

# Exploring Cooperation and Collaboration Between Secondary Agricultural Educators and Extension Faculty in the State of Florida

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## Abstract

In today's constantly changing business world, there is an ever-present pressure to become more successful, effective, and efficient. This pressure is just as evident in the educational arena. According to Janice Fauske (2002, p. 1), "Collaboration has become a politically desirable descriptor for attracting resources and attention in education." Due to the common purpose of youth leadership development, Cooperative Extension's 4-H clubs and Agricultural Education's FFA clubs can become more effective through collaboration.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore cooperation and collaboration perceptions among agricultural educators and extension faculty. Focus groups were utilized to discuss a series of introspective questions and participate in a S.W.O.T. analysis to determine if interdisciplinary cooperation already exists, and if so to what extent?

Upon analysis, major themes discovered that positively influence cooperation were: the relationship between the agricultural educator and extension agent, the awareness of the other profession, and the understanding and perceptions of cooperation and competition. Based upon the discovered evidence, there appears to be a lack of strong collaboration between disciplines. Ultimately, the data collected can be used to positively affect the relationships currently held between the aforesaid groups, and improve agricultural education in both formal and nonformal situations.

## Introduction/Theoretical Framework

### *Introduction*

“In many ways a new era is about to begin in the working relationship between agricultural education and Cooperative Extension. Both organizations have suffered budget cuts, but still have a very large clientele to serve. Often times the motto for both has been “Do more with less.” History indicates that it is possible for the agencies to cooperate” (Hillison, 1996, p. 13).

In today’s constantly changing business world, there is an ever-present pressure to become more successful, effective, and efficient. This pressure is just as evident in the educational arena. According to Janice Fauske (2002, p. 1), “Collaboration has become a politically desirable descriptor for attracting resources and attention in education.”

Current technological advances have allowed for easier and faster collaboration. Webster’s dictionary defines collaboration as the process of working jointly with others, particularly in an intellectual endeavor, and this has already been occurring in other arenas. For example, between agriculture and science teachers, investigators found that through the use of aspects such as information sharing, team building, and assigned tasks, the amount of cooperation and resource sharing that occurs is significantly increased (Whent, 1994).

Cooperation is also an important factor in different sectors of the business world – in areas such as “organizational behavior, organization theory, and strategic management,” (Ashford, Carroll, & Smith, 1995, p. 9) to name a few. Specifically, while collaboration can have many effects, one of the most sought after in an organizational setting is effective coordination, which is assumed to lead to higher performance. According to Ashford et al. (1995) the coordination which stems from cooperation is especially important in today’s newer organizational systems. They went on to say, “If work is accomplished in a fluid, ever-changing pattern of relationships that cut across functional, hierarchical, and national boundaries, high levels of cooperation may allow for an efficient and harmonious combination of the parts leading to high performance” (p.11). Simply stated, engaging in collaborative relationships across disciplines allows those involved to be more efficient, and therefore more effective.

There is a common theme running through the overall purposes of Cooperative Extension’s 4-H clubs and Agricultural Education’s FFA clubs, and this purpose is youth leadership development. According to the *FFA Official Manual (Organization, 1997, p. 5)*, “FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.” Furthermore, “the mission of 4-H is to assist youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming attitudes that will enable them to become self-directing, productive and contributing members of society....In the process, 4-H youth apply leadership skills, acquire a positive self-concept and learn to respect” (Wessel & Wessel, 1982, p. 332). This common theme enables educators and extension agents to work together. “The history of collaboration between the Cooperative Extension Service and agricultural education needs to be dusted off and reviewed in times such as the present” (Hillison, 1996, p. 13).

In the area of agriculture, anecdotal evidence shows there is a problem of limited collaboration between the disciplines of agricultural extension and agricultural education, particularly in youth programming. Competition between 4-H clubs and FFA chapters occurs on many levels, from recruitment to various competitive events. Nonetheless, collaboration between these disciplines is important because as resources become more scarce, we need to provide the best opportunities possible to today's youth. Working together allows us to expand these opportunities, and provide them in a more efficient and effective manner. With more effective collaboration and cooperation, there's a greater synergy developed between disciplines. This has a further impact upon youth in both 4-H and FFA by helping them to develop life-skills, leadership and citizenship.

To discover if the assumption of limited collaboration indeed exists, a focus group inquiry with introspective questions was conducted with two separate groups; the first was comprised of secondary agriculture teachers, and the second was made up of county extension faculty – specializing in youth development. This qualitative study served as a pilot test; these preliminary findings will be utilized for a subsequent comprehensive study of cooperation and collaboration among Agriculture Education and Cooperative Extension.

### *Theoretical Framework*

Within the agricultural arena, there is limited information available regarding cooperation and collaboration. However, in the business domain, there is a wealth of research that addresses the topic in regards to organizational behavior and human relations.

The foundation of this study is built upon Deutsch's Theory of Cooperation (1949), which stipulates both the outcomes of cooperation and competition and the processes that underlie these outcomes. Beginning with a thorough description of competition and cooperation, Deutsch looks to Barnard (as cited in Deutsch, 1949) who states,

Co-operation is a social aspect of the total situation and social factors arise from it. These factors may be in turn the limiting factors of any situation. This arises from two considerations: (a) the processes of interaction must be discovered or invented; (b) the interaction changes the motives and interest of those participating in the cooperation." He goes on to say, "The persistence of co-operation depends upon two conditions: (a) its effectiveness; and (b) its efficiency. Effectiveness relates to the accomplishments of the social purpose. Efficiency relates to the satisfaction of individual motives. The test of effectiveness is the accomplishment of a common purpose. The test of efficiency is the eliciting of sufficient individual wills to co-operate. The survival of co-operation, therefore, depends upon two interrelated and interdependent classes of processes: (a) those which relate to the system of co-operation as a whole in relation to the environment; and (b) those which relate to the creation or distribution of satisfactions among individuals. (p. 131)

From these assumptions, Deutsch developed his Theory of Cooperation, as stated by Tjosvold (1984), which says,

In cooperation, persons perceive their goal attainments as positively related; one's movement toward one's goals facilitates the others' goals. In competition, persons perceive their goals as negatively linked; movement toward one's goals interferes with and makes less likely the others' goal attainment. .... In individualization, persons perceive their

goals as unrelated. The goal movement of one neither facilitates nor hinders the goals of the other. (p. 745)

Competition, individualism and cooperation run along a continuum; and although it is possible to operate within pure competition or cooperation, most situations have elements of cooperation, competition, and individualization. Moving from competition to cooperation, there is a move from pure competition into the power-dependence relations theory, as it is outlined by Emerson (1962), who states:

Social relations commonly entail ties of mutual dependence between the parties. *A* depends upon *B* if he aspires to goals or gratifications whose achievement is facilitated by appropriate actions on *B*'s part. By virtue of mutual dependency, it is more or less imperative to each party that he be able to control or influence the other's conduct. At the same time, these ties of mutual dependence imply that each party is in a position, to some degree, to grant or deny, facilitate or hinder, the other's gratification. Thus, it would appear that the power to control or influence the other resides in control over the things he values, which may range all the way from oil resources to ego-support, depending upon the relation in question. In short, power resides implicitly in the other's dependency. (p. 32)

Power and the exchange of it is intricately involved in most instances of cooperation. By cooperating with another entity, you must exchange some of your power for what you wish to accomplish. From the opposite angle, the desire to retain power hinders the collaboration process from the very beginning, many times not even allowing the process to begin.

It is here where the theory of social exchange figures in. This theory is defined by Blau (1974, p. 204) as when, "Men enter into new social associations because they expect doing so to be rewarding and that they continue relations with old associates and expand their interaction with them because they actually find doing so to be rewarding." Basically, the old adage "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" is a good illustration of the concept of social exchange. As groups move into collaborative relationships, their expectations of the association change. Barring very limited circumstances, most enter into a collaborative relationship in order to receive something in return for something they contributed. Exchange requires trusting others, as the recipient is generally the one who decides when to reciprocate, or to reciprocate at all. Problems begin to arise when those involved view the exchanges to be unequal, or insufficient to reach their personal goals.

Finally, the theory which is the most cooperatively based is that of interorganizational relationship. "This framework for conceptualizing a relationship among two or more organizations as a social action system is based on the premise that an inter-organizational relationship exhibits the best common properties of any form or organized collective behavior: behavior is aimed at a goal, interdependence exists between members, and it can act as a unit with an identity separate from its members" (van de Ven, 1976, p. 28). This theory illustrates the closest relationship to complete cooperation. As mentioned previously, total cooperation is generally unrealistic; however IRs (inter-organizational relationships) operate under the greatest number of cooperative ideals.

All of these theories work together as one part of the whole. While Deutsch's Theory of Cooperation holds the overarching themes of the conceptual model regarding cooperation and collaboration among agricultural professionals, each additional theory explains different aspects as

to why cooperation is shunned or accepted. With additional information gathered through these focus groups and a subsequent quantitative study, it is theorized that a conceptual model can be developed and refined, specifically in the areas of agricultural and extension education.

### Purpose/Objectives

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore cooperation and collaboration among agricultural educators and extension faculty. The specific objectives of the study were:

1. To explore past and current cooperation and collaboration experiences among agricultural educators and extension faculty.
2. To determine and compare current perceptions related to cooperation and collaboration held by agricultural educators and extension faculty in Florida.
3. To identify major and minor themes involved with cooperation and collaboration among agricultural educators and extension faculty.

### Methods/Procedures

#### *Population and Sample*

The target population for this exploratory study was secondary agricultural educators and extension faculty across Florida. Participants in the study were chosen through a purposeful convenience sample from agricultural educators and extension faculty who attended the state 4-H/FFA livestock evaluation contest, on April 6, 2002. This sample provided a cross-section of educators and faculty involved in FFA ( $n = 8$ ) and 4-H ( $n = 4$ ) respectively who could adequately address the aforementioned purpose and objectives. Researchers would have liked to have a larger sample of extension faculty; however, the reason for the small number of participants was due to the fact that more club leaders than extension faculty seemed to have brought students to the judging contest.

#### *Instrumentation*

The methodology of this study involves the use of focus groups. Focus groups were utilized for this study because the data desired involved a range of opinions, along with a greater understanding of the extent to which collaboration and cooperation occurs in everyday life. Furthermore, focus groups are very effective for an exploratory study such as this. Stewart & Shamdasani (1990) illustrate that the contemporary focus group interview generally involves 8-12 individuals who discuss a particular topic as a moderator promotes interaction and assures that the discussion remains on the topic of interest. They go on to state that 6-12 people is a good rule of thumb for the number of participants. The researchers chose to keep the study between 6-8 participants, both to keep the groups manageable and due to facility restrictions.

Specifically, two separate focus groups were used to isolate perceptions about the collaboration experienced between secondary agricultural education teachers and 4-H youth development extension faculty in Florida. Each focus group was asked to discuss a series of introspective questions surrounding their perceptions of cooperation and collaboration between agricultural educators and extension faculty, including the barriers encountered, possible opportunities and

strengths, and the threats involved. After being guided through this series of questions, the focus group participants moved on to a tool that directed them through a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (S.W.O.T.) analysis. Unique to this study, the S.W.O.T. analysis concerned collaboration between the disciplines involved.

The instrument of introspective questions was developed by the researchers, and was designed to explore the participants' interdisciplinary cooperation and collaboration experiences. In addition, the researchers created the tool which directed the S.W.O.T analysis to examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats brainstormed by the focus group participants. Both instruments were reviewed by an expert panel of faculty and graduate students in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication at the University of Florida.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

The focus groups took place on April 6, at 10 a.m. for agricultural educators, and 12 p.m. for 4-H development extension faculty. The groups were held in an on-site classroom at the UF/IFAS Horse Teaching Unit. The focus groups were audiotaped and transcribed for verbatim accuracy; the tapes were then destroyed to assure anonymity.

Analysis began during transcription, when the researcher coded responses according to the speaker. Names were never attached to the data, in order to maintain anonymity. Once the transcription process was complete, each transcript was again reviewed and the data was organized into major and minor themes pertaining to cooperation and collaboration. Major themes were then separated from the groups, and each minor theme was listed under the major theme with which it most closely aligned. The data were analyzed and reported using a five-step procedure as recommended by Creswell (1998), and used by Kelsey and Mariger (2002):

1. Organization of data. Facts about the case were arranged in a logical order.
2. Categorization of data. Categories (major themes) were identified, and the data were clustered into meaningful groups via cutting and pasting.
3. Interpretation of codes. Specific statements that fell into like clusters (groups) were examined for specific meanings in relationship to the purpose and objectives of the study. Example statements were identified that helped with interpretation. Data were examined within and among groups for similarities and differences.
4. Identification of patterns. The data and their interpretations were scrutinized for underlying themes and patterns that characterized the study and allowed the researchers to draw conclusions.
5. Synthesis. An overall portrait of the study was constructed where conclusions and recommendations were drawn based on the data presented.

### Results/Findings

In analyzing the data, the researchers looked for major themes mentioned frequently. After developing a list of these themes and relationships, the list was narrowed into three major categories that most completely described the salient perceptions. These three categories are: the relationship

between the agricultural educator and extension agent, the awareness of the other profession, and the understanding and perceptions of cooperation and competition (Table 1).

*Relationship between agricultural educator and extension faculty*

Both teachers and extension faculty reiterated time and time again the importance of having a good working relationship with each other. Specifically, participants emphasized that developing and maintaining an effective relationship involved several different aspects, including mutual respect and essential communication.

Agricultural educators stated they enjoyed cooperation and collaboration with the extension faculty with which they had a favorable relationship. County and state fairs were the major arena where most teachers stated much of this cooperation occurred. At the fairs, collaborative efforts centered around sharing resources, including scales, chutes, and other equipment as well as sharing expertise and knowledge in different areas. Furthermore, several of the fair activities where cooperation occurred involved precedents set by previous professionals.

Table 1

*Categorization of Major Themes of Cooperation and Competition and Recurring Minor Themes*

Relationship between agricultural educator and extension faculty	Awareness of other profession	Understanding and perceptions of cooperation and competition
- Relationship history	- Relationship history	- Time/Commitments
- Communication	- Communication	- Competition between 4-H and FFA
- Relationships outside of the agricultural educator and extension faculty relationship	- Scheduling problems	- Openness of parties involved to cooperate
- Openness of parties involved to cooperate	- Involvement history in other profession	- Change in perceptions about collaboration among the parties involved
- Mutual respect needed for cooperation	- Resource sharing	- FFA using 4-H for recruitment purposes
	- Change in perceptions about collaboration among the parties involved	
	- Mutual respect needed for cooperation	

Additionally, it was mentioned that outside relationships can have a distinct impact upon the collaborative relationship between the educator and extension agent. Agricultural educators provided examples of outside relationships including being the parent of small children involved in 4-H, interaction with 4-H parent leaders, and input provided by other agricultural educators pertaining to extension faculty. [A7] accurately illustrates the source of her lack of cooperation, “Other ag teachers had told me (about the extension agent) beforehand...the extension agent, from what I can tell, she hasn’t been real willing (to cooperate). I was introduced to her at the fair; she didn’t offer any help, didn’t even introduce me to other agents or any of the leaders and things like that.” These relationships contributed to the educator’s decision whether or not to collaborate with extension faculty.

Extension faculty, on the other hand, painted a slightly less favorable picture regarding interdisciplinary collaboration. Most extension faculty stated there were teachers with which they cooperated and those with which they did not. Additionally, in the situations where cooperation was not occurring, it was said this was not necessarily due to an unfavorable relationship but more aligned with a lack of contact or communication by the educator. [E1] shared, “There’s some (educators) never calling me because there’s not a lot of communication there; we get along, there’s just not a lot of sharing of information.”

Each group also mentioned the usefulness of a previous history to adopting an effective working relationship. In one specific example, the current extension faculty member had also been an agricultural educator in the same county. This led to a great deal of cooperation and collaboration on several different fronts. According to [E2], “I’ve grown up in this county, done teaching in this county, done extension in this county, so I know all the ag teachers very well. And I think, having been an ag teacher, we probably didn’t use extension a lot for resources or collaboration. But now, since I’m in extension and they all know me pretty well, we do a lot together.” Other preceding relationships which improved the chances of developing a collaborative relationship included teachers working with former agricultural education students who are now extension faculty and extension agents working with current agriculture teachers with which they attended college.

### *Awareness of other profession*

A major barrier to cooperation and collaboration was identified as agricultural educators and extension faculty expanded upon their current collaborative relationships. A lack of awareness regarding the other profession was discovered as the cause in many instances where cooperation was not occurring. This barrier also affected the interpersonal interactions among agricultural educators and extension faculty. Aspects such as a lack of mutual respect and resource sharing, scheduling problems and currently held perceptions regarding the individuals involved all contributed towards the absence of collaborative relationships among these disciplines.

Both groups admitted not completely understanding the intricacies and responsibilities of the other profession; this lack of awareness led to misunderstandings on both sides, resulting in a sort of resentment, particularly from extension faculty towards agricultural educators. [E3] revealed, “The only frustration I run into is that both of our (county’s) FFA teachers are some of those that think that their day is from the beginning of the school day until the end and they’re interested in having teams – livestock, land judging, etc. – but they want me to do them.” These beliefs were further

illustrated by the articulation of extension faculty as to the absence of reciprocation in the cooperative relationship.

However, due to the direct relationship between awareness and cooperation, a successful example was also provided where the educator involved had a thorough awareness of the demands and responsibilities of the other profession, and as a result had a very successful working collaborative relationship with the extension faculty. [A8] illustrated, “If I wasn’t working with them (4-H extension faculty), it would be totally detrimental, although it’s easy for me because I was in it and it was a positive experience. In our county it’s been really good. I’m not in competition with them (4-H) at all.” Increased awareness was found to encourage the interaction needed to develop an effective collaboration relationship between agricultural educators and extension faculty.

### *Understanding and perceptions of cooperation and competition*

Through these focus groups, agricultural educators and extension faculty were able to express their personal understanding and perceptions regarding cooperation and competition across disciplines. As a result, a greater understanding of the participants’ perceptions surrounding cooperation and competition was discovered.

Cooperation and competition operate along a continuum – the more cooperative you are, the less competitive you are (Deutsch, 1949). Within this exploratory study, both agricultural educators and extension faculty mentioned there was competition between 4-H and FFA for members, resources and within various events. Additionally, both groups stated there was a type of interpersonal competition between disciplines, brought about by the level of openness to cooperate among the parties involved, which was a direct result of the specific perceptions held by the educators and extension faculty.

For several agricultural educators, the development of their perceptions regarding cooperation and competition began as a student participating in 4-H and/or FFA. Generally, the more favorable the experiences in either organization, the more likely the individuals were to get involved as adults. Additionally, those who participated in both 4-H and FFA were more likely to develop strong interdisciplinary collaborative relationships, as opposed to those who were involved in only one organization.

Extension faculty, on the other hand, stressed their perceptions regarding competition with agricultural educators. Much of this competition stemmed from competition for the same youth, as well as what was described by the extension faculty as “FFA using 4-H for recruitment.” [A6] from the agricultural education focus group affirmed, “I use them (4-H) to recruit. I like to see kids succeed, and the real reason I’m helping those kids is that I want them in my (FFA) program.” This was illustrated when some extension faculty mentioned instances where students were pressured by their agriculture teachers to join FFA and sacrifice 4-H. In addition, this seemed to add to the substandard impressions already harbored by some extension faculty about agriculture teachers.

During the S.W.O.T. analysis, both agricultural educators and extension faculty brainstormed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats they associated with interdisciplinary collaboration.

Several similar major and minor themes aligned with those discovered from the interview portion of the focus groups. Aspects such as added time, resources, and expertise were identified as strengths to cooperating; these facets could be used to help the make the opportunities such as fairs, fields days and Career Development Events to run more effectively and efficiently. In addition, weaknesses such as time and competition were registered by both groups, and worked against cooperation by helping make threats such as recruitment issues and conflicting personalities major barriers (Tables 2 & 3).

Table 2

*S.W.O.T. Analysis of Agricultural Educators*

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
- Expertise	- Unequal educational group leaders	- Fairs	- Fair allotments
- Technical knowledge	- Time	- CDE's (Career Development Events)	- History
- Time	- Availability	- Practice	- School policies
- Resources	- Personal biases	- Community safety program	- Personalities
- Supplies	- History	- Breeding program	- Jealousy
- Educational materials	- Competition	- Research workshops	- You have to teach in class (less flexibility)
- Manuals	- Politics and power	- Fundraising	- FFA using 4-H for recruitment
- Numbers	- Grades	- Contacts	
- Recruitment	- Fair allotments (stalls, space, etc.)	- Educational resources	
- Horse questions for training evaluation teams	- Territories	- 4-H begins younger	
- Contacts		- Exposure	
- Competition		- Involvement	
		- Insurance	
		- Food for America program	

Table 3

*S.W.O.T. Analysis of Extension Faculty*

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
- Share specialties	- Relations	- Formal education	- Relations
- Get youth involved	- Time	- Fairs	- Time
- Resources	- Lazy	- Expositions	- Rules
- Experience	- Competition	- Field Days	- Perception of “more” – more trouble, more time, more work, etc.
- Time	- Not carrying equal weight	- Competitions	- Recruitment
- Flexibility	- Obligations		
- Relationships	- No accountability on their (ag ed) part		

Conclusions/Recommendations/Implications

Overall, effective collaborative relationships among agricultural educators and extension faculty allow for the accomplishment of a few essential outcomes. Interdisciplinary collaboration will not only help streamline and enhance the work of agricultural educators and extension faculty, but at the same time, will allow those involved to build upon one another’s strengths. Just as importantly, cooperation will help to improve the leadership opportunities available for youth. The largest necessity vital to developing these relationships is educational opportunities with topics involving interpersonal relationships, professional awareness and understanding cooperation and competition.

Both agricultural educators and extension faculty participating in the focus groups affirmed the researchers’ hypothesis of a lack of strong interdisciplinary collaboration. Several major reasons were found to cause this, including an imperfect relationship between the agricultural educator and the extension faculty, a lack of awareness of the other profession, and the current understandings and perceptions regarding collaboration held by the participants. Each of these major themes helped to illustrate why there continues to be difficulties which are faced as a part of collaboration between agricultural and extension education.

Through this exploratory study, it was discovered that competition was quite prevalent among the youth involved in 4-H and FFA. Competition in and of itself can be useful, as it motivates individuals into striving to do their best. However, it was also noted that this competition was also occurring among the adults involved – mainly parents, extension faculty, and agricultural educators. This was primarily discussed with a negative connotation, as competition is the antithesis of cooperation (Deutsch, 1949). Several examples provided by educators and extension faculty

supported this point, and provided substantiation for the necessity of cooperation, not competition, among those working towards a common goal.

Specifically, employers and university faculty need to stress the importance to new educators and extension faculty, as well as students studying these professions, of the necessity of developing a good relationship with their extension faculty or agricultural educators. Ideally, incorporation of these ideas into a new employee orientation training, or a workshop emphasizing interpersonal relations would help in the education process.

To extend professional awareness among educators and extension faculty, university faculty should develop a workshop, seminar, or class required by the current employers to educate each discipline about the services, specific jobs and responsibilities under which agricultural educators and extension faculty operate. Additionally, to educate current students studying either agricultural education or extension education, the university should provide a course exploring both disciplines that will equip the students with a better understanding of future collaborative associates.

Furthermore, a workshop needs to be developed to educate teachers and extension agents (and other interested parties – such as parents, leaders and youth members) about the importance and details involving cooperation and its usefulness in the workplace. It is hoped this will help to change current negative and inaccurate perceptions about cooperation and encourage new collaborative relationships.

#### *Further research*

It is realized by the researchers that due to the nature of focus groups, the data collected may not be generalized past the sample utilized. Nonetheless, the final outcome is to develop an instrument using themes and relationships discovered as a part of this study, which will be mailed to randomly selected agricultural educators and extension faculty across Florida. This comprehensive questionnaire will allow a more in-depth look regarding collaboration and the perceptions surrounding it among agricultural teachers and 4-H extension faculty. Based upon the aforementioned evidence, there appears to be a lack of strong collaboration among the agricultural professionals involved in agricultural education and 4-H development extension. By further investigation, it is hoped that the barriers and benefits from collaboration can be more thoroughly identified. Ultimately, the data collected can be used to positively affect the current and future relationships between these groups, and improve agricultural education in both formal and nonformal situations.

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# **Exploring Cooperation and Collaboration Between Secondary Agricultural Educators and Extension Faculty in the State of Florida**

## **A Critique**

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As the authors state, cooperation and collaboration are essential skills for the workforce. Using focus groups, the authors sought to determine the extent of cooperation and collaboration between secondary agricultural teachers and extension faculty in Florida.

Is there a literature base in agricultural or extension education to draw from for this study? None were cited from the JAE or JOE.

The authors stated that the two focus groups used as the data foundation for this study were a pilot test for a larger survey-based study. I would encourage the authors to expand upon the focus group technique further and obtain more subjects for the focus groups to confirm findings through negative case analysis. The data gathered from only two groups are rather lean to base substantiate claims of cooperation and collaboration upon. The two focus groups are an excellent starting point, but I question claims made on such limited data.

The SWOT analysis was useful and enlightening, and will serve the survey development process well. Again, furthering data collection will only strengthen this portion of the findings.

In the conclusions the authors discuss using workshop to bring 4-H and FFA leaders into a collaborative relationship. The findings reported do not support this idea. Deeper probing into the complexities of the problem may yield such recommendations, but in its current state, this research cannot support the recommendations.