

Building Social Capital through Secondary Agricultural Education Programs

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Abstract

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to develop a theory for community social capital constructed by rural secondary agricultural education programs. Social capital represents the ability of people to work together to accomplish shared goals and it can be divided into two distinct types, bonding (within the community) or bridging (outside of the community) social capital. The study gathered in-depth interviews and field observation notes from three secondary agricultural education programs in non-metropolitan counties. The researcher observed the programs' community-based activities and interviewed community members for their perspectives on the programs. The researcher developed the following theory for social capital construction in secondary agricultural education. The activities that built bonding social capital typically involved only a small group of supporters, rather than the general community. While this situation may not be ideal, it proved to be positive and fruitful for those involved. The activities that built bridging social capital usually helped individual students rather. The program-community interaction was not symbiotic or reciprocal in nature, but rather unbalanced because most of the time and resources only benefited of a small group of students.

Introduction

Community building education has been a significant topic of research for rural education specialists (Arnold et al., 2005; Budge 2006; Galbraith, 1992; Theobald, 1997). Rural education studies have focused on such topics as school-community partnerships (Bauch, 2000; Scheie, 2001), community-based education (Doeden, 2001; Haleman & DeYoung, 2000; Owens & Wang, 2001), and community development (Deweese & Velázquez, 2000; Miller 1995). The major theme of the research has been to improve the local community through its educational system. Social capital has been utilized by some rural educational researchers (Cronginger & Lee, 2001; Israel, Beaulieu, & Hartless, 2001; Koliba, Campbell, Shapiro, 2006) and sociologist (Coleman, 1988; Flora, Flora, & Fey, 2004) as a significant indicator of community well-being. The studies found that the social capital level of the community affects the educational achievement of students. The resulting theme of all these manuscripts is community building education and student achievement could be a reciprocal in nature. The deficiency of social capital research in rural education and communities warrants further study though.

Agricultural education researchers have also begun to understand the importance of education that builds local communities and a call for research exists (Osborne, 2006). Theories

of how local programs influence their communities have not been well developed though. Agricultural education researchers have explored the role of community in the historical perspective (Martin, Ball, & Connors, 2006; Martin & Knobloch, 2005), providing, assisting, and shaping the local program (Barnard, 2002; Bell, 2002; Brashears, Smith, & Malone, 2002; Martin, 2006), program assessments (Bryant & Connor, 2005), holistic education (Strom, 2002), and conducting needs assessments (Israel & Hoover, 1996). Most studies emphasized utilizing the community's resources to improve the program. However, studies that utilized a sociological lens to examine the influence of programs on their communities have been neglected.

The purpose of this grounded theory study is to develop a theory for community social capital construction by rural secondary agricultural education programs. Social capital will be generally defined as the ability of community members to mobilize resources to accomplish a shared goal. Furthermore, social capital will be discussed in two formats, bonding and bridging capital. The central research question of the study was how do rural secondary agricultural education programs build social capital? The sub-questions included how do community members perceive the program's activities to build social capital and how do the community activities build social capital from the perspective of the researchers?

Conceptual Framework

The researchers were interested in the phenomena of community building education in secondary agricultural education programs. Because agricultural education typically existed in rural schools the researchers wanted to examine rural communities. The researcher conceptualized the different rural community types in accordance with the typology developed by Salamon (2003). The three communities studied were a mixed economy and residential, mixed economy, and agrarian community. The communities could be generally described as the following:

1. Mixed economy and residential – A community with a growing bedroom population (people who don't work in the same community they live in) with service, manufacturing, and agricultural occupations;
2. Mixed economy – A community possessing service, manufacturing, and agricultural employment;
3. Agrarian – A community having substantial employment opportunities, besides agricultural.

The researcher acknowledges that other rural community types existed, including affluent residential and shabby residential (Salamon, 2003), but the study focused only three types. The overarching question became how do agricultural education programs influence the three types of rural communities?

The researchers then conceptualized community building education in secondary agricultural education. First, community building education was understood as in-school or extra-curricular activities that improved the community. Improving the community included developing the local economic, educational, and social capacities. Within the framework of agricultural education, in-school activities included classroom instruction, while extra-curricular activities included the FFA and Supervised Agricultural Experiences (Talbert, Vaughn, &

Croom, 2005). Programs could include a FFA alumni chapter and/or a program advisory council. The FFA alumni consisted of adults that supported the program through volunteering time and resources, while the advisory council consisted of local citizens whom counseled the teacher on major educational issues (Talbert, Vaughn, & Croom, 2005). Both groups were a valuable component of secondary agricultural program studied and were utilized in the data collection process. The researcher focused on all the activities of the program that could have community building implications.

Procedures

Qualitative research methods were chosen because the research occurred in the natural setting of the problem being studied, utilized multiple modes of inquiry, was emergent rather than pre-figured, and was interactive, interpretative, and holistic in nature. The researcher sought to understand the world by asking broad and open-ended questions to produce a complex and deep understanding (Creswell, 2003). More specifically, grounded theory methods were chosen because the phenomenon of community social capital construction by secondary agricultural education programs has not been articulated in prior research (Creswell, 2003). Grounded theory methodology requires that data be collected and analyzed, then the theory must emerge from the data, and finally theories related to the topic are presented (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus the emergent theory and references to related theories appear in the discussion section (Creswell, 1998).

Data was collected from the communities of three rural programs. The three programs were purposively selected by two criteria. First, the programs must be within a non-metropolitan Illinois county as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA, 2004). Two communities were from level 6 Counties (Non-metropolitan County with urban population of 2,500 – 19,999 adjacent to a metropolitan area) and one was a level from 5 County (Non-metropolitan County with urban population of 20,000 or more, not adjunct to a metropolitan area). The researcher then narrowed down the selection process to individual communities within these counties that had secondary agricultural education programs. Secondly, the researcher selected communities that represented three different rural community types. The three types were a mixed economy and residential community (Community A), community with a mixed economy (Community B), and an agrarian community (Community C) (Salomon, 2003). The following table indicates the communities studied with their rural-urban continuum codes and rural community type.

Table 1
Demographic Representation of the Three Communities Studied

Site	Rural-Urban Continuum Code ¹	Rural Community Type ²
A	6	Mixed Economy and Residential Community
B	5	Mixed Economy Community
C	6	Agrarian Community

¹From the USDA (2004) ²Salomon (2003)

The most significant factor of the selection process was the rural community typology.

Community A, the mixed economy and residential community, possessed a variety of small shops, corporate businesses, and some agricultural and industrial occupations with a growing bedroom community. The business sector of the community blended older smaller businesses with newer corporate chain stores. The newer stores had come to the community less than fifteen year ago. They supplemented the community employment, which had suffered from factory layoffs. The corporate businesses were drawn to Community A by tax incentives and access to major roads. The community has had an increase in population, which led to new subdivisions, churches, and other community structures. The newcomers were drawn in by the corporate businesses and small town atmosphere. Some of these newcomers were bedroom community dwellers from a larger nearby community. They were attracted to live in community because of the small town atmosphere and quality schools. The newcomers have generally brought more wealth and prosperity of the community. These changes have not adversely affected the community socially. Community members reported that the newcomers were treated with respect and likewise gave respect back to the old timers. Yet, the community's once small town appearance has forever been changed by the addition of the new corporate business and subdivisions.

Community B, the mixed economy community, possessed a large service business that employed many of the town's people, as well as other small and agricultural businesses. The large business had been located in the community for over 100 years, employed over 1,500 people, and brought around 10,000 people to the community each year. The visitors supported not only the large business, but many of the smaller businesses of Community B. One community member related the importance of the business to the community. "People complain about it sometimes, but I tell them that if it weren't for that business our community would not exist". Indeed the identity of the community was defined by that the business as much as anything else. The slow growth of this large business has led to the growth of new homes, new businesses, and supplemented the employment of the community. Even though some smaller businesses have had to close, the unemployed were able to find work in Community B. The resiliency of the community to bounce back from employment shifts has given its citizens a lot of pride. The community members interviewed all agreed that Community B was a good place to live, work, and raise a family. People acknowledged that it was a small town, but the large business made it unique.

Community C, the agrarian community, contained principally agricultural occupations. The community has lost almost all of businesses. The community still retains one small business that served as the social center of the community. Besides that, the only other identity that the community had was the school. This too has been in jeopardy because of the economic pressures of the school district to consolidate. The community feared that if the school disappeared then community will disappear as well. The people in community have been changing along with the community. The community has had a declining population that depended on the surrounded communities for employment. In addition, more low income residents have relocated into the community. The newcomers took advantage of the low cost housing to live in the community as bedroom dwellers. A result of these changes has been a decline of civic engagement according to the old tiers of the community.

The data sources of this study were both interviews of community members and field notes regarding the community-based activities of the program. First, the interviews centered on these following questions.

- Describe your community and its vitality?
- How effectively is the local secondary agricultural education program meeting the needs of your community?
- What activities does the program conduct within the community?
- What are the good and bad things about the program?
- What part do you take in the programs activities?

Follow-up questions were asked of the community members to attain rich and thick descriptions. Eighteen people were interviewed at the community-based events and these interviews lasted usually ten minutes. Nine people were interviewed in private locations and lasted from 30-50 minutes. Field notes were taken by a researcher while visiting the three program's community-based activities. Nine community-based activities were attended in total. The researcher noted the attendance, purpose, agenda, occurrences, and interactions of the events. The notes were kept in a notebook.

Community members were selected to be interviewed with the assistance of the program's teacher. Adult community members were chosen over students because the researcher wanted to elicit the opinions of interviewees who had a firm understanding of their community. The interviewees ranged from average citizens, school administrators, to alumni members. No one turned down the request to be interviewed, but some choose not to be taped audibly. If interviewees were not recorded audibly detailed notes were taken of the interview.

Data was analyzed by a grounded theory systematic design. At the open coding phase activities were scrutinized for the construction of the five different community capital theories (human, cultural, financial, physical/built, political, and social). The data indicated that social capital was most frequently constructed and it became the central category in the axial coding process (Creswell, 1998). The activities that were indicated to build social capital were re-analyzed. Activities that developed social capital needed to provide people with the opportunity to communicate or co-operate for a common shared good (Agnitsch, Flora, & Ryan, 2006; Flora, Flora, & Fey, 2004). Then, these activities were analyzed for bonding and bridging capital. Bonding capital activities were events that brought together people whom were part of the same community network (Flora, Flora, & Fey, 2004). Bridging capital activities were those events in which people from different communities and networks gathered and labored (Green & Haines, 2002). The findings of the study were articulated in the discussion section in the form of conditional propositions, which is an explanation of the findings in the terms of categories from the axial coding phase, as well as the theory that emerged from the data (Creswell, 1998).

Numerous verification procedures were conducted to assess the findings of the study. Triangulation of the data occurred between the different sources of data, including interviews with community members, witnessing the community-based activity, second round of interviews with community members, and other documents from the secondary programs (calendars, award documents, etc.). Member checking occurred when the researcher went back to each of the three

communities and interviewed at least two more people from each community. The second round of interviews served to double check the researcher's interpretations of the data. An external audit was conducted with academic professionals in the fields of agricultural education and community studies (Creswell, 1998; 2005).

Findings

The findings of the grounded theory research were organized around the three different community types purposely selected.

Community A - Mixed Economy and Residential Community

The teacher of Community A admittedly organized only few activities with their classes and FFA program that built the local community. The activities included volunteering to landscape the buildings of the school district, adapting a family in the community, and participating in agricultural safety seminar for over a 100 elementary students. Most notably of these activities was with the agricultural safety seminar. The day long event was coordinating with local agricultural stakeholder groups and businesses. The students facilitated a workshop that lasted 20 minutes and was repeated numerous times throughout the day. The publicized event showcased not only the students willingness to volunteer, but also the ability of the adults and students to work together to accomplish a shared goal. While the teacher admittedly didn't conduct many activities that directly involved the community, the program's stakeholders acknowledged the program's value. "The FFA gives opportunities for students who are not in sports. It gives them a chance to become an adult and prepare for the future". While the lack of community development events and participation from students was alarming, the effort of the FFA alumni to support the students was encouraging.

The other catalyst for the community development was the work of the FFA alumni. The alumni have been in raising money for student scholarships and to construct new greenhouse. Two alumni members proudly discussed the amount of money that was raised by the alumni during the past five years. They figured the amount to be about \$10,000. The money had been raised by a variety of different activities all coordinated by the alumni, as related by one member.

We give out two scholarships per year for the last five years... We have been out making money to help that with that. They are \$500 scholarships, so that helps [the students] out a little bit. Two weeks ago we worked at a sale for a local business and sold stuff. That was one of the ways of making money. Every year we have a chili supper and pie auction. We make good money at that.

The time and effort provided by the alumni members was extensive. The members in charge of the chili supper and pie auction meet for twenty minutes after the alumni meeting to organize the event. The event had been a hit with community throughout the years with some of the pie auctions reaching \$200 a pie. These types of events also provided community members a chance to communicate and interact. The membership for the alumni was usually twenty members and had a healthy turnover of members from year to year. Many of the new members were parents of the students, but some members were just young and old adults of the community wanting to be active. The fruits of the alumni members' labors provided the students with a variety of different opportunities. The new greenhouse paid for and built by the alumni gave students a

chance to explore the fields of horticulture and landscape management in a controlled and experimental setting. The scholarships motivated students to succeed in the program and school, as well as a financial resource for college.

The program of Community A did not have many classroom or students-based activities that built the community. The agricultural safety activity did promote some intergenerational communication through cooperation. But, the work done by the alumni did the most to build community. The members helped the students attain educational and career opportunities through their fundraising efforts. These students then used these new resources to further their education. Some former students had even come back in the community after graduating. Furthermore, the events that the alumni sponsored brought recognition to the program and gave those involved a shared identity. Importantly, the community members interviewed were all proud of the program and the teacher. As one person said, "About everybody you talk to about it to thinks the teacher is real good."

Community B - Mixed Economy Community

The agriculture teacher of Community B did some to build the community in their classroom. Most notable, guest speakers from local businesses and colleges would share career information with students. There were from both inside and outside of the community. The teacher related the following.

Usually I end that class [Introduction to Agriculture Class] with an agriculture in the community lesson and we talk about people in the community that are in involved with agriculture... Every Friday was a career day and we had people from the community and some people from outside of the community come in to speak about careers in their areas... It was a huge undertaking...

The guest speakers would speak to all of the classes during one day and the speakers would come to the program about bi-weekly. These guest speakers provided a valuable link within Community B between employers and students. Students became aware of the occupational and economic opportunities of the community, as well as some opportunities outside of the community. Community members were excited about the speakers.

We know the value of success of our kids and to keep our kids in the community... The community wants our kids to be successful and to do well because they are the future of the community. We want them to stay in the community. If they go away to school we want them to come back.

There were a few students who had recently graduated from the program and found quality jobs in the local community. The emphasis of local opportunities by the program balanced well with the school's mission of preparing students to enter a competitive global economy. This dynamic was best represented by one parent who had two kids going through the agriculture program. "We have one child wanting to work in the farm industry near our community and another wants going to college... They are going their separate ways and that is okay".

The teacher of Community B was also indirectly creating some social connections in the community by having a diverse classroom. "It was cool because during senior night I saw that some [FFA] officers were also on the dance team... and the different kids from sports and other activities within the high school that are also in the FFA. That is great because that branches [the

social connections] out and they tell other kids their involved in it.” The community members envisioned the program bridging together diverse families through social activities as well. These activities ranged from community-wide cookouts to open houses to sell greenhouse products. The community stakeholders were excited about the future of the program and hoped that it would continue to build an identity within the community. The teacher has proposed activities for the future to achieve this goal, which included having students volunteer at local nursing homes and offering more after school social activities for students.

The agricultural program of Community B worked mainly through the classroom to build its community. While the guest speaker project was large and had much involvement, other events did not foster the same level of social networking. Small levels of communication and interaction did happen at the program’s cookouts and annual banquet. The greatest benefit of the program may have been giving students who were not going college a chance to be successful in the local community. Yet, the community members were delighted with what the program had done for its children and thought very highly of the teacher. “The teacher has beefed up the program... had new and fresh ideas, had a lot enthusiasm which helps spur the kids up and get them interested in doing something. The teacher has been good.”

Community C – Agrarian Community

Community C’s agriculture program worked hard with their FFA alumni to meet the needs of the community. A couple of activities conducted required that the alumni and students work together. First, the annual cook-out for parents and students was run by the alumni and students. They relied on each other to accomplish the goals of the event, which included increasing FFA alumni membership, student participation in FFA, and raise money for an annual scholarship and FFA travel expenses. While the event displayed a high level of intergenerational cooperation, meeting the some of the goals set forth by the alumni and students has been difficult. Most of the alumni support centered on a small group of people who had been working with the program for years.

I [the teacher] have a group of probably six really dedicated parents or friends of the FFA chapter that I could call on any of them and they could be there no excuses. They will drop any there doing and bend over backwards to do good things. I have been here for four yeas and those people were here when I started.

Gaining support from the general community proved to be difficult according to the teacher.

We have not been able to talk to anyone into coming and getting involved. They have tried and I have tried. A lot of people in the community will to say that we are doing a great job. They see our kids in the paper and are really proud of what the FFA chapter has done. If you ask them to help with an activity or provide financial support... they will not do it. That is extremely frustrating. How many yeas to you have to be here and how many things to do you have to do to get support?

Moreover the general public doesn’t even seem to identify with the hard work of the students and teachers. One alumni member related “They read about us, see us, but don’t really care about us”. This sentiment was shared by other alumni. “There are a lot of people outside of the Community C that comment the program does so much because they see it in the newspaper... but Community C doesn’t share the same enthusiasm”. The ability of the program to reach out to the community was comprised by Community C’s lack of motivation.

The need for students in Community C to attain some level success outside of the community was high. “Students need a vehicle for success because there were no real opportunities [in the community].” The alumni worked to facilitate this educational and career need by sponsoring a \$500 scholarship for one graduating senior. The money was donated by the few businesses in the area and community members. The alumni also raised at least another \$400 a year for students to go to different state and national FFA events. Career and educational opportunities were also provided by the annual career show hosted by the program. The career show included local businesses and colleges. The junior and senior high school students of Community C attended the event, as well as some students from another neighboring high school. The career show was coordinated by the alumni and the students. All of the efforts by the teacher, alumni, and students have paid dividends for some of the program’s students. One recent graduate was now enrolled in a Big Ten school and few other students were attending various other universities and colleges. There was only one of the program’s graduating students who had came back to work in the community in the past five years though. The topic of rural brain drain came up during the interviews and was quickly repudiated by a community member. “... That it doesn’t matter. What does matter is giving the students the best opportunity to succeed in life”. Their comment best sums up the alumni’s attitude.

While much effort was put into the preparing students for their future, the program did work to improve the community as well as. These activities included landscape beautification, volunteering time for charity organizations, improving community buildings and hosting community-wide events and activities. This impressive list undoubtedly improved the community and constructed social networks, as well as some shared identity and mutual trust. But, the community does not seem to value the work being done by the program and its supporters. “I went to the [school] board meeting last month... I could see from their demeanor and attitude that they don’t really care about what I am doing or what the kids or doing”. The alumni members and the teacher were not bitter about the empathy from the community though. They continued to ask for support and volunteers when ever they were needed, and sometimes supporters did come forward, but always the goals of the alumni were meet. The alumni and the teacher always stayed positive for the students. The teacher garnered a lot of respect from the community as well. “The teacher puts a lot of hope into students.” Considering the community’s desire for their students to have a better life, instilling hope and life skills in the kids was a huge success.

Discussion

This grounded theory research generated the following conditional propositions. The major drive of the program’s community building efforts was to present students with career and educational opportunities. While much time and effort was put into these activities, the only community members that benefited from these activities were the students of the program. Thus, the influence that the programs had on building the community was limited. The program that attempted to build local community the most was from Community C. The activities that the program of Community C facilitated constructed intergenerational cooperation and mutual trust between the alumni members and students. Yet, the influence that Community C had on the general community was limited. Finally, most of the work with the community was spearheaded

by the alumni and program supporters, rather than the students. The program-community interaction was not symbiotic or reciprocal in nature, but rather unbalanced because most of the time and resources only benefited of a small group of students.

The theory generated from the study represented a unique perspective about building social capital. The agricultural education programs built varying amounts social bonding capital for the communities, but primarily to the small group of program supporters. The activities included the student-based teaching activities and social activities from Community A, the social activities and the local guest speakers of Community B, and the collaborative efforts between the alumni and students of Community C's program. While Community A and B built some bonding capital for their communities, Community C built the most. The collaborative efforts between the alumni and students created bonding capital by reinforcing social norms, creating a shared identity, and developing mutual trust between within the community (Agnitsch, Flora, & Ryan, 2006; Flora, Flora, & Fey, 2004; Green & Haines, 2002; Koliba, 2003). The goal of these events was to connect the students to outside opportunities and resources. In other words, they were turning there high levels group bonding capital to needed individual bridging capital. Thus, bonding capital was utilized to build bridging capital, which corresponded to other related findings (Agnitsch, Flora, and Ryan, 2006; Gittel & Vidal, 1998). Research has indicated that groups with high levels of bonding social capital and low levels of bridging social capital can lead stagnation, seclusion, and a mistrust of new ideas or people (Flora, Flora, & Fey, 2004). Yet this was not the true with the FFA alumni from Community C. They still maintained an open and positive attitude with the community despite not getting the support they felt they deserved for at least four years. Thus, the activities that built bonding social capital typically influenced a small group of supporters the most, rather than the general community. While this scenario may not be ideal, it proved to be positive and fruitful for those involved.

The construction of bridging capital proved to be the most productive activity amongst the Community's programs. All the programs studied sponsored activities that built bridging social capital for their students. These activities included the fundraising efforts of the FFA alumni from Community A and C, the guest speakers of Community B from outside of the community, and the career show of Community C. The bridging capital that was being constructed opened new networks, resources, and opportunities for students outside of their own communities (Agnitsch, Flora, & Ryan, 2006; Green & Haines, 2002). But, the people that benefited the most from these efforts were a handful of students. These findings agreed with the findings of Leonard (2004) that bridging social capital usually helps the individual rather than the community as whole. Furthermore, the lasting influence of the bridging capital developed in the community can be tenuous because not all students will come back to their home communities.

The three different rural communities' agricultural programs purposely selected had similarities and differences represented in the findings. First, the programs had the capability to build social capital in their communities, which supports other research on service-based learning (Koliba, 2003; Koliba, Campbell, & Shapiro, 2006; Smyth, 2000). Second, all three of the communities' studied conducted activities to build bridging capital within the students. Third, the three communities did little to build bonding capital in the classroom. Fourth, bonding capital construction usually happened outside of the classroom and with the assistance of the

program's FFA alumni. Yet, the bonding capital was usually a by product of activities that supported construction of bridging capital in students. This finding had been supported in other research (Coleman, 1988). Finally, the individual communities had differences some in the activities that were conducted. Community A, the mixed economy and residential community, worked hard through its alumni to build bonding and bridging capital outside of the classroom. Community B, the mixed economy community, built some bonding and bridging capital through classroom activities. Community C, the agrarian community, also worked in cooperation with its alumni and students to build bridging and bonding in the community both inside and outside of the classroom. While the some differences existed between the different community types, the similarities provide teachers and researchers with some implications and recommendations.

Implications and Recommendations

Numerous implications arose for secondary agricultural education teachers and leaders. First, teachers need to think about their program goals from the perspective of the community. The health of the community can directly relate to the students learning. The vitality and social capital level of community can directly relate to the educational achievement level of students (Israel, Beaulieu, & Hartless, 2001; Perna & Titus, 2005; Smith, Baulieu, & Isreal, 1992). Bridging capital construction was a high priority for the three programs studied, but bonding capital construction was limited. Bonding capital is critical for building bridging capital (Flora, Flora, & Fey, 2004; Green & Haines, 2002). Teachers need to be aware of the influences that their programs can have on the local community, and then adjust the curriculum to match the needs of the community. Resources do exist that assist teachers with the issues of community (National FFA Organization 2004; 2006), but state and national leaders need to place the emphasis on how the local program can addresses its community needs versus activities that only engage the program's stakeholders. These resources also need to focus on activities that can occur both in the class and within the community. Finally, social capital development from teachers can be extremely beneficial for students who are high-risk (Croninger & Lee, 2001). Teachers need to be aware of their effect on high-risk students.

More research is needed to determine the impact that school-based social capital development has on the overall social capital levels of rural communities. These studies need to be comprehensive in size and duration. Agricultural education researchers need to examine the longitudinal effects of the social capital building activities from secondary programs on their communities. Most importantly does bridging social capital built with the students benefit the community or are those resources lost to other communities when the students graduate and become mobile? Furthermore, is the mobile bridging social capital produced being dispersed to other rural communities or to urban and suburban communities? Practitioners and other professionals also need to think about how to build bonding social capital through program activities. This study found that social capital development was used for positive means, but some research has demonstrated that social capital can have negative consequences for students (Koliba, 2003). Finally, agricultural education needs to conceptualize its role in rural communities and how local program can build better communities. Agricultural education has a great potential in rural communities to improve the lives of not only the students, but also the vitality of the community as a whole.

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