

Project Name:	A Qualitative Analysis of Youth Perspectives on Rockport Municipal Planning		
Community Partner:	City of Rockport and Texas Target Communities	Estimated Cost:	\$447.98
Project Start Date:	January 14, 2019	Project End Date:	May 6, 2019
Deliverable Start Date:	January 14, 2019	Deliverable End Date:	May 6, 2019
Project Scope Statement:			
The 2019 Master of Public Administration Capstone students at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi partnered with Texas Target Communities to obtain youth perspectives about the City of Rockport that will be used in providing planning recommendations in Rockport's comprehensive strategic plan.			
Deliverable Scope Statement:			
The 2019 Master of Public Administration Capstone students at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi collected qualitative data from upper-level Social Studies students at Rockport-Fulton High School. This community workshop focused on capturing the community's youth perspective on the strategic development of the City of Rockport. Further, the data was collected to help city planners better understand the perspectives of an underrepresented group, the youth.			
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A Qualitative Analysis of Youth Perspectives on Rockport Municipal Planning

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Texas Target Communities & The City of Rockport, Texas

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2019 Master of Public Administration Capstone, Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi



May 2019

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Executive Summary

For Service Learning & Texas Target Communities Projects

- Start date: January 14, 2019
- End date of the project: May 6, 2019
- Department: Social Sciences
- Class name: Seminar in Public Administration: Capstone
- Credit hours: 3
- Number of students participating: 15 graduate students
- Description of how the project was conceived: After Hurricane Harvey affected the Texas coast in August 2017, smaller communities have lacked the resources in recovering. The Texas towns of Rockport and Hitchcock were selected by Texas Target Communities (TTC) as Community Partners for 2018-2019. Public Administration students at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi were given the opportunity to join in TTC efforts to provide planning recommendations for a new comprehensive strategic plan for the community of Rockport. In February 2019, MPA Capstone students collected data from Rockport-Fulton High School students during their Social Studies classes, where they provided their input regarding recommendations for the community development of the City of Rockport. Data collected will be used by city planners to understand youth desires of community development and resiliency
- Primary project goals:
 - This project will collect data to help city planners to understand what youth desire in community development.
- Project budget: This project was financially supported by TTC
 - Mileage for up to six students and one faculty member to travel to the High School: (40 miles each way/ 80 miles rounds trip from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi to the High School)
 - State Mileage Reimbursement Rate is \$0.545: \$43.60/ per traveler; up to 7 travelers = \$305.20
 - An audio recorder for data collection-estimate: \$74
 - iPad for data collection: estimate \$429 (<https://www.apple.com/ipad/compare/>)
 - Total Budget Request: \$808.20
 - Actual Expenses:
 - Electronics: \$447.98
- Description of project circumstances
 - The focus is to provide the youth perspective as an underrepresented group, giving them a platform to express their concerns of the Rockport community
- Description of solutions, designs, and research provided to the clients:
 - Research Design:
 - Qualitative case study
 - Rockport-Fulton High School students in upper-level Social Studies courses
 - Methods:
 - Qualitative data collection to include a youth's viewpoint in the development of the City of Rockport's comprehensive plan and took place on February 28, 2019, at Rockport-Fulton High School
 - Codebook:
 - This contains all written and oral responses of each question has its own code; i.e., VALUE
 - This provides raw data from the students
- Primary problems encountered while executing the project:
 - Qualitative data collected were only applicable to youth concerns and perceptions in the City of Rockport

- Data collected from other communities would not yield the same results
- The study only included upper-level Social Studies students
- Time and money
- Each class period was only 45 minutes
- The sample size was limited to 102 students, but the target was 150
- The voice recorder was not completely audible, so three students had to transcribe the oral responses
- Any other distinctive information or context for the project
 - Overall, the youth that participated stated they
 - WANT:
 - More local job options
 - More youth activities within the community
 - To be heard
 - VALUE:
 - The family-friendly, supportive community feeling
 - The natural resources unique to the community
 - ARE CONCERNED ABOUT:
 - A lack of affordable housing
 - A lack of inclusivity between different age groups and different socio-economic groups
 - Protecting local wildlife and the environment
 - Improving infrastructure
 - Unique to this community:
 - Emphasis on valuing family
 - Expressing a desire for community improvement
 - Generalizable results:
 - The “vibe,” or sense of community
 - The Gulf Coast environment and natural beauty
 - Resiliency from hurricane recovery

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Abstract

Texas Target Communities (TTC) is a service-learning program and university-wide community engagement initiative designed to create resilient and sustainable communities while providing students with appropriate training. In 2018, TTC selected the cities of Rockport and Hitchcock as Community Partners for 2018-2019. Rockport, in collaboration with TTC, is in the process of developing a new comprehensive plan. TTC provided community resiliency workshops to ensure their perspective was included in this plan. However, existing research suggests that youth participation within civic engagement is low, and their limited participation may result in their unique perceptions being overlooked. Accordingly, in February 2019, the Master of Public Administration (MPA) Capstone students at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi joined TTC's efforts to support the City of Rockport in creating a new comprehensive plan. The MPA students collected qualitative data from upper-level Social Studies students at Rockport High School about their perceptions of their community and what they hope to see from the development of the City of Rockport. The researchers conclude that youth participants most value the sense of community and natural resources of Rockport. Participants want more youth activities, job opportunities, and recognition within the community, and they are most concerned with improving infrastructure, building affordable housing, being including, and protecting the local environment.

Chapter One

Introduction

Introduction

On August 25, 2017, Hurricane Harvey caused catastrophic damage to many coastal cities made landfall on the Texas Gulf Coast. The City of Rockport was no exception; it suffered severe damage from the storm, and it is still undergoing recovery efforts today. In working toward a full recovery of the city, Rockport municipal leaders applied for and received a grant from Texas Target Communities (TTC) in order to assist in the development of a comprehensive plan for the city. Graduate students in the Master of Public Administration (MPA) Capstone class at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi collaborated with TTC to assist in citizen engagement efforts as part of a service-learning opportunity. The purpose of this project is to gather youth perspectives to be integrated into Rockport's comprehensive plan. This report expands upon this purpose by providing the processes and procedures utilized by the MPA students to collect and analyze the data that make up their findings.

The research revealed three critical aspects of municipal planning: citizen engagement, youth participation, and building resiliency. Citizen engagement allows the public to learn from and inform government representatives and government officials to learn from and inform citizens; youth participation facilitates youth engagement and knowledge of a democratic society; and, building resiliency allows a sense of community to be renewed after disaster recovery. Underrepresented youth perspectives offered city planners a unique vision for community design and comprehensive planning in the wake of disaster relief efforts after Hurricane Harvey. Thus, this study tells a meaningful story about youth participants through descriptions of firsthand experiences and quotations of actual conversations. Written, verbal, and recorded responses were collected during six focus groups of 102 youth participants in upper-level Social Studies at Rockport-Fulton High School. The authors conclude that youth

participants most valued the sense of community and natural resources of Rockport. Participants wanted more youth activities, job opportunities, and recognition within the community, and they were most concerned with improving infrastructure, building affordable housing, being including with age-groups and socio-economics, and protecting the local environment.

Literature Review

The research for this qualitative case study can be summarized into three themes: citizen engagement, youth participation, and building resiliency. These themes serve as the direct basis for exploration into the existing literature. By thoroughly examining these themes, the full context and reasoning for this study can be articulated to external audiences and internal stakeholders.

Citizen Engagement

Citizen engagement and participation is the largest of the three themes within the existing literature. It can be subcategorized into two threads: models for participation and the citizen participation context. First, the models for participation explore the methods and techniques that promote participation in governing and planning (Stern, Gudes, & Svoray, 2009; Triplett, 2015). While discussing citizen voice and public involvement, Triplett (2015) introduced the public participation process (PPP) model as a method for transportation agencies and organizations to obtain input from the public. The PPP Model consists of six parts: inform, access, listen, engage/involve, standing/influence, and influence-policy-making (Triplett, 2015). The PPP model is used in transportation planning to gain citizen input and participation in the planning process, and it has been especially relevant since the 1960s and 1970s when stakeholders revolted against the top-down decision-making for freeway construction without local community input. Although the literature states that the PPP model is used in transportation

planning, there is little reason why it could not be transferred to planning and engagement in other areas of government. After all, “public participation is a process that involves the public in problem-solving or decision-making and can be used in public input to make decisions” (Triplett, 2015, p. 89). Additionally, Stern, Gudes, and Svoray (2009), who explore the relationship between the traditional public participation model versus the web-based public participation model, find that citizens who utilize the traditional public participation model feel more involved in the participation process, while citizens who used both traditional and web-based public participation report the highest feeling of involvement.

The second thread within the citizen engagement theme is the citizen participation context. Although it may seem vague, this thread is simply a continuation of the models for participation in action. For example, Burby (2003) describes the integration of richer and more meaningful stakeholder involvement and participation in city planning to build consensus for planning proposals. Likewise, Roberts (2004) explores citizen participation in the context of the 21st century and finds that citizen participation is often an ideal form of democracy, noting that some feel that citizen participation has little business in the day-to-day function of administrative governance. This critique of citizen participation is further articulated by Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini (2009), who note that civic engagement and civic participation is skewed toward individuals with higher levels of income and educational attainment, amplifying perceptions of elitism and enabling a “gated democracy” within some citizen engagement practices. Additionally, it is important to view citizen engagement as a precursor to conversations about youth participation. Without fully conceptualizing and accepting citizen engagement, it would be impossible to have a meaningful discussion about youth participation.

Youth Participation

Building on the previous theme of citizen engagement, modern perceptions of youth participation has been codified by the United Nations via the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Checkoway, 2010; Derr & Tarantini, 2016; Frank, 2006). Specifically, under Article 15, young people have the right to participate in decision-making processes that are relevant to their lives and to influence decisions that affect them (Checkoway, 2010). The literature on youth participation can generally be subcategorized into three main threads: barriers to participation, opportunities for youth participation, and youth participation in-action.

First, the literature widely discusses the feelings of social isolation and the barriers to participation that youth feel and encounter in contrast to adults and other members of society. Youth often feel alienated from their communities, and adult views of young people will often contribute to the feeling of social isolation (Checkoway, 2010; Frank, 2006). This isolation is further compounded by evidence that youth are becoming less tolerated within public spaces and further marginalized in public processes (Derr & Tarantini, 2016). A major step toward limiting the social isolation perceptions among youth is to view youth as resources for community development and progress while valuing the input and contributions that they can bring to the planning process (Frank, 2016). Incorporating youth input and priorities provides critical insights into what needs to change to build inclusion and value within the youth population (Laidlaw Foundation, 2012). Significant barriers to youth participation include societal views of youth. These societal views include the developmental, vulnerable, legal, and romantic views cast doubt on whether youth participation is beneficial and practical (Frank, 2016).

Second, there are opportunities for youth participation in community decision-making. These potential opportunities for youth participation are especially relevant considering many youths who “want to participate, to be heard, and to have positive influences on their

communities" (Derr & Tarantini, 2016, p. 1535). Opportunities for youth participation can be highlighted with the benefits that such participation offers communities. Frank (2006) notes that "youth participation [benefits] communities by raising awareness of problems, addressing youth concerns, and improving livability for all" (p. 369).

Third, youth participation in-action is mentioned throughout the literature as an exciting phenomenon. Particularly important in the literature is the case study involving Growing Up Boulder, which actively sought the participation of youth (ages 4-16) into a community planning activity involving the renovation of the Boulder Civic Area (Derr & Tarantini, 2016). These types of programs enable youth to engage with the community around them actively. This type of engagement empowers youth to harness "their collective social power to challenge powerful people and institutions to make a community-level change" (Christens & Dolan, 2011, p. 529). Youth participation has an integral part in the literature and is especially relevant in building resiliency with a community.

Building Resiliency

The final theme found within the literature deals with building resiliency before and after disasters occur. Building resiliency relies on a solid foundation of an integrated community, where the individual community members feel a sense of belonging. McMillian and Chavis (1986) view a sense of community as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through a commitment to be together" (p. 4). This sense of community is especially important in the aftermath of disaster and catastrophe. Many cities face natural and manufactured disasters and catastrophes, yet these cities rarely disappear and are often rebuilt. However, those rebuilt cities are not fully recovered unless there is a measure of resiliency among the citizens

within them. Campanella (2008) argues that “cities are more than the sum of their buildings [...] They are also thick concatenations of social and cultural matter, and it is often this that endows a place with its defining essence and identity” (p. 142). According to Campanella (2008), a city or community cannot be rebuilt without resiliency:

To enable total recovery, familial, social, and religious networks of survivors and evacuees must be reconnected urban recovery occurs network by network, district by district, and not just building by building; it is about reconstructing the myriad social relations embedded in schools, workplaces, childcare arrangements, shops, places of worship, and places of play and recreation. (p. 142)

This notion of resiliency is present throughout the disaster-recovery literature (Berke & Campanella, 2006; Campanella, 2008; Torres & Alsharif, 2016). Resiliency is such a strong aspect within this portion of the literature that there are few other threads to explore thoroughly. Berke and Campanella (2006) describe the necessity of disaster recovery planning to have a strategic process in place when it becomes necessary to rebuild after a disaster. Likewise, Torres and Alsharif (2016) discuss the importance of resiliency through an analysis of resilience in action in a Florida county. Resiliency means putting forth the effort “to repair a community’s torn social fabric a process that fundamentally entails reconnecting severed familial, social, and religious networks of survivors at a grassroots level” (Berke & Campanella, 2006, p. 206). Disaster recovery without resiliency is simply rebuilding. Citizen engagement and youth participation are essential in the resiliency process because they represent the social fabric of the community. The more community input into disaster recovery planning, the stronger the amount of resiliency restoration.

This study reconciles the three major themes within the literature into a guidebook for action-research. Citizen engagement, youth participation, and building resiliency are all major components necessary in communicating the purpose and direction of the study to external audiences and internal stakeholders. This study represents applied research in action and is growing and strengthening the academic literature by testing the theories presented within it.

Chapter Two

Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative research design was chosen for this case study. The case study focused on an underrepresented youth population to gain input on improvements for the City of Rockport as they update their comprehensive plan. The focus groups were comprised of high school students in upper-level Social Studies courses at Rockport-Fulton High School who have been exposed to course material that aligns with ideas of civic engagement and local government planning. Six open-ended questions were administered through a presentation and a questionnaire hand-out. Oral responses from the students were recorded on a digital recorder during the presentation, and the questionnaires were turned in at the end of the presentation to collect the anonymous handwritten responses.

This design was chosen because not only is it common in the social sciences, but also because qualitative data, generally used for understanding views and perceptions, provides a narrative that would be useful as the Rockport city planners continue developing plans for the city's future. This design allowed for diving deep into the focus groups to obtain material that provided a well-rounded picture of the reality. Qualitative research is chosen when researchers want to understand the values and perceptions that influence the behavior of a group, as well as identifying what the group's needs are. In this particular case, the forum was also used to capture ideas for improvements in the community based on the feedback from the target group. There was no theory preceding this research. This approach was also appropriate to obtain focused subjective and objective material to provide more understanding of the population, which is not normally easily gathered with other research designs such as quantitative design. According to Flyybjerg (2006):

This type of research is also essential for the development of social science; for example, in understanding the degree to which certain phenomena are present in a given group or how they vary across cases. The advantage of large samples is breadth, while their problem is one of depth. For the case study, the situation is the reverse. Both approaches are necessary for the sound development of social science. (p. 26)

This demographic was chosen because, although underrepresented in the city planning process, youth participants should provide a unique perspective on the current state of the city. Since the comprehensive plan will span decades, the input of today's youth was important because they would be adults as the plan unfolded. The venue chosen for this survey was upper-level Social Studies at Rockport-Fulton High School because the students' exposure to the curriculum should facilitate informed responses. This environment not only provided rich, deep data, but it also afforded the survey participants from the six focus groups with a thorough understanding of a comprehensive plan process. All these factors helped to provide a relevant sample from the youth population of Rockport.

Methods

The data collection methods intended to obtain a youth's perspective so that it could be integrated into the City of Rockport's comprehensive plan. Data collection took place on February 28, 2019, at Rockport-Fulton High School. The site, participants, and activities were purposefully selected to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the problem and investigation of the research question (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Participants

The project consisted of 15 MPA Capstone students who are student researchers certified in Social and Behavior research through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI)

Program. They worked under the advisement of the Dr. Beth Rauhaus, the faculty lead, who is an assistant professor of Public Administration. Each of the MPA Capstone students and Dr. Rauhaus participated in the pre-collection, data collection, and data analyses phases. Seven MPA Capstone students and the faculty lead conducted six focus groups at the Rockport-Fulton High School. The participants consisted of 102 upper-level Social Studies students who attended Rockport-Fulton High School on the day of the focus groups. Two students declined to participate. Social Studies was selected because economics, government, and civics commonly provide students with knowledge of local, state, and federal government civic affairs, knowledge of the importance of civic engagement, and knowledge of how to make informed decisions in “a culturally diverse democratic society” (About National Council for Social Studies, n.d., para. 4).

The workshop was conducted at Rockport-Fulton High School in order to have face-to-face interactions with the students in their natural setting and with the intent of not disrupting the students’ daily class schedules (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Individual participant information such as name, age, and gender were not collected to ensure student confidentiality.

Pre-Data Collection

The TTC and the City of Rockport’s planning officials had previously conducted similar workshops seeking information from other demographic groups in the city. The objective of this youth workshop was to collect the thoughts and opinions of what youth wanted to see in future community development. The questionnaire was based on other TTC and the City of Rockport workshop questions. After careful review and critiques from the MPA Capstone students and faculty lead, the following six questions were formulated:

Table 1

Capstone Project Questions

Question #1	What do you value most about Rockport?
Question #2	What is your favorite thing about Rockport and the community?
Question #3	What would you like to see improved upon in your community?
Question #4	What would keep you in Rockport?
Question #5	When you think about the future, what are some specific concerns you have about Rockport?
Question #6	Do you feel your community is inclusive to all?

The questionnaire contained basic instructions and an informed consent statement, and it indicated that participation was voluntary, and responses would be confidential. The MPA Capstone students then prepared a PowerPoint presentation to be used at the research site (See Appendix B). Special attention was given to the design of the PowerPoint. Although the research suggests PowerPoint presentations are generally beneficial and can lead to favorable attitudes toward the presenter, presentations with irrelevant graphics and pictures can negatively affect students' understanding and learning (Bartsch & Cobern, 2003; Nouri & Shahid, 2005). This was critical to the design of the PowerPoint since the data collection team needed to quickly build rapport with the students to receive candid feedback during the focus groups. Moreover, the data collection team had to be careful of biases affecting group discussions. Unlike individual interviews, focus group discussions are group-based and open to biases commonly encountered in group settings (Nyumba et al., 2018).

The team then conducted an in-class pilot study to make sure the questions were applicable, introduced the project and its reason, and discussed participants' rights. The data

collection teams then took turns asking each other the six open-ended questions. Prior authorization and accessibility to the research site were organized by the team faculty lead.

Data Collection

The study took place on February 28, 2019, at Rockport-Fulton High School. The data collection team, which consisted of seven MPA Capstone students, was split into two research teams. Each research team arrived 30 minutes before the first-morning and first-afternoon focus group sessions to gain access to the school and get acquainted with the research site and administrative staff of the school. The first team arrived with the research support materials which included 150 questionnaires and audio-visual materials such as the audio recorder, iPad and camera. The team utilized the school's classroom computer and projector. The questionnaire was used to obtain individual responses from the participants. The recorder was used to capture the qualitative interviews and allowed the students to share their opinions and perceptions of their community directly. A notepad was used to document the oral responses in case the researchers were unable to capture all the oral responses or transcribe the audio file. Audio recordings may be a challenge to transcribe when multiple participants speak at the same time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The iPad and camera were used to capture the experiment visually in which pictures were used in our presentation and report.

The Social Studies teacher introduced workshop teams and the faculty lead. Then, the faculty lead introduced the MPA Capstone student moderator who led each of the six focus group interviews. The other team members took notes and recorded the responses. The presentation included information regarding the TTC, the City of Rockport's comprehensive plan, and an introduction of the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi 2019 MPA Capstone students involved in the project. The students were informed about the purpose of the workshop including

the initiative to facilitate responses from them so that their ideas and voices would be used for future community planning in the City of Rockport. The research moderator included the confidentiality statement and stated that Social Studies students' participation in the workshop was voluntary and that the data collected would be documented and recorded. The researchers informed the students not to write their names on the questionnaire, and if they did, their names would be blacked out with a marker for anonymity. The researchers also indicated that both audio and visual recording media would be used and, at any time during the workshop, a participant could inform the team to stop recording in one or both recording mediums to protect their fundamental human rights.

The presenter then proceeded with each of the six questions, taking about five to ten minutes on each one and instructed the students to write their responses down and discuss them orally as a class. It is essential as a researcher to use multiple sources of data and not rely on a single source. The multiple sources included the written responses, verbal responses, and researcher's notes that are essential in this context as the participants were encouraged to share freely and without constraints. The researcher then must analyze all sources and organize it for data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research team used probing questions to facilitate more detailed responses and were careful not to influence the students' responses.

Limitations

The limitations of the study were that the qualitative data collected from the open-ended questions were only applicable to youth concerns and perceptions in the City of Rockport. The study only included participants that were upper-level Social Studies students that were in that classroom on the day of the workshop. The research questions concentrated on youth participation in community planning for the City of Rockport to be used in the City's

comprehensive plan. Data collected in other communities around the City of Rockport, State of Texas, or nation-wide would not yield the same results as this study due to the City of Rockport being in a post-Hurricane Harvey recovery state. The major hurricane had impacted the community of Rockport in 2017 and caused significant catastrophic damage. Other conditions which were also impacted by the storm, also set the City of Rockport apart from other communities.

Several other limitations existed that may have possibly impacted the study; however, the research team conducted a pilot study before the actual experiment to obtain quality data. In the pilot study, the researchers tested for reliability and validity in the responses in the research instrument. The two trial runs revealed similar consistent responses in the pre-experiment, which proved reliability in the replies. Secondly, the research questionnaire intended to collect thoughts and opinions of the youth in the Rockport community to provide meaningful and useful information for the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The MPA Capstone students took careful precautions to obtain informative responses by tailoring the questions to the students of Rockport-Fulton High School. The researchers took steps to obtain informative data by utilizing both the questionnaire and the recorded conversations (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013).

However, other constraints in the study included time and money. The time restriction created a small window of opportunity to interview the participants in the study. Each focus group session was limited to the time constraints of each class period. The project also had a small budget of \$498 to support research efforts. If the research experiment had an unlimited budget, the team could have conducted more resiliency workshops to capture additional responses from other grade levels and would have allowed the researchers to purchase software

to help code the data collected. Another possible limitation was the sample size, which consisted of 102 participants compared to the targeted range of 150 students. Most scholars agree that there is not a set rule for sample size in qualitative interviews, but sample sizes of 30 to 50 are often recommended for qualitative interviews (Cohen, 2018, p. 897).

Lastly, an additional possible constraint is conformity in focus groups. People who participate in focus group workshops may seek a desire to “fit in” or follow the crowd and not reveal their individual responses. According to Acocella, “the presence of other people can inhibit an individual and influence the way judgment is formulated, or an answer is given, thus pushing participants to express more socially desirable and stereotypical answers” (2012, p. 1135). As stated previously, by using both the written questionnaire and the oral interviews, the research team obtained useful information for the study. The questionnaire and conversations were used to capture the students' personal views and opinions; all individuals have unique perceptions and stories to tell (Creswell, 2007).

Chapter Three

Results

Data Analysis

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the first step of data analysis should be to organize and prepare data for analysis. Thus, after transcribing the open-ended questionnaires and audio recordings, six Capstone students used qualitative analysis to group data by content similarities, so it would be easier to gain a total impression and reflect upon its overall meaning. This strategy was similar to the systematic text condensation method of Malterud (2012), who argued that novice researchers could achieve qualitative analysis in four steps: total impression (from chaos to themes), identifying and sorting meaning units (from themes to codes), condensation (from code to meaning), and synthesizing (from condensation to descriptions and concepts).

After obtaining a total impression of the data, the researchers began coding with simple descriptions to identify topics and themes and to organize for further analysis. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), simple coding helps researchers sort and synthesize data, but it does not help researchers see implicit relationships among topics and themes. Grounded theory coding, on the other hand, allows researchers to develop more rigorous analyses of qualitative data (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). “A grounded theory of a studied topic starts with concrete data and ends with rendering them in an explanatory theory” (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2015). Accordingly, the researchers began a more rigorous and systematic analysis of the database codebook and shared this analysis with the data analysis team. They also began to winnow the data because not all of the information in data analysis should be used in a qualitative case study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). After identifying patterns, connections, and relationships between the data through a grounded theory coding process, the researchers sought to tell a meaningful story about the responses through quotations of actual conversations,

descriptions, or firsthand experience. Each member of the data analysis team individually carried out a process that utilized these steps. The data coding for the six questions addressed includes: Question 1 (most valued in community), Question 2 (favorite thing about community), Question 3 (community improvement), Question 4 (community retention), Question 5 (community concern), and Question 6 (community inclusiveness).

Question #1 Most Valued in Community

Students participating in the study at Rockport-Fulton High School were asked, “What do you value most about Rockport?” Based on the responses from 102 students, several common themes emerge. The commonalities in the Rockport-Fulton High School students’ answers made grouping the data an expeditious process. The responses to Question 1 were organized into three broad categories: nature, public organization, and culture or vibe. “Nature” includes those assets available to the community due to its geographic location: the beach, wildlife, watersports, and scenery. “Public Organization” includes those assets available to the community through tax-funded entities, such as community parks, schools, and festivals. “Culture or Vibe” contains assets that are available to the community through the community (e.g., through the people that make up the community) including food, family, friends, and the “small-town feel” described by students. These categories allowed the researcher to group the responses based on who or what provides the valued characteristic of Rockport.

Overall, most of the youth that participated in this project stated that they value Rockport’s small-town, supportive, family “vibe.” A majority of the respondents also stated that they value Rockport’s beach, wildlife, and natural environment. A smaller percentage responded that they value local parks, the Aransas County Independent School District, and festivals such as Oysterfest or Sea Fair. In planning for future development, these responses indicate that actions

toward nature preservation as well as facilitating community activities and public spaces should be considered.

Question #2 Favorite Thing about Community

Students participating in the study at Rockport-Fulton High School were asked, “What is your favorite thing about the Rockport community?” Respondents frequently identified community, selflessness, small-town, activities, and the ocean as their favorite things. The analysis indicates an overarching theme of a sense of community, as described in the literature review since a significant number of respondents referred to the small-town feel, kindness of others, and community’s willingness to help one another. The analysis also suggests that being a small, inclusive community link with the residents’ kindness towards others and willingness to help one another. One student said, “My favorite thing about the Rockport community is that it’s strong and grows stronger when times get hard.” Another student explained, “The community is small, so we often band together. It is difficult to get the same results in bigger cities. Nobody really gets left behind either, especially prospective business owners and workers. Everyone supports each other.” Many respondents also identified community activities (e.g., the beach, market days, and Oysterfest). A student explained, “We like having events like Oysterfest, farmer’s markets, wine festival, etc. I love how it feels as though there are always things going on and the Rockport community also likes these things going on.”

Question #3 Community Improvement

Question 3 asked, “What improvements students would like to see in the Rockport community?” Ninety-five written responses were collected from the questionnaire out of the sample size of 102. Most responses listed several areas of improvement that fell into different

categories. The participants' main concerns included a limited entertainment industry, environmental issues, the cost of housing, and a poor job market.

The majority of participants wanted to see an increase in entertainment facilities for their community. Most of the responses received fell into this category. The most common response was a request for a movie theater which appeared a number of 20 times. Another primary complaint was that the community is geared toward the older generation and the youth feel that there is a lack of activities for them outside of school. Other top responses were a mall and more restaurants. Students also wanted to see an improvement in their environment including beaches, debris, streets, and parks. Thirty-one responses mentioned issues with the community environment. The most common responses included the terms "beaches," "parks," and clean up from Harvey.

Opportunities for jobs and affordable housing were mentioned as a concern for the sample of students. Since both themes fall in a general economy theme, they were grouped together. Overall, 26 responses mentioned jobs and housing, and five responses mentioned "better job opportunities" or "more jobs." Students also mentioned a lack of affordable housing in the Rockport community. One respondent stated Rockport needed to "improve the housing market." The most common terms mentioned in this category were "affordable housing," "more apartments," and "better homes."

Question #4 Community Retention

Students participating in the study were asked, "What would keep you in Rockport?" Three themes have been identified after analyzing the raw qualitative responses from Question 4 of the Rockport-Fulton High questionnaire. These four themes were family, fun (e.g., shopping, dining, and youth activities), and jobs. These themes were generated by recognizing the

frequency of keywords or phrases found throughout all 96 responses. Each code groups the responses that used the same word or phrase for future review by data analysts. Responses are not mutually exclusive to the codes. In fact, many responses contain multiple codes.

Family was the most used response out of all 96 responses with 33 appearances. These responses indicate that most surveyed high school students would continue to live in Rockport because they place a high value on their family, home, and community. The word job appeared 16 times out of all 96 responses along with other phrases related to the economy. These responses indicate that many of the surveyed high school students would continue to live in Rockport if there were more opportunities for careers and businesses. One student said the “only opportunities are in retail or fast food.” Moreover, the phrase “things to do” and words like fun or activities frequently appeared throughout the responses. These responses indicate that most of the surveyed high schoolers would stay in Rockport if there were more opportunities and places to partake in regular social interaction. Some students said they wanted a mall or a movie theater.

Question #5 Community Concerns

Based on the responses from the students, several common themes emerged: economy (e.g., jobs, poverty), environment (e.g., hurricanes, emergency response, and pollution), and entertainment/leisure activity. Students participating in the study were asked, “When you think about the future, what are some specific concerns you have about Rockport?” They overwhelmingly reported on the economy, the environment, and entertainment were concerns. Respondents voiced concerns about having quality good paying jobs, the rising costs of housing, and increasing poverty within the community. Several students noted how the hurricane affected the city with respect to polluting the environment, one stating, “After effects of Harvey, pollution in the bay, things that relate, etc.” while others voiced concerns of emergency response due to

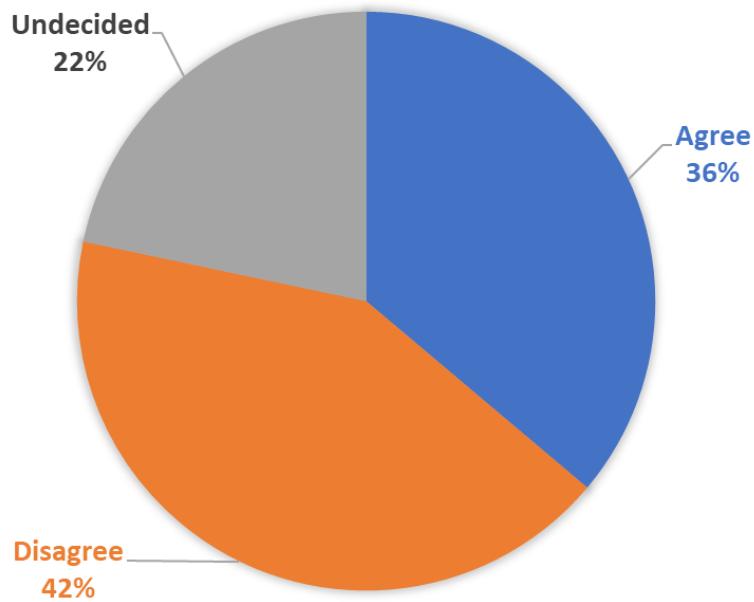
hurricane Harvey with several respondents voicing concerns about emergency shelters. Many students explained, “Not enough things for teens and kids to do” as several responses were desiring a “movie theater.”

Question #6 Community Inclusiveness

In coding Question 6, techniques such as color coding to mark parts of the text, sorting data by cutting and pasting text sentences onto a table, and creating a pie chart were used to analyze data. The student participants were asked, “Do you feel that your community is inclusive to all?” Although the question allowed for an open-ended response, several student participants provided closed-ended responses (e.g., yes or no). Due to the number of “yes” or “no” responses given, the data was analyzed using numerical tally (See Figure 1). The data analysis for Question 6 is based on written results only.

Figure 1

Q6 Data Responses



Out of the 102 student participants, only 83 students responded to the survey questionnaires, which meant that there were 19 unanswered questions. Within the 83 survey questionnaires, 30 (36%) students agreed that their community is inclusive to all. However, 35 (42%) students disagreed and 18 (22%) students responded with sometimes and maybe, which are presented as “undecided.” After identifying the resulting themes, student responses were grouped into two categories: age gap and prejudice and discrimination. Out of the 83 student participants, 37 students provided a detailed explanation about the age gap and the prejudice and discrimination problems occurring in Rockport. Of the 37 student participants, 15 students described concerns about the age gap in Rockport, while 22 felt Rockport is prejudiced and discriminates (See Table 2).

Table 2

<i>Age Gap and Prejudice and Discrimination¹</i>
Youth Responses
<u>Age Gap</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ “It is definitely geared more towards older people. We need more teen involvement. Community involvement in a general statement.”▪ “No social areas, not a lot of stuff for teenagers, and most events held are for older crowds.”▪ “It’s mostly for the old, cops, and very young kids, not much for teens to do to go for fun.”▪ “I feel like youth are targeted badly and our voice isn’t heard as much as the elders.”
<u>Prejudice and Discrimination</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ “Yes, but I think that once you offend someone here it can affect your life. In the way that you’re seen by people in Rockport.”▪ “Not LGBTQ or minorities. There’re many racists here, with hateful flags flown openly with no consequences. It makes me sick that I’m afraid of being targeted as a minority again.”▪ “No. Rockport favors the rich people and does not care about anyone else.”▪ “Yes and no, it’s a proving thing especially for a person of color.”

The students expressed that the youths have nothing to do in Rockport because most services and events are geared towards the elderly, cops, and young children. Some students suggested that the City of Rockport increase youth involvement and create more social areas and activities for youths. One student mentioned that “younger people are not as welcome or likely to stay” in Rockport, and another student stated a youth’s “voice isn’t heard as much as the elders.” Additionally, many of the students felt that some people in the Rockport community are prejudice and discriminatory. They identified minorities, especially the LGBTQ and African-American communities. Several other students mentioned income inequality throughout the Rockport community.

Chapter Four

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

Finding meaning in data is one of the most critical features of a qualitative case study. Taking the time to ask students at Rockport-Fulton High School these six questions provided data that should be useful to community stakeholders upon analysis. The findings may specifically help the City of Rockport update their comprehensive plan by including the perspectives of an underrepresented population. Additionally, the research was the culmination of the MPA program at Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi for the class of Spring 2019.

The results of the questionnaires produced expected results and unexpected results. Some responses were generalizable to other communities and some unique only to this community. For example, the youth respondents in this case study stated they were concerned about finding employment after graduation within their rural community. While this a generalizable concern for many high school students in the United States, some of the respondents' goals include lofty aspirations that are difficult to achieve. For example, several students at Rockport-Fulton High School expressed the desire to rebuild or replace the movie theater. In reality, there is very little that city administrators can do to rebuild or replace something privately owned like a movie theater. Responses like these are the reasons it takes a considerable amount of time to find a compromise between the dreams of residents and the realities of administration.

Respondents identified "selflessness" and "support" as unique traits exhibited by their community members during hurricane recovery. Lack of affordable housing and needed infrastructure improvements were other unique characteristics of a community recovering from a natural disaster. However, the concerns about the lack of inclusivity between different age groups and different socio-economic groups; and the concerns about protecting the environment, are more generalizable to other communities.

The comprehensive plan is expected to guide city administrators in Rockport's development for the next ten years. Therefore, the youth who stay in Rockport will inherit the changes the comprehensive plan will create. This is why the researchers wanted to gather data that could be used to retain high school students and chose questions that would give city administrators insight into the opinions of the community's youth. The information gathered could also provide the potential foundation for future consensus building with Rockport residents.

Conclusion

This project is a collaboration with TTC and the Rockport city planners that will assist the City of Rockport in developing a comprehensive plan. This qualitative case study is part of a more extensive analysis that will help to create the roadmap that will guide the city for the next five to ten years. A focus group of 102 upper-level Social Studies students was selected to provide answers to the survey questions that were presented. Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi student data collection teams will assist the city planner in understanding the desires of the community's youth regarding community development.

Through analyzing the findings, several common themes emerged. They included small community, family, entertainment, environment, and economic issues. The main positive aspects of their community were noted as the small-town community feels and that everyone assists each other during catastrophic events or in times of need. The improvements recommended for the city by the target population is to develop areas for teenagers or sources of entertainment, increased youth-centric employment, and affordable housing for residents in the Rockport community. Question 6 stated: Do you feel that your community is inclusive to all? The findings showed that 42% disagree, 36% agree, and 22% undecided.

With the diligent work of MPA Capstone students from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, the city planner can begin constructing a roadmap for the city. Additional research could be completed to understand better what the youth within the Rockport community desire for their city, what they will need and what efforts could be done to retain or recruit them back to rural towns across America. As dedicated community leaders and public servants, we can all truly make a difference.

Appendix A

List of Abbreviations

CITI	Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Program
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer
MPA	Master of Public Administration
PPP	Public Participation Process
TTC	Texas Target Communities

Appendix B

PowerPoint Slide Summary



We are graduate students in the public administration program at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

Today, we hope to gain an understanding of your thoughts and opinions so that we may provide this valuable information to the Rockport community.



- Texas Target Communities is an outreach program from Texas A&M University that provides resources, technical assistance, and continuing education opportunities.
- One resource is helping cities revise their comprehensive plans. Comprehensive plans show a community's vision for its future and are a guide to achieving that vision.
- You can help Rockport develop its comprehensive plan with your ideas and voices about your city's future.

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Your participation is voluntary. You may answer as few or as many questions as you wish. The results of any research or analysis from the data will be presented in a way so that individual respondents cannot be identified.

The data will be shared in aggregate form with Texas Target Communities. They will not report results in a way that identifies individual respondents.

Questions

1. What do you value most about Rockport?
2. What is your favorite thing about the Rockport community?
3. What improvements would you like to see in your community?
4. What would keep you in Rockport?
5. When you think about the future, what are some specific concerns that you have about Rockport?
6. Do you feel that your community is inclusive to all?

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