the effort's intentions. Those who display only a thin or "cheap" commitment to incorporation will simply display an aversion to making any significant contribution or undergo any sacrifice on behalf of incorporation.

It is an important task to determine the extent to which participants are sincere in their support. To capture this insight, participants were asked how much they would potentially give to the incorporation effort. The exact form of this question is determined by the context in which

the research is being undertaken. Such flexibility works to the advantage of increasing the validity of responses collected. The ongoing campaign prevented one from asking how much a participant gave to the effort. Asking this question would imply finality in the effort that is unjustifiable given its ongoing nature. The first challenge arises from the fact that they are currently involved in the effort, ensuring noticeable difficulty in interpreting responses as authoritative.

Even if the effort had been resolved, there would still be questions regarding the validity that could be attached to any response. Replacing the actual level of support with a hypothetical response minimizes the social desirability factors inherent in interview settings involving the current campaign. Such a track enables one to probe the individual's view of what is justified or acceptable. It insulates the response from being tinged by the respondent's view of what would be valued by the interviewer. An effort that has been successful, or at least on the verge of success, can be anticipated to elicit responses indicating a respondent gave heroically. Such a response would be expected in light of the incorporation effort achieving the goal of formally creating a new municipality. Respondents would react in a manner emphasizing the social desirability of having contributed to a successful effort (Sears, 2002). People can be projected to display a willingness to associate themselves with an effort that has achieved some measure of success. In this situation, individuals simply want to be part of something historic.

A failed effort will exert some influence on responses as well. An incorporation effort that has failed, or is clearly on the way to failure, can be expected to generate the opposite response effect. This is attributable to the fact that few would wish to link their names to a failed effort. Individuals express an aversion to being associated with failure (Sears, 2002). In neither case could one expect respondents to be unaffected by the final status of the incorporation effort. Drawing responses from those involved in an ongoing effort that is nearing completion is somewhat difficult because there is no way to ensure removal of the social context attached to these events from interview responses. What is needed is a way to remove any external stimulus that can artificially shape interview responses. Overcoming this problem could rest in asking people what they would contribute in certain situations.

Trying to gauge a participant's willingness to contribute is further complicated because the fact responses cannot be verified. Asking about past behavior simply forces one to trust every respondent to provide accurate information. This stems from the fact that there is no way to



verify the truthfulness of responses put forth by respondents. In the case of donating monetary resources, the state imposes few regulations on formal incorporation efforts that could be used to verify individual responses. Thus, there is no independent method of ensuring the validity of responses proffered by individuals. In the case of volunteering time, each analyst could trust other respondents to verify the responses provided by each respondent. This path would introduce uncertainty into the interpretation of individual responses. Given such difficulties, the best method to determine the sincerity of individual responses would be to reconstruct the justification for giving.

One can gauge the extent to which a respondent felt contributions to incorporation were justified by introducing some hypothetical situations. The fact that the effort was in its initial stages did not impede the use of such a strategy. Asking these questions allowed for illustration of the individual's personal donation threshold. It is their individual threshold, beyond which no further contributions were made, that is illustrated in their responses. Probing the hypothetical limit of one's contribution provided the clearest insight into what justifies any individual's contribution level.

### **Personal Limits To Support**

From these responses, one can move closer to illustrating how much one's residential environment is worth. Given these individuals wish to protect their home environment, it makes sense to determine the extent to which they will support an incorporation effort. Milton, the life-long farmer discussed earlier, offers an insight into the value of community. In discussing the extent to which he felt contributing was justified, he quickly expresses his views. Milton argues "incorporation will take a lot out of us, but is alright because we can protect the town." In this passage, we see Milton expressing his position that almost any contribution is justified.

An effort must be made to identify the limits of his willingness to give. Milton must be asked the extent to which he would work to achieve this end. "At first I was willing to work as hard as I was asked," he added. He felt the need to maintain the community was important enough to justify volunteering his time to achieve success. With his response, Milton identified the only situations beyond his limit to contribute to the incorporation effort. He stated "the only time I decided I wouldn't work for the community was when my kids had something to do, or on

Sundays.” To Milton, the need to incorporate Ruskin was important, but not so important as to overcome family needs or church attendance. One can understand Milton’s response to indicate only his family and religious commitments were more valuable than volunteering to incorporation. The fact he believes these were the only two activities that took precedence over volunteering to the effort signifies the extent to which he valued Ruskin’s community. Significance should be attached to the fact that Milton will forgo even his own personal activities to support incorporation.

The responsibilities of a farmer always place demands upon the time they can commit to any outside activity. Yet, in spite of these demands, Milton still donates his time. Milton’s sacrifice on behalf of incorporation is clear. As a farmer, Milton continually faces more chores and responsibilities that must be addressed. In this way, taking time out of his schedule represents a very significant contribution to the effort to give form to the new municipality of Ruskin. Milton adds further:

*“I gave when I could. Sometimes they (the effort) needed more than other times. I tried to make sure that I did when I could. My family, church, and the farm, came first, but I gave when I could. Our time and sweat was valuable in keeping the topic moving forward, so giving was alright.”*

Milton’s emphasis upon not taking time away from such activities illustrates his belief that incorporation was surpassed in importance by only a few events. Such a standard of commitment speaks highly to the importance Milton attaches to creating a new city.

What about other participants in the incorporation effort? Willa provides some insight into the limits on her willingness to contribute to the effort. She says:

*“I had been active in many other campaigns within the community. They always require a great deal of work, but if you believe in their goals it’s justified. Because I believe in the effort to grant Ruskin city status I always found time to give to these communities. My family was active in their own activities, so I did not face many constraints on my time. I was happy to sacrifice my time, as long as it appeared to have some impact. When it appeared that I could no longer have an impact, I withdrew my time from the effort. At that point, it seemed that I could not add anything to the effort. The requirements placed on the effort were beyond my expertise.”*

From Willa’s response, one observes volunteering time is justified so long as such acts contribute to the goal of incorporation. Given Willa’s ability to make a significant contribution to the effort, she was more than willing to make such a sacrifice. Willa, however, was not willing to

contribute to the effort in perpetuity. Her limit would be reached when she perceived her contribution would not have any further impact on the effort. Willa's position makes it clear she could not justify contributing with the same intensity until Ruskin was formally incorporated. If her sacrifice would have no further impact, it would not be justified. One could interpret Willa's level of commitment as less than wholehearted, but that would miss the point. This particular informant was willing to contribute to incorporation only as long as she perceived her contribution to the effort would be justified.

For Willa, the threshold of justification was whether an individual contribution furthered the effort's agenda. While such a threshold may be hard to operationalize, the logic is clear. The logic employed by Willa holds that the impact of each potential contribution must be determined before giving to the effort. So clearly, she did not foresee being involved with the process until its conclusion.

Rather, Willa only sees her contribution to the effort continuing as long as it has some noticeable impact on the effort. Why? What was the fundamental reason for making a less than total commitment to the incorporation of Ruskin? Willa claims that her "limit of commitment to incorporation stemmed from already having made a significant contribution." She argues a further contribution would make little difference, simply being a waste of resources, if the initial donation had not displayed any impact. The determination her individual contribution had no impact would cause her "to quit regardless of where the effort stood," she explained. Others would be left to support the incorporation effort after she withdrew her contribution because she understood her involvement as no longer having an impact.

Willa's response, with its self-awareness, holds the possibility of being the first response to illustrate the unexpected ability of participants to apply some form of rationality to the decision to contribute. To identify such an effect, one must determine if other participants displayed a similar awareness in their giving patterns. Did other participants display a similar type of commitment to the incorporation effort? The answer is mixed. Some individuals displayed less of a commitment to the incorporation effort than Willa; others displayed a great level of commitment. In reviewing the differences between these individuals, it is clear that rational behavior does not serve as the only means of differentiation among donors. Calculating the impact of a contribution simply does not enter into the thought of most participants. In effect,

Willa is rightly understood as an outlier among those interviewed. She simply acted in a more rational manner than other interviewees.

### **Time Spent in Ruskin and Contribution Levels**

Still, differentiating among those who behave differently from Willa is a useful exercise. We must attempt to identify that which differentiates the levels of support incorporation supporters provide. One could explain these differences through several possible paths. Warner (1972) argues the length of one's residence in the community can explain the level of support for incorporation. He finds that the more time one spends in an unincorporated community, the more time and effort can be expected from these individuals on behalf of incorporation. Bender (1979), who argues one's investment in residential property is what determines the amount of sacrifice an individual will put forth on behalf of incorporation, offers a contrarian view. Higher value residential investments further the tendency to contribute to creating a new municipality by linking wealth to community status. The literature does not provide a definitive answer as to which explanation best captures reality, nor does it provide any practical advice on how to determine which motivation is driving a particular individual's record of contribution.

These motivations provide a wonderful foundation upon which to differentiate among those individuals who gave high and low amounts to the incorporation effort. Length of tenure allows for the separation among contributors based on their developing a sense that the community is their home. In effect, this explanation would offer a clear account for any differences found. Property values also offer an apparent explanation for any differences among contribution patterns. This type of explanation simply argues that people give in an amount that reflects the value of their property. Within the literature, these two explanations are posited as rival accounts in illustrating the sacrifice of each individual.

To determine which motivation is driving the Ruskin incorporation effort, or if some as of yet unknown factor is at work, we must analyze why people vary in their contribution levels. In an attempt to gain understanding of this issue, we turn next to the responses offered by Reggie. Reggie is a twenty-year resident of Ruskin, working as a car salesman in another community, and a deacon in a local church. He provides an initial step toward developing a

framework to differentiate among the contributions made by different participants. Reggie argues:

*“People are just different in how they make to the time to work on behalf of incorporation. One difference I see in the people who do more to become a city is that they tend to spend more time in town. Its not that they don't get out of town. They do. What I mean is that these people just have less drawing them outside the town's borders. These folks donate the most to being a city. The people who donate less, or for a shorter amount of time tend to have a life that draws them beyond town. These people have things to do that can be done here. I am not sure why these people are different, but they are. They don't give the same to becoming a city.”*

Reggie's typology provides a rudimentary framework to identify the determinates of individual contributions to incorporation. The continuum underlying individual commitments to the incorporation effort holds people who have more involvement with the outside world will make fewer contributions. In Reggie's response, we fail to see a kernel of either of the mainstream explanations accounting for his donation level. In his response, one sees recognition of a new factor influencing the level of an individual's donations. That factor is one's connection to the outside world. Reggie offers some evidence for an interpretation that has been subject to significant theorizing, but his response does not have significant empirical support. There is a distinction between the logic Reggie describes, and that set forth by Warner (1963). Warner (1963) argues that donations increase with one's length of residence in the community. Reggie, on the other hand, argues greater social isolation within the community is what will contribute to higher contribution levels.

Reggie response makes the point that people who spend more time within the community will make greater contributions to incorporation. Reggie's explanation of why individuals differ in the extent to which they contribute resides in their interaction with the outside world. Such an insight serves as the first stipulation of how such factors influence the process. Consequently, one must consider the extent to which Reggie's explanation affords a realistic account. Certainly many treatments within the literature support this point of view through significant theorizing (Beauregard, 2006). If support for Reggie's explanation exists, tremendous insight into the process is gained. At this point, it is useful to allow Reggie's insight into the process. Reliance upon this insight to structure analysis into donation patterns is useful in understanding the process of incorporation.

## Thanks for the Memories

The first respondent who was interviewed following the revelation provided by Reggie is Lacy. Her role in Ruskin's incorporation was reviewed earlier. When asked about why she contributed to the incorporation effort, Lacy asserted she gave in an attempt to preserve Ruskin. Lacy stated she gave "time because I really like Ruskin like it is." The environment Ruskin provides is "something almost everyone in town likes," she adds further. Lacy provides additional explanation for her reasoning, noting:

*"It's all real simple. You know? People need a place to set up house. When you find that you have to keep it that way. You can't just let it slip by. When you loose you home ground, you loose a piece of you."*

Why does one need "a place to set up house?" In Lacy's eyes a need for domestic stability necessitates forming a linkage to one's community. Failure to do so "leads to a situation in which a person doesn't have anything to follow, or is being shuffled around" she clarified.

What is it that Lacy is expressing in her statements? The something "to follow" is "the events, holidays, and town events," she adds. Lacy argues these are the things that give "life in town the ability to create memories." The "memories" Lacy mentions are best understood as the social events that cement one to his or her neighbors and community social institutions. Hunter (1973) finds that such "memories" are the subject of community identity. They are the building blocks of the meaning associated with community residence. They are the material upon which the bonds of attachment are created (Hunter, 1973). The more one values these memories of a community, the more they will spend time within the community. They will develop an unwillingness to turn to other communities to meet social needs. The memories of living in a community are what bond Lacy to the nation's "tomato growing capital."

The import of this memory-making capacity upon Lacy's association with Ruskin is what drives her forward on behalf of incorporation. Her motivation to donate to the effort stems from her attachment to the way of life maintained in Ruskin. Her responses demonstrate that her willingness to contribute originates with a desire to protect that aspect of the community. How does such motivation translate into an actual contribution level? Lacy reports that at this point in the incorporation effort she has given over "over hundred hours as a volunteer and three hundred

dollars.” “I would give more of (both time and money) to the effort when the dangers facing Ruskin got worse,” she adds. She further reports her pattern of donating either time or money to the effort revolves around “the dangers facing Ruskin.” Why did changes in the perceived threat to Ruskin cause this woman to increase her sacrifice to the community? “I would give more when it appeared that developers would win and we’d become home to outsiders,” she recounts.

In Lacy’s response, we are presented with a respondent displaying awareness that her contribution is needed to protect her community. We are also presented with a respondent displaying awareness of the strategic impact of her contribution. She gives at all because she loves the community. She gives more at times because she perceives an increased threat to her community. In her response, we clearly see a focus upon perceived threats to Ruskin’s environment. This participant saw Ruskin suffer different levels of danger from outsider interests at different times. When the danger increased, so did Lacy’s sacrifice on behalf of creating a new municipality.

The sentiments expressed by Lacy are different from those expressed by Reggie. Lacy does not outwardly reference her connections to the outside world, or to Ruskin itself. The question that must be asked is whether her response can be seen as consistent in anyway with Reggie’s explanation. Lacy’s response can be viewed as consistent if one refers to the literature surrounding the use of cognitive heuristics. Heuristics are cognitive frameworks that allow one to make decisions with less information than normally used in standard situations. In many instances, heuristics are created from information acquired for other purposes. For example, one may use the price of a gallon of unleaded gas to determine if the economy is moving in the right direction. The hypothetical person in this case may evaluate the economy negatively if the price of this staple is increasing. In such a case, information gathered during one’s refueling of his or her car would be used to judge the state of the nation’s economy. Does such a decision reach the standard of logic used by economists? No, but such use of information byproducts would allow the “average” citizen to reach a sensible evaluation of the economy. One could come to a reasonable determination without investing more intellectual resources.

What does this imply for Lacy’s position? It means that Lacy’s response is consistent with Reggie’s if she estimates the threat to Ruskin based on her daily experience within the community. One’s continued existence within Ruskin could serve as the basis of such decision-making if the repetition of activity becomes the basis for rendering evaluations about the state of

the community. If one makes decisions about the threat facing Ruskin because of his or her daily life, then daily life within the community does serve as a heuristic. Does Lacy's day-to-day routine within Ruskin serve as the basis for determining when there is an increased threat? When asked, Lacy noted that "I see what is going on in town and then make-up my mind about what I need to do." In this response Lacy clearly admits that she does use her daily existence to determine when to give more to incorporation. Such behavior is consistent with the explanation offered by Reggie, which means that Lacy gave more because her attachment to Ruskin was greater.

Does Reggie's folk theory find further evidence among those involved in the Ruskin incorporation effort? Reggie's theory of donation levels does find support among other respondents. Support is found in the views of a marginal participant in the Ruskin incorporation effort. Smith, a twenty-three year old machinist who works in another community, but who lives at the northern end of Ruskin, offers insight into the process. In recounting his pattern of involvement on behalf of Ruskin incorporation, Smith focuses on his initial desire to give to incorporation. About his involvement with the effort, he states:

*"I donated when I could. But hen I took a job outside of town and I had to stop. I didn't have the time right away. When I had time after getting settled in at my new job I didn't have the drive to do it. I don't know why, but when people asked I had an excuse. I guess after I had less in Ruskin, I didn't do as much. "*

In this passage, we see Smith attempting to provide a justification of why his contribution to the effort had diminished. His response illustrates his initial desire to contribute to the incorporation effort decreased after he had taken a new job outside of town. Initially, his reason for not contributing to the effort was the need to "get settled in" at his new position.

At this point, Smith is sincere in his desire to give to incorporation. He remembers that he "was really into the idea of making the place a city." The community was a place that "needed to be protected" from outsiders, Smith adds. His recognition of the pressures upon the community drove his desire to support incorporation. "I really thought the place was going to change," he elaborates. The limit to his contribution reflects recognition that other concerns were important to his lifestyle. In his response, Smith displays a pattern of behavior that initially inconsistent with the theory explicated by Reggie.



Smith's commitment to incorporation did not continue unabated. Upon getting situated in his new job outside Ruskin, he felt a lessened need to contribute to the incorporation effort. Why? In a manner consistent with the theorizing detailed earlier Smith reports his diminished sacrifice on behalf of city status was the result of a reduced bond to Ruskin. "After I got settled in at work, I just didn't have much kick for incorporation," he adds. Can one understand this response to support the view that attachments to outside communities will diminish one's contribution level? Yes. Another response by Smith makes such an impact clear. Upon further probing, he adds that:

*"Driving to work outside the community made me think more about what was going on in town. When you see other places you know weren't developed, or be developed, you seem to get the idea that it is inevitable. There just is no place in this part of Florida were people won't build anymore. Hell, swamp land is being sold. When you face up to this fact, putting forward a lot of effort to maintain tomato farms doesn't seem important. For example, my dad and stepmom hold on to Ruskin, but they work and live here. When you only live here in Ruskin, its real easy, I think, to buy into the "we're gonna get chased away" view of those living in town. It becomes real easy to think that you will not recognize Ruskin in a few years."*

Smith clearly recounts behaving in a way consistent with the view that connections to outside communities lower the latent tendency to contribute. From Smith's further response, we see this participant displays awareness that the amount of time one spends in their community on a daily basis shapes the amount of sacrifice one is willing to make to the incorporation effort. His view is consistent with the findings of Warner (1963) and Burns (1994), who both argue one's reaction to community change is impacted by his or her daily movement. Warner finds one's pattern of daily movement provides free information about the consequences of being annexed or undergoing severe development pressures. Individuals in such a position find this free information source is often the only reliable information source they can draw upon when making decisions about the community. Thus, when determining their individual position on community evolution, people may rely upon their daily routine to assist their need for news. The mechanism detailed is the same as that underlying the use of cognitive heuristics. Warner's (1963) view further supports the conclusion that Smith's actions reflect the influence of community attachment.

In many instances, this free source of information will come to mitigate the media's image of the consequences associated with change. The question that must be asked is if the use of these heuristics can be detrimental to the pursuit of one's goals. How significant is the

possibility that the use of “free information” will lead to negative outcomes? The possibility that such usage will do harm is clear. Warner (1963) finds many communities provide an environment in which the perceived consequences of change will be overblown. This tendency stems from the fact that these communities display a significant number of tight bonds between residents. Siskind (2006) argues that traveling outside the community will minimize this influence by making it clear to residents there are suitable neighborhoods outside their community.

In effect, travel outside one’s community allows positive experience with other areas to vouch for development within his or her home community. Individuals with such experience develop awareness that their communities will not be destroyed by change (Siskund, 2006). In this view, working outside a threatened community provides residents with a sense that they can survive in a changed environment. This position supports an understanding that traveling beyond the boundaries of one’s community will create a more balanced view of what his or her community can add through change. Smith’s recollection of his evolution on the question of how much he would give supports these insights. Do others follow a path of contributing similar to Smith’s?

Victor, thirty-five years old, a federal law enforcement officer, and five-year resident of Ruskin, does lend support to the views of Smith. Victor is married, has two children, and moved to Ruskin from south Florida. Victor is different from the majority of his neighbors in that he is of Hispanic descent. Although his ties to Ruskin are not as deep as Smith’s, Victor does behave in a similar manner. To better understand the logic structuring the decision about how much to contribute, Victor’s decision-making process must be analyzed. When asked about his donation pattern, Victor recounts, “I couldn’t volunteer time, but our family did give a great deal of money.” Did the amount of money donated by Victor and family vary over a period of time? Victor does confess that the amount given did change. He describes his pattern of giving largely in negative terms, but his insights support Smith’s. He adds:

*“We gave less when we got back from visiting our families (in the Liberty City neighborhood of Miami). I think the comparison of Ruskin area and neighboring communities with Liberty City placed things in perspective. There is no comparison between these two places because in that area of Miami you see crime, drugs and poverty. In Ruskin, and the surrounding area, you see SUVs, manicured lawns, and screened in pools. In Ruskin there are more farms than SUVs. Its pickup trucks there, but in neither Ruskin nor surrounding areas do you see gangs*

*or prostitutes. Comparing what is here (Ruskin and neighboring communities) with what is in Liberty City it is clear that encroachment upon Ruskin really is not that serious a concern. It really is not that bad. We could be talking about real problems here. When we got back from our families I think this was just too firmly in our minds."*

In this light, Victor's response can be seen as confirming the view that traveling outside the community makes one less likely to overstate the threat to his or her community. The interaction Victor has with the world outside Ruskin makes it clear that the consequences of the town being annexed or forced to accept outside development, are not as severe as portrayed. These experiments make it clear that making an open-ended commitment to the incorporation of Ruskin was not in his best interests. Is Victor unique in his awareness of the comparative impact of development among these settings? Is he the only respondent impacted by the consequences of these comparisons? Victor's insight is a very useful account of how experience with the outside influences contribution levels. If this account gains support from other accounts we move further to verifying Reggie's folk theory of contributing.

Is Victor the only one who displays any awareness that place matters? No, but Smith was the most articulate in expressing his view that the situation facing Ruskin was not as dire as portrayed. Nancy, a retired schoolteacher in Ruskin and twenty-year resident of the community, express a view similar to Smith. Her membership in many civic organizations within Ruskin further supports her ability to shed light upon the role of outside experience on the willingness to contribute. She expresses a view very similar to Victor. Nancy remembers she "gave a significant bit of time to incorporation." "It was worth it because this town is under the threat of becoming part of the modern world," she adds. In this statement, one observes Nancy justifying her contribution on the basis of the perceived threat facing Ruskin. Asked if she contributed only time to the effort, Nancy responded that she was only able to do so because she lived on a fixed income. She asserts that "I knew when I had to give time because I could see it."

How did she reach the conclusion that she needed to give to the incorporation effort? "New things being built in town was a tipoff when to give," she provided. Nancy added further that she "saw a lot of (new construction) when dropping off the grandkids at Ruskin Christian School everyday when their mom worked mornings." In this statement, she clearly remembers that when traveling to deliver her grandchildren to school, she would become a witness to the change unfolding within Ruskin. The drive from her daughter's house to her grandchildren's school took Nancy across town, and provided her with a wealth of information about what was

occurring. These travels provided her with the opportunity to collect information she describes as “giving (her) a sense of when it was time to do something.” Nancy stated that she did volunteer time and why. However, she did not offer any insight into when and why these patterns varied. Her insight is useful in understanding involvement with incorporation efforts because she does still provide support for the theory expressed by Reggie.

Did any additional individuals express feelings supporting the view that a community-centered lifestyle promoted higher contributions to the incorporation effort? Yes, Baxter responds in a way that clearly is consistent with this perspective. In recounting how he decided the amount of his contribution, Baxter stresses that the more he traveled around town, the more anxious he got about the community’s prospects. His commitment of resources was something Baxter felt he could justify based on what he observed in Ruskin. The “goings on in town let me keep informed about what was happening,” he added. Baxter says:

*“I got more involved and gave more when I had more business within Ruskin. I would go to the farm supply store, pick up workers, the feed store, or take my wife to the doctor. Then I would go back home, but I didn’t go beyond that. The less I got outside Ruskin, the worse it got. I am not sure why, but if I had to guess I would say had to do with the fact that I had more time to talk with people in town. Yeah, the people I talked with would gin me up for more. My wife always said I had to talk more with people, but that’s not quite what she had in mind.”*

From Baxter’s response, we observe further evidence in support of the view that familiarity with the community makes an individual more likely to sacrifice by giving more time and donating money. Baxter’s response highlights a probable causal mechanism by which these influences shape the behavior of individuals. Baxter provided the response above in response to the question: “Do you notice any instances when your contribution changes?” In his answer, Baxter demonstrates a clear awareness that his sacrifices on behalf of incorporation reflected his access to other’s opinions. From Baxter’s perspective, his contribution to the incorporation effort reflected his exposure to community-generated information. Baxter benefited from his daily activities by becoming more aware about what was happening in his surroundings. His information inadvertently reflected his social interactions and responsibilities.

The message of Baxter’s experiences is clear. The more one gains understanding of the dangers confronting their community through social activities, the more his or her time and treasure is committed to opposing any change. Baxter’s perception of the situation was clearly bounded by the views he acquired through daily activities. The activities engaged in by these

individuals did not occur in isolation from other residents. Together with his fellow residents, Baxter was enmeshed in a common social network. While most people in the network are “mainly from town, they do not have a lot of different views,” Baxter noted. In this admission, we see Baxter’s social network is comprised of a range of people from Ruskin. The inclusion of these individuals works to keep him focused upon the nature of the community. It prevents him from placing these experiences in the larger context metropolitan region. “We all got around a bit, and we have a good idea of what is going on,” he adds.

The benefit for Baxter’s decision-making is that his determination to give is directly related to the community and constituent social relations. These individuals perform such a function by providing Baxter with needed information and decreasing dependence upon elite figures for information about the development pressures facing Ruskin. In this manner, Baxter’s decision-making is focused inward upon the community. He is divested of any opportunity to evaluate the accuracy of his conclusion with information from the outside the community. As Tversky and Khaneman (1973) note, when such emersion within a context occurs on the part of one person, they become more likely to overestimate threats to that context. Therefore, it is possible that Baxter’s familiarity with local social networks makes him more likely to donate because he has overestimated the threat facing the community.

Baxter is not alone in being influenced by his immediate social network. Walker, a thirty-four year old car-radio sales representative, seven-year resident of Ruskin, and member of an area big brother program echoes Baxter’s view. “I am someone who loves the community,” he adds. Walker’s view on how his level of contribution on behalf of incorporating Ruskin fluctuates also reinforces Reggie’s typology. When asked about his pattern of contributing to the incorporation effort, Walker stated, “my focus was on winning.” While Milton was focused on internal relations within the community, Walker was drawn to considering the strategic position of the effort. The more time he spent in the community, the more sensitive Walker became to the effort’s progress. He further elaborates on his meaning by saying:

*“I knew when things got bad for incorporation and that’s when I gave more to see it succeed. You knew when it hit this stage when the leaders started to get around and telling people what was going on in Ruskin. These people usually didn’t have much to say outside of meetings when things were going good. You might here from them about bake sales for school or to raise money for church, but not about this. When they started talking to you about it at social gatherings, you knew it was bad. That’s when I gave more.”*

What can one take from Walker's recounting of his contribution pattern to incorporation is that he also gives more when there is an increase in the perceived threat to Ruskin. He recalls his awareness "didn't come from friends, or acquaintances." The opportunity to participate in formal events, or meetings "were where I acquired the info I needed," he added. The social network to which he belonged was devoid of a wealth of news on this topic. "The people I hang around with aren't informed and aren't all from here," Walker offers. Attendance at community organizations was the only means by which such awareness could emerge. "I would attend meetings and get caught up to date by going," he explicates.

Did Walker display a tendency to give more to incorporation at different times? "Yeah, I would give more when I got new information at the meetings," he added. Why was he so influenced? Quizzically Walker asserts, "without going to them (the meetings) I just didn't know anything about what was going on. So, my natural assumption was that things were fine, and I didn't give." Walker would give to the effort after attending the meetings because it provided him with some clear direction. In his recollections, Walker quite clearly displays an awareness that varied, and was reflected in his record of contributions. The threat facing the community is what underlies his willingness to give to incorporation. Walker never displayed any personal confidence in his ability to evaluate the status of development within Ruskin. He never developed any self-capacity to evaluate the threat facing it. So how did the threat influence him?

At meetings he attended, those in attendance all discussed the threat. Through these discussions, the term "development" emerged within Walker's mind as a heuristic for the consequences associated with development in Ruskin. For him, the heuristic threat served to represent the potential consequences of development within the community. Awareness of the perceived threat made Walker more willing to give on behalf of the campaign. An additional concern is whether the impact of these meetings met with any resistance from other sources. Walker reports that his involvement with the outside world is "pretty much limited to occasional work trips." He clarifies by saying that "when I do get out of town, I go to the airport or to the beach." His involvement with local affairs was heavily constrained within the community. While he was involved, it was not the primary focus of his daily routine. "I only attended the meetings of the incorporation effort," he adds. The limited contact with the outside world is a characteristic that works to place community events in the understanding of Ruskin's residents. Immersed within this informational environment, Walker is forced to make decisions that are

heavily dependent upon what residents perceive is occurring in Ruskin. Such dependence does not allow decisions to rest solely on objective information regarding the community.

Such immersion within a socially manipulated information environment reduces the acquisition of information contradicting the community's constructed image. The consequence is Walker is ensured he will never have knowledge of what occurs outside Ruskin boundaries. Such an environment promotes decision-making upon the basis of an image, not fact. The reality of the situation facing a community is something obtainable if one can access additional information sources. The information that Walker has drawn from the debate is not subject to any outside evaluation or disconfirming images. Walker's awareness that the meetings he attended increased his contribution level and the lack of conflicting information support Reggie's explanation of contribution activity.

Evidence supporting this position also comes from another participant, Becca. She is an individual who displays less of a devotion to life within Ruskin. Yes, Becca does call the community home, but she does so without constructing an identity as a resident. Her less than total commitment to incorporation causes her to devote less time to living in Ruskin and making fewer contributions to incorporation. Becca supports this explanation by providing evidence of the negative consequence of one's having social connections outside Ruskin. Her experience illustrates outside acquaintances are a key factor in predicting the contribution individuals may make to support the incorporation effort. She reports that she was not a significant actor in the effort to create a new municipality. "I dropped in and then out after a lot of time," she related in response to a question of the extent to which she was involved. Being tangentially involved in incorporation, Becca still contributed to the effort, even though hers was a marginal contribution. "I made a small contribution, much smaller than others mainly because I cared less about it," she recalls. The extent to which she was involved in the community's effort to incorporate was limited by both her work and personal relationships.

The orbit of Becca's life drew her away from Ruskin, diminishing any susceptibility to premising her decisions on a socially constructed understanding of events. Becca was prevented from joining the web of those whose daily existence was anchored to the community. She explains:

*"I don't spend much time here, I work at a hospital twenty miles away and my significant other lives about fifteen miles away. Yeah know, that really limits how much time I spend there."*

*When I am there, I do my own thing and relax. That's why I moved out here, to relax. So I am not really plugged into the whole incorporation effort. But I have contributed my signature and some money when asked. I want to keep my peace and quiet for as long as possible. But at some point I just stopped giving. "*

Her response focuses attention upon the fact that only one minuscule portion of her existence is rooted in the community. This single aspect of her life connected to Ruskin is that associated with the after-hours substance of sleep and dreams. Becca simply did not carry out many of her daily activities within Ruskin. Consequently, she faced significant barriers to accepting the locally constructed meanings of events than others. Becca, by spending a majority of life in other communities, was not stimulated by the same social stimuli. This fact generated significant limits on how much she would consider giving to the effort. Her absence from any significant social network divested her of the motivation to participate like a more grounded community member. Her role within the community did not allow for a great deal of social stimulation by neighbors.

The absence of any method of linking her to the wider community had a profound effect upon Becca's ability to further personal links to the incorporation effort. Social interaction forged no impetus to give more than a minimal contribution in this case. Becca states, "the whole thing just didn't resonate with me, so I simply stopped giving what I gave at some point." Why did she cease contributing to the effort? Her willingness to refrain from further contributions to incorporation stems from an emerging feeling that Ruskin's character did not confront extreme pressure from development. "It quickly becomes clear that life here will change, even if we had our own government, because the state is growing so quickly," she says. "The state is growing, and no one is holding Ruskin up as the key target for development. It isn't the most important place for builders, so it wasn't something special," Becca notes. With this realization, it becomes clear that no single person associated with the Ruskin incorporation effort could say with any certainty that the community could control its future. This view caused her to see any contribution in a new light. She further clarifies her position:

*"You have to understand that even a city can not exercise absolute control over its own affairs. The state has a lot to say about what each city can do. For example, the state has the ability to determine whether, and how, we can pursue this question. That should tell something about the value of contributing to the whole effort. It just doesn't really make all that much sense when you think about it. It also doesn't make a whole lot of sense to contribute your time. The people who have made a big commitment to the whole just don't get that at all."*



What factors account for the inability of highly involved individuals to realize a limit to donating to incorporation? Becca has only one thought: “I think these people have become such a part of the community that they live in a different world.” Individuals making a noticeable contribution to the incorporation effort apparently made decisions based on their bonds to the community. These bonds are so strong that people contributed to the effort based on a social construction of public events, rather than reality.

### **Family Influence and Involvement**

Becca provides further insight into how contributors differ from others who are not as involved in the process. “These people just don’t want to put anything in anyone else’s hands. They want to keep Ruskin controlled by people from Ruskin,” she says. The impact of her observations is significant because they highlight the extent to which increased contributions on behalf of incorporation stems from devotion to the status quo within the community. From Becca’s perspective, those who make significant contributions to the incorporation effort simply have too strong a bond to their community. These individuals cannot escape from within the bonds of attachment to the existing state of the community, and consequently, are more motivated to donate.

However, one must ask why some people are more attached to the status quo within Ruskin? Milton offers an initial insight into the process by which people become more grounded in Ruskin’s affairs. He argues:

*“People get this way when they have some link to town. The biggest link I can see, here, is the one coming from having some family ties in town. People whose family link to Ruskin extends beyond the 1970s, seem to have the most to lose from losing control over Ruskin’s affairs. I don’t know for sure why, but neither do they. They just have a ‘feeling’ that they do. So, its emotional with them, but I am not sure why. Maybe, maybe it’s the fact that they like the place? Maybe be it’s the fact that they like the lifestyle? Maybe it makes them something?”*

From Milton’s recollection, we see an awareness that increased linkages to the community might stem from the family’s position within the community. Milton’s response stresses those families with deeper roots within Ruskin display a greater awareness, and

sensitivity to, any perceived threat facing Ruskin. Milton's answer is incomplete, however, because he fails to offer any further insight into how this relationship works. To complete our understanding of the process, the knowledge held by others must be accessed. Fortunately, others display a greater awareness of how these linkages work to create a sense of obligation among individuals to contribute to the effort in an attempt to protect the community. Christa offers an additional explanation for why family ties to Ruskin help to account for the difference between highly involved contributors and others who display a lessened contribution pattern. She reports, "When I watch these people and talk with them, what I notice is that they display a great deal of pride in having families that can be traced back a long way in Ruskin."

Being part of the community acts as a form of distinction because it identifies those families with the history of the community. It provides these families with a cloak of notoriety. As Ruskin has grown, the number of families able to accomplish this task has diminished. However, for those families within Ruskin, who cannot trace their history to its founding, the desire to become a family of distinction continues. A new avenue to achieve such notoriety for one's family exists in supporting incorporation. The individuals can then identify their families with the history of the community. Christa, a twenty-seven year old nurse and resident of Ruskin, offers additional insight into how this process works. She recognizes how such activity could advance community perceptions of one's family. "Being out there like that seems really big among people here," she recalls. In her observation, we see being recognized as a contributor to incorporation as a method of acquiring family status. Her view is supported by a view that has the advantage of some social separation from the social network within Ruskin.

The linkages engendered by contributing ensure these families gain standing as leaders within the community. Christa adds, "this is the only way some people can get into the story of Ruskin. So they do this, but in the process they gain some appreciation for what they are trying to save." While the motivation for contributing to the incorporation effort stems from a desire to further family status, the result appears to be an increased affection for the community. For many individuals, the desire to gain status drives their contribution to incorporate Ruskin. The more they desire to acquire status for their family, the more an individual can be expected to contribute to the incorporation effort.

Others offer different accounts of why contribution levels differ in intensity. Ginny was first asked about why she had felt that incorporation was a good idea. The initial interview with

this participant covered a wide range of topics, but did not include any specific reference to the variance found in individual contribution levels. Ginny, in a later interview, does also refer to the role of family ties in the community to account for the fluctuations in donation levels. The later interview was conducted specifically to determine if she felt that family ties could explain for differences in donation levels. In response to the question: “Does coming from a family with longer ties in Ruskin make a difference?” Ginny replied:

*“Yeah, having a family that has not been long established within the community does make a difference in how you participate. It makes you more responsive to what is happening within the community. Why? It makes you more responsive for the direction of things in the community. You begin to feel the responsibility for the community, and other’s react to that self-image. You can then tell people what is going on with the community, why it matters for those in the community, and what they can do to meet the needs. My husband calls people like this, and my family fits this, ‘tomato people’.”*

In her response, we see an awareness of the benefits associated with being one of the “tomato people,” but we also see little explanation of why this status is important. Further probing of her understanding revealed an unstated awareness of the distinction’s importance. After some thought she stated, “having a family that has done something like this is better than going back that far in Ruskin’s history, while still making me feel good about what I am doing for the community.” Is this type of “good feeling” just associated with the satisfaction of making a contribution to a cause larger than one’s position? On the other hand, are such feelings the sensation of gaining status? Ginny argues that:

*“I think it is pride that makes family important. Family is a source of pride for those of us with kin in Ruskin, those who lived here a long-time, and those who moved here because their effort made this a place to be proud of, and want to move to. Yeah, that’s what it is. I feel special because I have a link with what we are trying to do here. My family may not have helped create the community that we love today, but I have helped to save it. That’s why I have a special responsibility for contributing to the incorporation effort.”*

In Ginny’s response, we see awareness that her family’s strain to create a new link to the community provides her with a source of differentiation from her fellow residents. This source of differentiation imbues her orientation toward donating to the effort with a personal dimension. Ginny expresses a responsibility for the community because her family was involved in the town’s creation. She further expresses awareness that people look to her family for additional contributions because of her family’s behavior in the past. This record of behavior increases the

motivation to support incorporation by encouraging her neighbors to expect further contributions because of Ginny's clear desire to maintain her family's new found status. Meeting these expectations provides Ginny with "a feeling beyond just having an impact on the process." It is a feeling that she was building with the community. "It was an impact that is good and I liked" she noted.

While both Christa and Ginny do acknowledge the role family can play in accounting for variations in contribution levels, another question remains. The question is whether others express a feeling that family can account for variations in contributions to incorporation. Yes, additional accounts of incorporation do support the understanding that family influences an individual's contributions to incorporation. These accounts, however, rest not on family status, but an effort to reduce any social dissonance that can be mobilized by neighbors connected to any individual. Paul explains his theory:

*"My family has been involved in the tomato festival and other community events for a long, long time. I don't get into that stuff, but since I live here I have to be involved. Except for the festival, I like to eat the food, especially the chili. Anyhow, if I didn't get involved the old ladies would be mad. I would disappoint them and that wouldn't be good. It would put me in a weird situation. That wouldn't really make things very enjoyable around here. It just makes me work harder for incorporation than others who do not have the family links to the community.*

Paul stresses that his responsibility to contribute to the incorporation effort is higher than someone who is trying to increase their family status in the community. The link to the community did not drive Paul's involvement with the incorporation effort. Rather, his family ties amplified his initial willingness to contribute to the process of creating a new city. Paul confirms this interpretation of his motives, saying "mom's involvement didn't push me into giving, it only made it get stronger." From this participant we uncover another possible explanation for why some individuals contribute more to the effort. From Paul's perspective, we are encouraged to create an understanding of contributing that emphasizes the impact of social ties. This perspective holds that an individual's social and family linkages within the community will serve to establish the environment in which one determines their personal level of contribution. This insight helps to create awareness that the longer one lives within a community, the stronger their tendency to give on behalf of incorporation.

## Quality of Life and Contribution Levels

Do other explanations for the differing levels of contributions levels exist? Yes, but only a relatively small group of additional individuals referred to another influence. An additional explanation put forth to account for the varying intensity of different individuals' contributions is found ensconced in the testimony offered by participants, Sally and Karl. Both individuals provide information promoting the view that suburbanization exerts a key role in shaping contribution levels.

A computer programmer and twelve-year resident of Ruskin provides the first account from within this perspective. His name is Karl, and he reported that he made regular contributions to the incorporation effort. In his words, he “had a steady stream of money flowing to the incorporation effort.” When asked why his contribution was so substantial, Karl reported his sacrifice was influenced by the value he attached to the quality of life in Ruskin. He recalls, “I made the contributions I did because I love it here. Ruskin is a really great place to live with all the green space here.” From Karl’s perspective, his contribution stemmed from his attachment to the quality of life engendered by Ruskin’s environment. His willingness to give is related to his affinity for the environment provided by Ruskin, but why does such a link matter? He notes:

*“I moved to Ruskin to get away from Tampa. I work there, but I didn’t want to want to live there. The place is too expensive, too crowded, and too loud. There isn’t any place where you can get outside and enjoy the weather. You can’t do that because people are playing music in the park or other stuff that doesn’t allow you to escape what is happening in your life. When I want to get outside in town, I can go the park and walk. The only thing I have to deal with in Ruskin are seagulls begging for food. In Tampa, I have to deal with a lot of people and noise. That’s really why I give so much because I don’t want to loose my walks in the park. It would really be sad if they replaced seagulls with druggies.”*

With this admission, Karl clearly states a feeling that his actions were needed because his refuge from the tensions of life was threatened. He simply feared Ruskin would transform itself into another nondescript suburb of Tampa. Such a state would divest him of what he enjoyed as an effort to reduce stress. The continued contribution Karl made to the effort reflects the value he attaches to living in Ruskin, as it presently exists. It is an opportunity Karl feels compelled to take full advantage of while in Ruskin. He recalls, “I discussed the issue with others and told

them that I liked where I am at and that I couldn't think to lose that." These individuals did not have any influence upon his level of contribution to the effort. The individuals with whom he discussed the issue expressed continual disbelief that Karl would make such a significant contribution to the incorporation effort. "I just went down my own path," Karl explains.

These individuals expressed disbelief with his commitment to the incorporation effort because from their perspective the costs were outweighed by the benefits. From the perspective of these individuals, incorporation meant higher taxes rather than a sanctuary from Tampa. Given the costs associated with incorporating the city, these individuals reasoned that Karl's large home would become too large a tax burden for him to bear. Creating a new city was seen as requiring more of a sacrifice through increased tax revenue than remaining an unincorporated community. For individuals with such a perspective, the increased taxation level was all the reason needed to oppose the effort. In informing these individuals that he supported incorporation, Karl surprised their sensibilities as taxpayers. He further added to their surprise by informing them, "I just wouldn't consider trading all that in for money or anything." Creating a new local government was seen by Karl as a fine tool to protect those amenities within Ruskin that he truly valued.

Karl's increased level of contribution to incorporation simply reflected the value he associated with the amenities he enjoyed within Ruskin. What logic motivated Karl to make such a contribution to the effort? Why was the contribution so significant? "The reason I did so much is because it was the least I could do to protect a place I love so much," Karl states. He gave all he could give to protect what improved his quality of life within the community. Does the feeling expressed by Karl extend to other high-level contributors in explaining their contribution? Yes, other informants report such a logic of participation animates their involvement in supporting the effort. Sally, a small business-owner and seven-year resident of Ruskin, reports a similar drive to incorporate Ruskin. In addition to these factors, she displays a stability of residence and activity in community affairs characteristic of those deeply involved in incorporation.

When asked how much she gave to the incorporation effort, Sally reports that she "gives more money and time than my husband thinks is reasonable." Aside from indicating some distance between husband and wife, her answer is somewhat imprecise. When probed further about her contribution level, she recalls the sum of sacrifice has come to total over a thousand

dollars and few hundred hours volunteering. She further reports that her effort represented a significant sacrifice to her family on behalf of incorporation because her time was devoted to pursuits outside the home and income given to others. However, it was a sacrifice she felt justified because of the threat posed to Ruskin. “I knew the county was growing too fast, it showed up in my business and in politics, and I knew that we had to protect the community,” Sally recounts. When questioned about the wisdom of her pattern of giving to the effort, Sally did not possess an accessible account. She spent time during the interview engaged in thinking about, even engaging in self-analysis of, her actions. In cobbling together a justification of why she contributed so much to the incorporation effort, Sally focused upon her experience as a Floridian.

Sally’s life experience as a Floridian instilled within her a sensitivity to the fact that communities can undergo serious change. In many instances, change can be so significant that the community’s character would be redefined over a matter of months. “The town I grew up in is gone, its not there anymore. It is really there, but not in the same way. Sort of like the Pretenders song,” Sally reports. The reference to the Pretender’s *Back to Ohio* is illustrative. The song’s lyrics allude to the fact that the singer’s hometown was radically transformed. Emphasis is focused on the fact that the singer’s “city” and “childhood memories” were paved over by developers. From Sally’s perspective, development in Florida displayed an ever-present capacity to destroy what remained of existing communities and constituent social networks. Such awareness made Sally sensitive to the challenges confronting Ruskin. This awareness allowed Sally’s sensitivity to be transformed into action on behalf of incorporation.

Sally’s level of response was not calculated to affect change, but reflected an automatic response to the triggering of her awareness. “I gave because the things in town began to change, and not for the good,” she recalls. She reports her effort had reached a reasonable limit because she acted to support her very strong bond with the community. Sally expressed a willingness to do more. However, she recognized that she could not do so without being financially irresponsible in her eyes. Sally did report that she could foresee giving more to effort. Her response assumes she possessed the necessary level of resources:

*“I would give more, if I had it. I would. There are simply so many chances to contribute to the protection of the community. The biggest way to contribute would be to volunteer with the incorporation effort. I would do that, especially when the effort has to go before the county or to*

*up to Tallahassee. That is when volunteering is an important thing. Its important because other people need to hear the voice of Ruskin. Without that, they cannot know whether what we want to do is real. That is when I would give more to the effort, if I could give it.”*

This passage puts forth an understanding that the amount of time donated to the incorporation effort would only change if she perceived an extraordinary opportunity to advance the effort’s agenda. Sally’s reflection upon when she could give more, given the absence of any personal restrictions to her time, reflects awareness that she would give more when such sacrifice could have a greater impact. Sally was questioned further about the conditions under which she would give more to the incorporation effort. She responded by saying, “I could also see myself giving more during the tomato festival.” Why the tomato festival, you ask? “The festival brings people here to town, really gives you an opportunity to talk to these people,” she recounts. The festival begged for a greater effort on her part because it also provides an unusual opportunity to get the effort’s message before the public. While not overtly strategic, Sally’s response clearly highlights the ability of average citizens to perceive the need to take advantage of all marketing opportunities presented to advocates of incorporation.

Thus, increased effort originates with an opportunistic view of the challenges placed before the feet of those involved with incorporation. The greater the opportunity to publicize the group’s effort, the more individuals would give to achieve their goals. The pattern found in this response works to show how higher level of contributions would be made by Sally and other like-minded residents. An individual’s level of investment will only be possible if they can perceive differential opportunities in their environment to advance the goals of effort.

### **Concluding Thoughts On Contribution Levels**

The insights collected from these interviews illustrate that individuals differ in the extent to which they give to incorporation based on two traits. One factor influencing the level contributed by each supporter is the extent to which their life is immersed within the community. Those who display a lifestyle more grounded in the community will be more likely to sacrifice a great deal on behalf of the incorporation effort.

Living one’s life almost exclusively within a small community makes that individual more likely to overestimate the threat posed to the community. Overestimation of the threat



facing the community encourages these individuals to give more to incorporation because they are devoid of accurate information about the effort's status. Without this information, these residents simply assume the worst is befalling the effort to incorporate Ruskin. Thus, one explanation for increased donations on behalf of incorporation stems from their isolation from the outside world.

Another factor influencing the level contributed by each individual is found in that individual's ability to engage in strategic behavior on behalf of incorporation. Strategic behavior among incorporation supporters works to create an environment in which people give when they perceive a need by the incorporation effort for these resources. The ability to evaluate the likely impact of each contribution makes individuals more likely to give when these resources are needed. In effect, people give more because they perceive a greater need for the resources. Regardless of whether this is the case these denizens give more due to their evaluation that more is needed.

One must ask what these findings imply for scholarly understanding of municipal incorporation. The findings presented in this dissertation recommend that the scholarly community revisit the previous understanding of municipal incorporation. The need to revisit previous studies results from the fact these findings offer an image of the process that is at odds with most portrayals of incorporation. The difference between the results in this dissertation and those in the literature rest in how the behavior of Ruskin residents is conceptualized. The manner in which residents decided how much to give to the effort does not appear rational in an economic sense. The economic model of rationality is the dominant mode of discussing the behavior within the public administration literature. This particular model of rational action centers on the ability to develop a strategy that allows one to use objects to achieve valuable goals. From this perspective, the behavior of those supporting incorporation in Ruskin does not advance the attainment of some goal. Instrumental rationality holds that behavior must utilize a strategy to achieve a tangible goal. The extent to which these individuals gave appears to be irrational because they received little immediate benefit for their involvement. Such a view is misguided because it reflects only the dominant perspective of rationality.

Weber (1972) addressed the issue of rationality to determine the extent to which there are variations in rational behavior. Among the variants of rationality Weber identified, was "value rationality." This form of rationality holds people will engage in action that advances the

behavior addressing some value regardless of whether this behavior will lead to success in that activity (Weber, 1972). This perspective of rationality emphasizes that action will be directed at participating in behavior highly valued by the actor. Rather than engaging in behavior to achieve some goal, this type of behavior views individuals as valuing the behavior itself. The individuals supporting the incorporation of Ruskin engaged in this behavior because it was consistent with their view of what was expected of them as community residents. These individuals expressed little concern with whether their behavior would ultimately be successful. What they expressed was a concern with upholding a pattern of behavior consistent with what they valued. These inhabitants valued their membership within the community and engaged in behavior directed to supporting this role.

The role social bonds play in structuring the incorporation of Ruskin are important for uniting participants engaged in these efforts. Residents involved in the effort were individuals who did not display a range of connections to the outside community. They simply spent much of their time within Ruskin. As a result, they were not exposed to information that disconfirmed the view of incorporation common within the community. This description of those supporting the incorporation of Ruskin resonates with an academic discussion that occurred between Gans (1962) and Granovetter (1973). The discussion between these two scholars focused upon a disagreement over how to account for life in an Italian-American community on Boston's west end. Gans' (1962) account details how residents of this tight-knit community suffered because of being so tightly connected to one another. Gans (1962) argued that the social structure of the community was so strong as to prevent residents from fully immersing themselves within the larger world beyond their ethnic enclave. The absence of any participation in the larger community had very detrimental effects upon the well-being of those living within the community. Gans (1962) stresses this was because these individuals were not part of society. They were isolated from the mainstream culture because of their reliance upon the culture found in their local community. In effect, Gans (1962) argued that these residents were limited to life within their community because their social connections prevented them from interacting with outsiders.

Granovetter (1973), who argued community members suffered because they could not access the knowledge held by those from outside the community, challenged this view. Members of a tight-knit community prefer spending time with those like themselves (Granovetter, 1973).

This reduces their well-being not by preventing them from remaining outside mainstream society, but rather because they cannot access information beyond their community's borders. In effect, residents of a closely-knit community cannot access the information that others may offer to them. The absence of any social linkages beyond their community deprives residents from taking advantage of any opportunities that may exist. The absence of any connection to individuals beyond their social network deprives residents of much needed information about resources which they could access (Granovetter, 1973). Such an inability to access resources or information from outside the community disadvantages community members in pursuit of their goals.

Based on Granovetter's argument, Burt (1995) finds what is needed to overcome the lack of information from outside the community is someone who can access information held by outsiders. Those individuals who can access information from beyond the community are accessing what Burt (1995) identifies as a structural hole. These individuals are the ones who will import new information and innovations into the community, as well as bring individuals together in the pursuit of some goal. The presence of a structural hole argues that the structural context in which communities exist is important in explaining why individuals can access information from outside the community. The findings presented in this chapter support this argument. While the individuals did focus their attention upon a common community culture, it was the absence of any community members able to forge bonds with outsiders that animated the incorporation effort. In effect, the absence of a structural hole prevented individuals within Ruskin from realizing that there were other options available to protect their community. The results presented in this chapter support this position by highlighting the fact that contribution levels were higher among those individuals who saw no other option. This is an important finding because it highlights the fact that the structural factors surrounding a community can focus behavior upon a few established alternatives.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSION**

The image of those pursuing incorporation within Ruskin is interesting. It is a representation emerging directly from the interview data presented in this project. This representation of their action is noteworthy because it directly contradicts the explanation found in most scholarly accounts of municipal incorporation. The story of those attempting to incorporate Ruskin is one of advocates displaying greater efficacy than scholars would attribute to them. Within this literature, incorporation advocates are understood to originate from the more efficacious and knowledgeable members of the community. Such individuals are understood to represent a very small stratum of the local citizenry (Fischel, 2002). The interviews conducted during the course of this project emphasize that collective understanding of who will support and contribute to incorporation should be expanded beyond the current perspective. Understanding of incorporation should include those beyond the small realm of the community elite.

The importance of such findings should not be overlooked. These findings bolster a belief that all citizens, if properly motivated, can undertake incorporation to prevent their quality of life from any threat posed by the actions of others. The actions of non-community members exercise significant influence because their decisions represent a challenge to maintaining the community's character and the social environment found in it. Citizens described as more "typical" (i.e. less wealthy and knowledgeable) are clearly capable of undertaking incorporation when confronted with the loss of community traits they feel makes the community a wonderful place to live. If pushed to the limit, such individuals will act decisively to maintain the character of their community. As illustrated by many of the respondents interviewed for this project, the strong bond between community members encourages recognition of such benefits. The importance stems from the existence of a social environment in which residents share their lives with others in a manner that adds a sense of fulfillment to life. This type of social environment is one that few individuals are willing to risk in order to attract an uncertain amount of new development.

These residents turn to incorporation to serve their interests. This results because incorporation is one way to minimize the risks facing the social environment provided by Ruskin. Incorporation in the community came in response to a desire to ensure these risks did not affect the quality of life. The perceived threat to the social environment found within Ruskin is

significant because it drove individuals to undertake a highly involved and very costly response to the threats they perceived. This path to insulating one's community from perceived threats is a difficult one that holds very few certain benefits. The interviews conducted within Ruskin indicate the extent to which individuals were willing to look past the uncertainty inherent within this process in spite of the costs associated with it. The interview responses highlight how attachment to a social environment can determine incentives for individuals to overlook very rational considerations.

Previous efforts to explain incorporation often looked past the importance of one's attachment to their community as a motivator to support incorporation. One must ask what is the true importance of the finding that people will undertake difficult actions to maintain a favorable social environment. The fact residents recognize the value of their community's social environment is not inconsistent with the perspective of some scholars analyzing the creation and existence of communities. Bender's (1978) investigation of the role social incentives played in the creation of new communities in the United States provides a clear record of how new communities are largely social constructions. For Bender, and numerous others, the role of social relationships between residents was an important enabler of the creation of new communities. These social relationships enabled incorporation by allowing individuals to establish some bond with their neighbors. The findings presented within this dissertation are not inconsistent with the view presented by scholars working within this intellectual tradition.

These scholars took the position that the social component of communities was an inevitable fact. Without some linkages between neighbors, establishing a community was found to make little sense, or have little meaning capable of binding individuals together. In effect, this perspective holds a community is more than a physical entity; it holds that the social aspect of a community is a more primal aspect of communities, municipalities, villages, cities, or any other legally recognized entity. The fundamental component of community from this perspective is the interaction between residents. This is what gives rise to the social institutions structuring these entities. Forming a community can only proceed when individuals become willing to allow such interactions to become institutionalized.

Before the legal benefits of incorporation become clear residents of the area must determine regularized interaction makes life less difficult. These individuals must view interaction with others as providing more meaning to life in the community than would be

obtained otherwise. The legal benefits associated with formally establishing a municipality are seen by many as providing additional benefits to living within their community. Bender (1978) argues that for much of the nation's history social interaction provided the fundamental difference in the lifestyle enjoyed by residents of communities and municipalities. Communities preexist municipalities because the social foundation of community predates the legal benefits provided by any state government.

In recent times, one can observe a change in the relationship between community and municipality. Currently, many municipalities are created without including any social foundation. The emergence of a post-modern society in the country has created a situation in which developers have found commodification of community to be a useful way to increase their wealth. Developers are exposed to incentives promoting either provision of a sense of community or hoisting development upon existing communities. This fact illustrates the social aspect of community is acknowledged by developers to add further value to the properties they are constructing. Thus, it is in their interest to appropriate the sense of community pervading existing unincorporated communities. Success in appropriating the social fabric of any unincorporated community increases one's reward for building new properties. This benefit increases the desirability attached to new development by creating an image that these areas are part of an existing social network.

The appropriation of an existing social network is something most residents of unincorporated communities will find objectionable. Often their objection will arise from a sense that their network of relationships is being intruded upon by outsiders. The community's objection to the misappropriation of the social fabric present in their community will drive them to resist. The practice of hoisting new development upon their community engenders feelings that an aspect of their residential environment is being changed without their consent (Siskind, 2006). The failure of developers to inquire whether residents find further development advisable deprives residents of a degree of self-determination in shaping the community's future. The failure to address residents' concern for the evolution of their environment reflects an absence of deep appreciation of what the community represents. The chance of adding unwanted development to one's community initiates sensitivity to the designs of outsiders among residents. Such sensitivity encourages an incorporation effort to proceed in the wake of new development.

Without the cycle of events initiated by developers, who have attempted to add new homes to these communities, it is highly improbable that sensitivity to these events would be observed.

It is certainly an interesting process by which residents that could be labeled more “typical” reach a conclusion that the community must undertake the difficult process of incorporation. It is also an interesting question how participants determine the extent to which they will contribute to such efforts. One may contemplate the nature of decision-making determining the amount of sacrifice individuals will put forth on behalf of incorporation. Those interested in understanding municipal incorporation may engage in such thought because they find portrayals of the process dubious. In the interviews presented in this project, one obtains an unexpected image of how such conclusions are reached. In these interviews, respondents display an unexpected willingness to undertake these efforts.

That these individuals will respond to perceived threats to their community with significant political action is illustrative. Such action highlights the value they associate with residing in a strong social environment. A corollary question that was answered centered on how individuals decide the extent to which they will sacrifice on behalf of incorporation. The amount of exertion reported by those supporters of Ruskin incorporation reflects concerns beyond the degree to which they see an opportunity to add value to property in the community. This picture of the decision-making process illustrates the extent of effort they contribute to achieving incorporation finds little support within the extent literature. This image fails to reflect scholarly emphasis upon rational thinking or strategic action.

Milton, for example, confirms the understanding that Ruskin residents employ a different logic than previously understood. Milton’s thinking and behavior ensures that he is an individual displaying behavior unfamiliar to those relying upon the literature to explain municipal incorporation. Milton’s only limit to his contribution was the presence of a prior commitment on his time to work, family, or church. These considerations reflect a focus that does not stress strategic behavior. For Milton and others like him, the limits to their contribution to incorporation did not fail to rest on decisions whether their involvement would further the likelihood Ruskin would be incorporated. Rather, the limit to their contribution originated with the existence of some previous commitment to other activities. Such individuals made a commitment to sacrifice in order to incorporate Ruskin until success was obtained. The logic

employed by Milton did not focus on the extent to which such an outcome was likely to occur, but rather focused on his contribution to obtaining the desired outcome.

The decision-making process demonstrated by Milton was not the only unexpected finding contained within this dissertation. Others who detailed their contribution level provided further insight into how individual contribution levels were determined. Becca stated she would contribute until she no longer felt her contribution was “making a difference.” Becca’s determination of her contribution did not address whether incorporation would ultimately succeed because she made a contribution. Rather, Becca’s logic focused upon whether her contribution was something that ensured greater progress toward the goal. It is a logic centered on maintaining the momentum of the incorporation effort. She did not consider whether incorporation was closer to being achieved. Becca simply tried to make contributions that prevented the effort from receding in strength in a noticeable way. As long as her involvement provided her with a sense she was making a difference, Becca would contribute. If her involvement did not provide her with an indication she was maintaining the intensity of an incorporation effort Becca’s contributions would cease. The thinking demonstrated when deciding the extent to which she would contribute to the incorporation effort is not reflected in the literature. Becca simply was not acting in a manner consistent with traditional understanding of “rational considerations.” Becca was reacting to an understanding of how her contribution level worked to influence the incorporation effort.

Another consideration influencing the manner by which people determine their contribution level is the extent their life is contained within that community. Reggie’s explanation of how such considerations are employed in concluding how much to give stresses the role of limited knowledge in driving such decisions. Reggie’s explanation centers on the fact that greater time spent within the community furthers individual contribution levels. The influence rests in the fact that when one spends more time within Ruskin, they have fewer opportunities to obtain information capable of correcting any misperceptions of the benefits and progress associated with incorporating Ruskin. His account stresses that few contributors possess significant amounts of knowledge originating from beyond the borders of their community. In this response, we again see further evidence incorporation activists do not behave in a manner consistent with that portrayed in the literature. Tversky and Khaneman (1973) find reliance upon uncontested and unverified information promotes behavior that can be ineffective and



inefficient. Acting upon the basis of information that promotes inefficient behavior is clearly not rational. This stresses the fact that Ruskin is home to individuals displaying behavior contradicting that in the literature.

The accounts presented within this dissertation contradict much of the findings presented by other scholars. This leads to the question of what these findings imply for collective understanding of incorporation. One clear implication of the findings presented in this dissertation is that incorporation is heavily invested with social meaning. In contrast to other instances of institutional creation, municipal incorporation directly influences individual identity and the social importance of this identity. Importance originates with the fact that each community provides social meaning to those familiar with a particular community. A regional development initiative or cooperative governance arrangement is likely to have social meaning only for those individuals intimately familiar with such institutions. The number of individuals who meet such a standard are very few. Those impacted by these institutions, but fail to derive social meaning from their existence, do not develop a belief these arrangements contribute to their identity. Municipalities have greater impact because they are hardly incapable of being ignored by residents. The services provided by municipal government touch each resident's quality of life on a daily basis. The failure to reference the social meaning of municipalities when detailing the process of institutional creation in this context is one possible reason existing empirical accounts do not find massive empirical support.

The use of qualitative research methods facilitated the discovery of previously unrecognized characteristics of municipal incorporation. The benefits associated with utilizing in-depth interviewing to collect data stems from the capacity of this method to expose the motivations respondents react to when attempting to create a city. This attribute is provided by the ability of interview data to shed light on the motives to which respondents structure their behavior. Among the individuals interviewed during this project, many reported a clear self-justification for their actions. Such justification rested strongly on their view that this path was the sole method of protecting a way of life contributing a significant portion of their identity as Ruskinites. Further insights provided by the use of qualitative research methods are found in the fact most reported their contribution was only limited by a sense that their contributions were having an impact.

Such insights into the mindset of those involved in incorporation were only uncovered with qualitative research methods. Utilization of a quantitative approach would have ensured the explanation in this project would have failed to include such observations. This would originate with the fact that most scholars have drawn from accounts emphasizing a particular set of assumptions about individual behavior. These assumptions often include a very distinct perspective on what motivates residents to become involved in supporting incorporation. Qualitative methods provided a clear path to overcome any reliance upon such assumptions. As a result, the use of these methods also prevents drawing inferences failing to reflect the full range of influences prompting incorporation. Such an advantage establishes a broader understanding of incorporation to be focused on the social explanations presented in this project. Providing greater depth in explanations of incorporation promotes a collective ability to further the common task of generating a mid-range theory of incorporation. Such a theory would provide acknowledgement of the role social influences play in driving this process.

This dissertation represents a necessary first step in accomplishing this task. Emphasis is placed on recounting how micro-level considerations emanate from the social context surrounding each community. Consequently, the conclusions drawn from the interview data collected during this project do not neglect the influences such contextual factors exert. Explicating the path by which individuals respond to a threat to “their” community, stresses the power contextual factors demonstrate. This path also prevents encouraging misinterpretation of responses as indicating responsiveness to factors beyond those recalled by respondents. Such decisions prevent misinterpreting these contextual factors as evidence individuals are behaving in a “rational” manner consistent with that stressed in the literature.

The involvement of these individuals may appear to be “irrational” on its face. However, their involvement does meet some needs they recognize. The denizens participating in incorporation of Ruskin felt their lifestyle was under assault from outsiders. Supporting incorporation provided these residents a path by which they could engage in self-determination when confronting a proposed change to their community. For many Ruskinites, the need to address development pressures imposed upon the community by outsiders originated with a sense they possessed little power to oppose these pressures. In spite of the burden inherent in actively supporting incorporation, the opportunity to support incorporation provided to respondents a path to resist their perceived feelings of powerlessness. Although such action

offered little guarantees of success, supporting incorporation was an action-oriented way of resisting the threat posed to their community. The consequences of such action may ultimately be the creation of a new municipality, but at the least provides the benefit of improving one's image of him or herself and their community. Such benefit originates with undermining the perception that the community must passively accept the challenge posed by outsiders.

The importance of this dissertation rests in that it provides evidence several previously overlooked factors promote incorporation. In effect, the findings presented in this dissertation highlight a need for scholars to include social factors in any explanation of incorporation. The findings presented here transmit a clear message. The message is that social factors can no longer be relegated to the realm of unexplained variance. While this is clearly a noteworthy contribution, the full promise of this dissertation can only be attained if more work is done.

A first step in allowing these findings to achieve their full potential rests in development of variables capable of capturing the relationship between these factors and the observance of municipal incorporation. The findings presented in this project represent a departure from those presented in previous accounts of incorporation. The divergence between these different treatments stems from the fact that those engaged in empirical testing models of incorporation largely neglect social factors. The advocacy displayed in this chapter for providing social factors a larger role in accounts of incorporation suggests one future extension of this work. That extension rests in operationalizing this class of variables. Advocating a greater focus on social influences recommends those suggesting this path assume some responsibility for contributing to operationalization of these influences. Criticizing others for excluding these variables from the empirical models during estimation should not be the end to the contribution these individuals make. Quantitative scholars, if they are to include social factors in their models, must be able to operationalize them. This is an inescapable necessity arising from the need to bridge the gap between both research traditions. The fact quantitative scholars possess less familiarity with this family of influences requires qualitative scholars provide some assistance in explicating the causal path associated with social factors prompting incorporation. Through fully explicating the causal path by which these factors affect incorporation, can operationalization proceed.

The criticism leveled at Burns (1994) in this project rests upon the fact that Burns relied upon indicators that were divorced from the reality of municipal incorporation. The variables employed by Burns did not fully reflect the logic of the relationships they were intended to

capture. Consequently, much of the criticism levied at Burns' efforts is justified. As Kuhn (1962) notes, criticism is only a positive force for improving scholarship if it provides support for overcoming a difficult shortcoming. When such criticism becomes excessive and repetitive, it no longer remains a force promoting better scholarship. Additional criticism offers little to the community of scholars interested in extending knowledge of incorporation. Extending the findings presented in this dissertation to promote inclusion of social influences in empirical models represents a significant contribution to the literature.

This class of factors must be translated into an accessible set of variables that can represent these influences in future empirical testing. Future empirical testing must include the social considerations making incorporation more likely in order to ensure progress is made in understanding incorporation. The absence of social considerations in previous models prevented scholars from including these factors while controlling for additional influences. Such a fact provides a basis for believing past empirical models have generated results that failed to provide accurate estimates. Only with including variables reflecting the impact of social factors in an additive manner can parameter estimates gain more accuracy. Qualitative researchers must spend more time providing insight into the eventual form social indicators should assume. A clear extension of this dissertation rests in exploring social factors further to assist others in operationalizing these factors.

With work directed to this goal, variables capturing the influence exerted by social factors will develop. This is a vital first step in achieving the promise of furthering collective understanding of municipal incorporation. Different avenues to modeling these influences will be explained in terms of the feasibility of each operationalization. Some time must be spent determining if each possible operationalization will be hampered by commonly encountered data limitations. If an operationalization strategy fails to overcome these considerations, one can understand this form will be impractical in future applications. Developing new measurement strategies represents a clear improvement to the past practice of using proxy variables. Proxy variables, such as time of residence or involvement in local organizations, cannot reflect the influence of these variables. Such crude measures possess little capacity to reflect the vividness with which the incorporation proceeded in Ruskin. Measurement of social influences clearly must progress past the point of using such poor indicators. To achieve this task, the findings of

this dissertation will be used as a basis to move beyond the crude variables used in the few models referencing social influences.

Further extensions of this dissertation will involve consideration of how best to model the process of municipal incorporation. Current efforts to model incorporation display many shortcomings. The most common inadequacy of past efforts stems from the use of standard regression models to represent the process of municipal incorporation. This model form fails to enable scholars to capture the multilevel influences prompting incorporation in an appropriate manner. Scholars estimating empirical models of incorporation confront great difficulty in attempting to measure variables in a way reflecting the embeddedness of the process. Incorporation occurs as the response to a series of events that influence an entire metropolitan region. The growth of an entire metropolitan region, whether in terms of overall population or suburbanization, initiates the motivation to incorporate each unincorporated community. Without the pressures to develop, the residents of each unincorporated community would most likely have little reason to undertake this difficult course of action.

Clearly, municipal incorporation is a process that cannot be dissected into one process occurring at a single level of society. It is a process shaped and initiated by factors influencing multiple levels of society. What is required to model these influences properly is the selection of a model form that is capable of capturing the embedded nature of municipal incorporation. The contextual nature of incorporation can only be captured by using models that provide estimates of how contextual factors promote municipal incorporation. The family of multilevel models provides the only techniques capable of affording unbiased and accurate estimates of both first-level and upper-level variables. This is a stark improvement to the current practice of modeling contextual factors in single level regression models through inclusion of single variables. When following such a practice many of these relationships are misspecified and often underestimated (Snijders and Bosker, 2000). Following this practice prevents accurately capturing the role of embedded variables in a single-level model.

### **Improvements to Future Research**

The findings presented in this dissertation must be extended to further knowledge by their inclusion in multilevel models. Social factors structuring each community take place in a larger

social environment than a single community does. It is this larger environment that determines the extent to which residents in each unincorporated community will feel these influences. The influence exerted by social factors in an embedded relationship is an important aspect of the incorporation story. Proper model choice would allow this relationship to be estimated in a manner that does not ensure misspecification of the relationship between these influences and incorporation. Contextual factors will then be less likely to be estimated in a way that would promote promoting drawing spurious inferences by estimating some form of multilevel model.

The use of the proper model form prevents the interaction between social factors and regional characteristics from reflecting any influence exerted by other factors. In a single level model, this relationship would prevent the impact of other factors from contributing to the estimation of these variables. This would thereby ensure the generation of spurious results. A pattern of generating spurious results harms knowledge of incorporation by confounding any influences hypothesized relationships may exert within each data set. This practice, however, has been common among a majority of scholars attempting to empirically test theories of incorporation. One path displaying significant potential to address this problem rests in the use of hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) techniques to model the process of creating a new municipality. The use of HLM techniques offers a clear benefit to those interested in incorporation challenges. This technique provides empirical estimates that confer greater validity to the results generated.

In spite of these benefits, the decision to employ HLM techniques requires significant thought. Use of HLM techniques is made difficult by the quality of data for most variables implied by mainstream theories of incorporation. The main difficulty originates with the quality of data collected in unincorporated communities. The lack of formal boundaries for each unincorporated community makes it very difficult and costly for government agencies to collect data in unincorporated communities. The demand for this data is not too strong to justify the expense of collecting it. Consequently, there are very few incentives for federal and state agencies to collect this data. These incentives contribute to an absence of data for many unincorporated communities. The void in data for most unincorporated communities presents very significant barriers to estimating empirical models of incorporation with the HLM technique. HLM modeling is very sensitive to the presence of missing data in any data set. To

prevent the presence of missing data from permanently inhibiting estimation of multilevel models, additional resources must be devoted to developing better data sets.

Another difficulty originating from the available data from unincorporated communities rests in collecting values beyond the borders of the community. The values of independent variables for unincorporated communities must be collected only at the level of these communities. The misstep made by Burns cannot be replicated in constructing future data sets. To duplicate such a mistake would prohibit acquisition of additional knowledge surrounding incorporation. This highlights the fact that beyond improving operationalization of these social influences, more effort must be focused on constructing better data sets for all unincorporated communities. Together, these two tasks represent the most significant challenges scholars must overcome if an improvement in modeling incorporation can occur.

These two challenges are not the only ones that must be addressed if modeling of this phenomenon can improve. A further task that must be addressed to promote better modeling practice rests in respecifying the dependent variable. Current efforts to estimate empirical models of incorporation often operationalize incorporation as a continuous dependent variable. Operationalizing the process in this way fails to capture the logic contained within most theories of incorporation presented in the literature. Many scholars acknowledge the problems associated with employing this strategy. However, their justification for following this modeling strategy fails to reflect sound principles of research design. Scholars following this strategy for modeling the dependent variable often argue that it is the only path to avoid selecting on the dependent variable. In offering this excuse for use of the strategy, they often emphasize the infrequency with which incorporation occurs. Incorporation is an event failing to occur with great frequency in recent American history. In an effort to increase the number of observations in each data set, many scholars operationalize this event as a continuous dependent variable. Scholars who argue from this position note that this practice increases the number of observations within each data set. Thus, the justification offered by those operationalizing the dependent variable reflects a concern with not violating sound sampling practices.

Following this standard does not reflect the reality of municipal incorporation. The practice of operationalizing incorporation as a continuous dependent variable fails to acknowledge the basic nature of incorporation. Incorporation is an event that is either underway or simply being contemplated. The path to achieve incorporation in a community is a process in

which legal requirements winnow alternative specifications for a new municipality from consideration. These legal requirements ensure there cannot be more than one ongoing incorporation effort after the state has allowed an effort to proceed. The use of a continuous dependent variable form does not reflect this fact of municipal incorporation. To reflect the reality in which incorporation proceeds, and to avoid selecting upon the dependent variable, requires use of rare-events techniques when estimating empirical models of incorporation. Estimating models using rare-events techniques generates variable estimates that do not require one to operationalize the dependent variable in novel ways. Unfortunately, rare-events techniques are not widely familiar to a majority of scholars investigating municipal incorporation. One extension of the findings presented here will rest in modeling the impact of social influences upon municipal incorporation with these techniques. The result of such efforts will be to provide parameter estimates for social factors displaying greater validity. The consequence of using these techniques is that one can have greater confidence parameter estimates will be free from spurious influences.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

The primary benefit associated with extending the findings of this dissertation is in establishing a record of insight free from unnecessary error. A disturbingly large percentage of the shortcomings found in the literature originate with scholarly refusal to broaden the effort to improve upon past research practices. One may question why this group of scholars displays an unwillingness to devote more effort to improve past modeling efforts. The most valid explanation is probably that the perceived intellectual yield of working to improve research practices offers little justification for the exertion involved. Simply stated, many scholars understand the costs to outweigh the benefits associated with greater research on municipal incorporation. Those with this understanding overlook the possible contribution to the literature that such effort affords. Further research into the topic of municipal incorporation provides an opportunity to uncover additional insight into how social factors prompt institutional creation. Determining the extent to which individuals will forgo tangible benefits to preserve a particular social meaning is a question clearly worthy of further research.



The practical meaning attached to the findings contained here is also found in illustrating the need to consider the social component of municipal incorporation. Social meaning accrues from the act of creating a new municipal government. This social meaning often originates with the fact that individuals undertake incorporation to preserve their desired way of life. With this response, residents reflect a concern that some perceived threat will alter their community. Their reaction uncovers a belief that an important aspect of their existence will be altered. For most individuals, a threat to their lifestyle often challenges how they perceive themselves. This challenge shapes how others view their community, as well as how they perceive others' views of their community. Residents reacting to such realizations are motivated to search for some method capable of facilitating maintenance of an image they cherish.

Such an understanding is not exclusive of those individuals who view incorporation as a vehicle to advance their self-interest. Certainly, efficacious actors are more capable of using incorporation to achieve personal objectives. The findings presented in this dissertation simply highlight the fact that the efficacious are not the only actors who may initiate incorporation. The "typical" citizen is also capable of initiating incorporation, but his or her actions originate from a different set of concerns. The findings in this dissertation indicate the extent to which factors beyond self-interest motivate this group to undertake incorporation. The account presented here emphasizes how factors in addition to economic self-interest motivate this phenomenon. This illustrates the fact that people do not respond only to the opportunity to further economic benefit through establishing a new municipality. Many individuals will participate in incorporation because it provides an opportunity to avoid being overwhelmed by perceptions of powerlessness.

From an applied perspective, such findings are interesting. They present an opportunity to strategic actors to encourage public support for incorporation by manipulating the social component of incorporation. A strategic actor who wishes to increase the likelihood of successfully incorporating a community should foster greater recognition of the community's social meaning. This stands in stark contrast to the practical implications contained in the bulk of studies addressing incorporation. The implication contained in this group of studies is that one should provide tangible policy benefits to individuals if he or she is to have their support for incorporation. The social aspect of incorporation provides those wishing to institutionalize certain benefits in the new government a powerful tool to achieve their ends; and further their self-interest. This originates with the ability to highlight the contribution community membership

provides to each resident's identity. Individuals are presented with an opportunity to further their self-interest by manipulating area reaction to any proposed change to the community. In engaging in such activities, strategic actors must stress how proposed changes will shape residents' self-image. Broaching the implications of any change for how each resident views him or herself, as a member of a community, is a clear path to mobilizing individuals on behalf incorporation.

The consequences associated with change for one's self-image a finding of this dissertation holding significant consequences for those driving incorporation. However, this is not the only finding displaying such importance. In an effort to increase the likelihood than an effort will succeed, strategic actors must also promote awareness of the social component of incorporation. Through stressing the impact to one's self-image associated with incorporation, individuals can make other residents aware the unincorporated community in which they reside establishes a social environment. Every unincorporated community contains some social framework structuring interaction between community members. Residents in each unincorporated community can easily overlook the social structure to which they contribute. This fact ensures each unincorporated community provides a ripe environment in which to introduce greater awareness of the implications of the social environment. Awareness that the community provides the social network in which each individual exists, promotes acknowledgement that the environment influences the current lifestyle.

Knowledge that one's lifestyle is determined by this environment stimulates greater sensitivity to the need to protect it. For example, an incorporation effort could gain significant support through making residents aware their community represents more than a collection of buildings and roads. Support is furthered by increasing this sensitivity to the fact that the unincorporated community contributes something to each resident's quality of life. Furthering awareness of this fact increases the likelihood incorporation will take hold among community members. Placing individuals in this position increases willingness to protect one's community. Incorporation, by addressing these concerns, mobilizes support based on such desires. Heightening awareness of social meaning within the public achieves this by promoting incorporation as a tool to combat the threat to one's lifestyle and identity.

The impact of this dissertation is partly a story of advances in knowledge achieved and that anticipated. Advancement of knowledge is achieved by the findings presented here through

provision of a needed corrective to the current literature surrounding municipal incorporation. An overwhelming majority of current accounts of incorporation stress the process is a tool to institutionalize certain benefits for strategic actors. This emphasis furthers the perspective incorporation is solely the province of individuals able to enact their goals in spite of heroic odds. Such an understanding promotes presentation of a reality in which “average” citizens are incapable of playing a significant role in the process. In effect, scholars addressing the topic promote an image of the “average” citizen as incapable and passive. The findings of in this dissertation call the image of an incapable and passive citizenry into question. These findings illustrate how a more “typical” citizen can claim a role in shaping the residential environment and identity.

Providing evidence “average” individuals can proactively define their community represents an important contribution to the literature surrounding institutions. As stated earlier, scholars have tended to treat incorporation as simply another instance of institutional creation. It is a mistake to treat municipal incorporation as displaying little difference from other instances of institutional creation. Simply stated, arguing there are few differences in the creation of these various types of institutions misrepresents the process of municipal incorporation. Compounding this tendency is the fact that institutional creation in general, is also more intensively couched as the realm of efficacious actors. The act of creating a new social institution should be understood to represent the machinations of these actors. However, the findings in this dissertation provide a warning to those studying institutional creation. The warning is to avoid overlooking the differences between various types of social institutions. Effort should be taken to allow the unique aspect of each institutional type to be reflected in research. Municipal incorporation is an instance of institutional creation that is less prone to the influence of more efficacious actors in pursuit of some goals. This fact recommends to scholars they construct research designs reflecting the uniqueness associated with each observation of institutional creation. This requires sensitivity to the influence of some institutions that cause individuals to respond more strongly to some influences, but not to others. This surely is an important contribution to the larger literature on institutional creation.

Another possible contribution of this dissertation could rest in its application to ongoing incorporation efforts in these communities. This is a yet to be fulfilled contribution of this dissertation. As urban areas continue to grow and evolve, new community forms will emerge.

The emergence of new community forms establishes an environment in which residents of unincorporated communities must consider and possibly address how these forms may alter their lifestyle. The specter of undesired consequences will provide many residents with a desire to create a new municipality. Communicating the findings of this dissertation to such individuals would make their task less difficult. This is one potential consequence of the findings presented here. Currently, residents of Cullowhee, North Carolina are contemplating whether undertaking incorporation in this community is justified. A small number of residents in Cullowhee initiated correspondence with the author about the findings presented in this project.

These individuals were informed of the importance social factors exert upon those undertaking incorporation. The group was also provided with some suggestions about how implementation of these findings can increase the likelihood of successfully incorporating Cullowhee. Residents viewed these suggestions as a new insight into how achievement of their goal could be attained. Only time will afford an answer to whether these findings can be acted upon by those involved in an ongoing incorporation effort. The individuals in Cullowhee, however, seem optimistic that addressing social factors would facilitate incorporation. The contribution will be fulfilled as this group enacts aspects of these findings. Knowledge of incorporation will grow with future extensions of these findings in both the academic and applied worlds. The findings presented in this dissertation provide a solid setting upon which scholars can undertake advancement in either setting.

The significance of the results presented in this dissertation rests in an unusual finding. That finding is the illustration of the mechanism by which individuals choose to engage in a very difficult process simply to maintain a socially constructed good. The fact that residents were found to immerse themselves in the task of incorporating a new municipal government to protect the social environment in which they reside is counterintuitive. Public administration scholars have not provided many studies in which individuals sacrificed both time and effort to obtain a goal derived from social influences. Previously, the majority of work originating from public administration scholars emphasized that individuals would engage in such work only if they were able to institutionalize the provision of public goods. Maintenance of some favored social environment is not a public good. Rather, it is the consequence of policies promoting that outcome. These individuals cannot be understood to respond to instrumental rationality because protecting a community is an eventual outcome.

This suggests that future scholars should be more sensitive to those operating upon the basis of value-rationality, rather than focusing solely on instrumental rationality. It is unexpected that individuals react upon the basis of value-rationality to undertake the incorporation of a new municipality. From within public administration, there is simply little evidence that participants are able to engage in such behavior to achieve such an amorphous outcome. The findings of this dissertation correct that absence by providing a vivid example of denizens who are behaving unexpectedly. Aside from the importance residents attach to their community, it is this vivid portrait of behavior that contributes to the literature on public administration.

The conclusion that residents support incorporation because of the desire to prevent harm to the community is also important because of the implications for scholarly understanding of freedom. The findings emanating from this dissertation lend support to the view that such individuals are responding to the desire to achieve freedom, but through the mechanism of negative liberty. The willingness of individuals to undertake a very difficult process to constrain the behavior of future residents is a very important insight. It requires that scholars be sensitive to the fact that other instances of government or governance structures may rest on such logic.

## APPENDIX A

### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SUBURBAN AND UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES

Table 1.1

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Suburban Community</b>	<b>Unincorporated Community</b>
<b>Developer Involvement</b>	<b>Present at the founding of community</b>	<b>Only present once sprawl makes community feasible for development</b>
<b>Awareness of Municipal Government</b>	<b>Significant because of developer focus on protecting land-values</b>	<b>Absent until threat is posed to community</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>Newer, with most created in post-war era</b>	<b>Founded soon after territory was made available for settlement</b>
<b>Economic Diversity</b>	<b>None, land-use patterns limited</b>	<b>Diversity is present because these communities were previously self-sufficient</b>
<b>Outsider Involvement in Community Affairs</b>	<b>Community is heavily dependent upon developers who established community</b>	<b>Almost none until outsiders come to community looking for new territory to consume</b>

## **APPENDIX B**

### **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER**

Office of the Vice President For Research

Human Subjects Committee

Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742

(850) 644-8673 . FAX (850) 644-4392

#### APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 7/30/2007

To: Jason Sides

Address: Dept. of Political Science, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV 26505

Dept.: PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research

A Government of Our Own: The Politics of Local Government Creation

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be

required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 7/28/2008 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Lance DeHaven-Smith, Advisor  
HSC No. 2007.346



## APPENDIX C

### SAMPLE OF INFORMED CONSENT SCRIPT

Hi (*insert interviewee's name*) are invited to participate in a research study conducted by me, Jason C. Sides of Florida State University's Askew School of Public Administration. I am currently undertaking a project to learn why individuals undertake the task of creating new municipal governments. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have been identified as key member in this process.

If you decide to participate, I would like schedule a time in the future when we can conduct a telephone interview. Each interview will take about twenty-five minutes to complete, and will only be conducted over the telephone.

The telephone interview may consume some portion of your time. Your involvement will be valuable for creating a more realistic picture of government creation. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. Subject identities will be kept confidential by assigning them an assumed identity that cannot be traced to any community involved in the study. Your identity will reported as being John (or Jane) Doe from community A.

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the creation effort. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Jason C. Sides, at the Department of Political Science, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV. 26505. My telephone number is (850) 559 – 1101. My email, if that is a more convenient way to contact, is [jasonsides@hotmail.com](mailto:jasonsides@hotmail.com). You can also contact my research advisor, Lance deHaven-Smith at the Askew School of Public Administration & Policy, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Fl. 32312. His phone number is (850) 644-7397.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee, Institutional Review Board, through the Office of the Vice President for Research, at (850) 644-8633. This Office oversees the review of the research to protect your rights and is not involved with this study.

If you would like a copy of this letter for your records, please let me know and I will fax you a copy. Do you have any questions for me at this time?

Thank you again for your help.

## APPENDIX D

### QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**Table 5.1**

<b>Interview Protocol: Perspectives on Ruskin Incorporation</b>	
<b>Question</b>	
1.	Can you tell me what incorporation in Ruskin involves?
2.	Can you describe how you first became aware of the incorporation effort?
3.	How do you understand Ruskin to be threatened today?
4.	Can you tell me how Ruskin is pressured by increased development?
5.	Can you describe your position on the effort to incorporate Ruskin?
6.	What does Ruskin mean to you?
7.	How do you think Ruskin will be transformed in the future?
8.	Can you tell me what those consequences will hold for your life in Ruskin?
9.	To what extent do you consider yourself a member of Ruskin's community?
10.	Can you describe any aspects of Ruskin that lead you to support incorporation?
11.	Can you describe any factors in Ruskin that lead you to oppose incorporation?
12.	How do your friends feel about the benefits associated with incorporating Ruskin?

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