What’s All This Talk About Social Capital?

Presenter:
Jody Horntvedt
with Participants as Guest Presenters

April 9, April 30 and May 21, 2009
10 – 11:30 a.m. CST
What’s All This Talk About Social Capital?

Community Development Core Competencies for Extension Professionals in the North Central Region

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Format for the Session

We’ve designed it to be more conversational than presentational, with...

- Opportunities for participant input via “sharing examples” and “story telling”
- Opportunities for “question and answer” built in at various times - with time at the end for your specific questions
- Participants encouraged to send questions to the “chat pod” throughout the session
- An emphasis on program application
Quick Check-in…

Did you check in at the website for our supplemental materials from Session Two?

Did you find the suggested reading items for this session?

- Using Community Capitals to Develop Assets for Positive Community Change (Emery, Fey and Flora, CD Practice)
- Social Capital Building Toolkit (Sander and Lowney, Saguaro Seminar)

Are your speakers turned on and the volume up? [we’ll be showing a video clip]

Please MUTE your phone line when not speaking.
Sessions

**Session 1:** (April 9)
Understanding Social Capital

**Session 2:** (April 30)
Assessing Social Capital

**Session 3:** (May 21)
Building Social Capital
As a result of this session, you will deepen your understanding of...

- How the concept of social capital as “connecting the dots” can help communities think about ways to build social capital.
- Strategies you, as an Extension professional, can use to build trust and increase engagement to strengthen networks in communities.
- How “story-telling” can be an effective tool to building social capital.
- How strong networks can be used to leverage benefits to the community.
Connecting the Dots!

Building social capital is all about “connecting the dots” in your community!
A closer look at networks…

Thank you to Dr. Jerome Stein, Senior Fellow, University of Minnesota School of Social Work for connecting us to this visual based on Paul Baran, *Introduction to Distributed Communications Networks*, RM-3420-PR.
Another look…

What you can’t see makes all the difference.
What is our role?

The county extension system was an important effort to develop social capital in the past, and in some states new efforts are underway to revitalize this mission. Extension agents are coming to realize the limits of service and expert approaches, and coming to rethink their role as catalysts of new community partnerships. They bring institutional actors together in health services, link churches and self-help networks, convene citizens and provide training so that community volunteers can continue projects without depending on the county agents. They bring together local businesses and banks, and help develop meeting space for citizen problem solving groups and low-income women’s empowerment networks. They help develop the educational materials that civic partners can use in local groundwater protection projects, and engage in the kinds of “public issues education” that develops community deliberative capacities. These efforts draw upon concepts of “citizen politics” and other traditions within community organizing, as well as older traditions within Extension.

Framing Social Capital

Bonding Networks
- These are close ties that help people get by and help them feel secure and safe. These connections are usually with family, friends, and neighbors.

Bridging Networks
- These are weaker ties that can help people gain opportunities by connecting them to new people and organizations.

Linking Networks
- These are links to organizations and systems that can help people gain resources and bring about change.

Trust
- Residents trust leaders of public and private institutions.
- Residents with different social backgrounds trust each other.
- Residents with a common social background trust each other.

Connections
- Residents have connections to organizations and systems that help them gain resources and bring about change.

Residents with different social backgrounds engage with each other.
- Residents with a common social background engage with each other.
- Residents have close connections that give a sense of belonging and help them get by.

Community Social Capital Model
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Framing Social Capital

Types of social capital

Social capital is not a monolithic entity, just as physical capital encompasses everything from a hydroelectric dam to an eggbeater: each useful for very different things. While social scientists are seeking a better understanding of the various dimensions and types of social capital, we do know of some prime distinctions:

- **Public-regarding** ties that tackle a public issue (e.g., a Parent Teacher Association) v. **private regarding** (e.g., a purely social club). The latter may better stimulate more community members to be active since the former sometimes appeals only to “do-gooders,” but it is also true that real community problems (like a crime spree, or a zoning issue) often mobilize people to action.

- **Formal** (a dues-paying organization with committees and bylaws) vs. **informal** (e.g., pickup basketball game). Many connections that begin more informally sometimes morph into more formal social relationships. Formal ties are more likely to ensure that these ties persist over time. So while it is often easier to start informal social ties, participants in more informal relationships have to pay special care to make sure that these bonds deepen over time through additional activities, social interchanges, etc.

Disclaimer!

**Much of what we will focus on today falls into the “smart bets” category!**

“Much of what is suggested here falls in the ‘smart bets’ category rather than the standard of certifiable truth that academic institutions typically adhere to. The comments and framework in this document are designed to help communities thinking about social capital and present them with hypotheses that they can pressure test through field experimentation.”

# Strategies for Building Social Capital

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<tr>
<th>LOW</th>
<th>TRUST LEVEL</th>
<th>HIGH</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Food / Celebration</strong></td>
<td><strong>Electric Coop open house lunch</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Joint Activity Around Common Interest</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wellness Initiative</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Do a Favor</strong></td>
<td><strong>Co. Hwy Dept providing city w/equipment</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Discussion of Community Issue</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Habitat for Humanity project</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Town forum</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Clubs and Groups</strong></td>
<td><strong>Block party</strong></td>
<td><strong>Voluntary association</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Habitat for Humanity project</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Small Groups</strong></td>
<td><strong>Picnic with friends</strong></td>
<td><strong>Bowling league; book club</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Benefit for Medical Expenses</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Neighborhood association</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Street conversation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Mentoring or tutoring</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Individuals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Invite another to restaurant</strong></td>
<td><strong>Walking with a friend</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Street conversation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Civic organizing (IAF)</strong></td>
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Adapted from Sander, Thomas H. and Kathleene Lowney, Social Capital Building Toolkit (Version 1.2), October 2006
Strategies for Building Social Capital

A few examples...

Stories!
Building Social Capital:
Welcoming New People

Then…
The community didn’t do anything to welcome newcomers to town (or *bridge* them to others).

Now…
The community makes personal visits, brings informational packets, makes household signs, plants gardens, shovels snow, etc, and blogs about newcomers to their town!

Lynette Flage, Extension Community Leadership Specialist, North Dakota State University, Cavalier, ND / 701-265-5200 / lynette.flage@ndsu.edu
Here’s what we/they did...

- Community conversations with many led to the idea of a “Welcome Wagon” type committee
- A social capital workshop presented by Extension staff helped community better understand the concept
- This committee included the concept of “welcoming” in their community strategic planning for long-term
- Decided to find out specifics about new families and what they needed upon arrival
- Celebrate newcomers consistently through their blogs, local newspaper and through local events

Check out www.anamoose.communityblogs.us
Then…
Three different entities through out the county were working on economic development.

Now…
There is one economic development organization for the county.

Barbara Schmidt, Extension Educator, Jefferson County, Fairbury, NE 68352 / 402-729-3487 / blschmid@unlnotes.unl.edu
Building Social Capital: Working Together

Here’s what we/they did…

- Extension sponsored a leadership development program
- Participants in the program brought the different economic development groups together
- A partnership was formed and there is one economic development organization which has hired an economic development person
- New business start ups
Building Social Capital: Community Cooperative

Then…

The community grocery store was about to close because of an unexpected death.

Now…

This very bonded community formed a cooperative with over 150 community members investing in the local grocery store.

Lynette Flage, Extension Community Leadership Specialist, North Dakota State University, Cavalier, ND / 701-265-5200 / lynette.flage@ndsu.edu
Building Social Capital: Community Cooperative

Here’s what we/they did...

- Community meeting held drawing over 90 people (from a population of 150) responding to the potential closing of the meat locker and grocery store.
- Worked with partners the community members knew (social capital linking) on possible ownership models and included entire community in discussions.
- Determined a cooperative model was best suited -- and 45 households signed up immediately to participate.
- Grocery store is open and viable for this small community. Most households in the community have bought into the cooperative and purchase many grocery products locally.
Building Social Capital: Home Care Cooperative

Then...
Caregivers (30) in a rural county in Wisconsin provided Homecare services in isolation of other caregivers in the community.

Now...
Caregivers (81) provide services as a team, cooperative, working to meet the needs of their clients and the community in which they live.

Wilson Majee, Ph.D, Community Development Specialist, Mercer County - NW Region, Princeton, MO 64673 / Tel: 660-748-3315 / E-mail: majeew@missouri.edu
Building Social Capital: Home Care Cooperative

Here’s what we/they did...

- Professional organized and educated caregivers about the cooperative business model
- Caregivers voted to establish the business (democratic process)
- Cooperative provided them with a platform for interaction through training sessions, meetings, conferences, volunteer opportunities, business ownership and social activities (family picnics, bake sales, etc)
- Caregivers acquired business and social skills
Building Social Capital: Home Care Cooperative

Here’s what they say...

- “I believe it [the cooperative] has boosted their self-esteem and their confidence enormously. They have all learned a great deal about the day to day operations of a business....It’s not just me it’s now us, I see that just in their body language. They walk taller, they have pride in what they are doing, they are able to verbalize.” [Interview with researcher, May 10, 2006]

- When I first started [working at the cooperative] I did not see any other co-workers because you go house to house and you do not see other co-workers. But since we are owner-members and we own this [business] I became more involved in committee meetings, the trainings sessions and then I became a mentor and went through the mentor training and now I have “mentees” who I talk to. This is helping [me] get to know some of the members. [Interview with researcher, May 18, 2006]
Building Social Capital: 
Coming Together

Then…
Multiple community groups and organizations in the community (more than 100 in a community of 1200 people) just did their own thing.

Now…
Leaders of more than 40 community groups and organizations gather (quarterly) at a breakfast meeting to share their plans and coordinate activities with each other!

Jody Horntvedt, Extension Associate Professor and Regional Educator, Leadership and Civic Engagement, Roseau, MN / 218-463-0296 / hornt001@umn.edu
Building Social Capital: Coming Together

**Here’s what we/they did…**

- Community “rally” where all groups/organizations were invited to share about their goals
- Conversations with each other led to commitment to gather quarterly
- Convener identified (rotating role)
- Community website/blog with community calendar
- Groups working together on small shared projects
- And…!
A community member said…

“We didn’t realize that there were three other groups in our community with plans to work on the same project. Now that we come together, we can be a stronger force for making things happen in our community!”
Effective Tool: Story Telling

- Session 1: Personal and Community Stories
- Session 2: Telling Our Story (assessments)
- Session 3: Stories from Others
- The Power of Storytelling (Appreciative Inquiry approach)
- What’s It Like in Your Town?
### Effective Tool: Leveraging Self-Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I believe I can make a difference strengthening social clubs or groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I believe I can make a difference helping newcomers get involved in groups or organizations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I believe I can make a difference connecting my organization(s) with other groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I believe I can make a difference helping community institutions (like schools, hospitals, city government) be more responsive to people’s needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I believe I can make a difference helping institutions outside the community (like schools, hospitals, government in other communities, regional or state agencies) be more responsive to people’s needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Seventh Scale (Self-Efficacy) as measured in the U of MN Extension Social Capital Survey.
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Community Development Core Competencies for Extension Professionals in the North Central Region

Effective Tool: Community Capitals Model

The Community Capitals represent the things we have to work with, thus using the Community Capitals as the framework for “asset mapping” can help communities take a strength-based approach to working with communities and organizations.

Emery, Fey and Flora, Using Community Capitals to Develop Assets for Positive Community Change, 2006
Effective Tool: Framing Around Data

The Whole Picture

- **Bridging Trust**
  - Adults = 46.4
  - Youth = 43.7

- **Linking Trust**
  - Adults = 57.2
  - Youth = 55.4

- **Bridging Engagement**
  - Adults = 61.4
  - Youth = 59.3

- **Linking Engagement**
  - Adults = 49.8
  - Youth = 33.3

- **Bonding Engagement**
  - Adults = 51.3
  - Youth = 53.6

- **Bonding Trust**
  - Adults = 63.3
  - Youth = 59.4

- **Connections**
  - Residents engage with leaders of public and private institutions.

- **Trust**
  - residents trust leaders of public and private institutions.

- **Engagement**
  - Residents with a common social background trust each other.

- **Bridging Networks**
  - residents have broad connections that help them expand opportunities.

- **Linking Networks**
  - Residents have connections to organizations and systems that help them gain resources and bring about change.

- **Networks**
  - Residents with different social backgrounds engage with each other.
A Challenge to Everyone…

What will we do to move approaches (tools, strategies, etc.) out of the “smart bets” category into the rigor of “certifiable truth” which we (academic institutions) can take to communities?
Questions? Comments!

About **Understanding** Social Capital…

About **Assessing** Social Capital…

About **Building** Social Capital…

About *the readings* on social capital…

Anything else?!
Thank you...

- **Additional Resources**… What else might you be interested in?
- **Community of Practice**… Is there an interested in coming together (virtually) to share our thoughts, stories, and/or research ideas around social capital?
- **Evaluation**… Watch for a link to an evaluation site to share your thoughts on this series!

I believe Extension has an important role in helping communities understand, assess and build social capital! Are you up for the challenge?