

HOW COMMUNICATION IMPACTS NETWORK STRUCTURE AND ACCESS TO COMMUNITY  
SOCIAL CAPITAL

Laura Duffy Crank

**Dr. Kenneth Pigg, Dissertation Supervisor**

This dissertation utilizes an interactional community perspective that focuses upon the networks of common experience *within* a place (Colclough and Sitaraman 2005). Little empirical research exists about how information and communication (ICT) affects the network structure and social capital in rural communities. Lin's Theory of Social Capital is adapted to theorize how social structure elements of rural networks affect certain network characteristics and access to social resources. Community leaders from ten rural communities were surveyed about their communication during a recent project. Social network analysis (SNA) techniques were utilized to analyze network structure. Results indicate that rural networks with greater and more diverse social structure elements possess more "information leaders" (greater indegree centrality). Networks with more "information leaders" have greater "social bridges" and "weak ties" for instrumental action. Networks that utilized ICTs more frequently have more network components and ICTs do not affect the building of community social capital.