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# Mapping Social Capital in a Network of Community Development Organizations

The South West Centre for Entrepreneurial Development  
Organizational Network

Jason Heit

**A research report prepared for the Northern Ontario, Manitoba,  
and Saskatchewan Regional Node of the Social Economy Suite**

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Entreprises sociales  
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et communautés durables



MAPPING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN A NETWORK  
OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

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ORGANIZATIONAL NETWORK

JASON HEIT



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## INTRODUCTION

**I**N RECENT YEARS, southwest Saskatchewan has been the stage for several innovative initiatives and collaborations among business and economic development organizations, community service organizations, various levels of government and their agencies, and the private sector. The resulting networks, strategies, and mindset changes suggest that behind the economic success and achievements that the region has experienced is a current of social capital — relationships, co-operation, and common vision and set of goals for a group, community, or region.

This report emerges from the networks and relationships among and between business and economic development organizations, community service organizations, various government agencies, and the communities that they serve. The idea of measuring the “softer” aspects of economic and community development within the network of organizations that serves southwest Saskatchewan and the City of Swift Current came from key stakeholders within that network. These stakeholders were interested in measuring the benefits of their collaborations — whether those benefits were a fresh start for a woman that had been the victim of domestic abuse or the extra resources that a project partner could contribute to a workshop or conference. Normally, the outcomes of such activities are measured in terms of their economic contribution to the community’s financial balance sheets (i.e., number of new jobs created or the number of new businesses started), as most of these organizations’ funding partners require them to report in this way. However, the project partners and stakeholders in this research were concerned that the social and human capital outcomes of their work was being neglected and that, had they an appropriate and accepted mechanism for measuring these outcomes, that their funding partners might be better able to realize the added benefits that these organizations provide to their communities.

In consultation with the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) and the researcher, the research partners agreed that prior to developing a mechanism for measuring the social and human capital outcomes generated by the networks and relationships that comprise their group of organizations, it would be appropriate and useful to map the networks that exist among the group of organizations participating in the study. This report thus identifies and maps the social capital that exists among these organizations as the first step in understanding how these organizations and their members work together to build the capacity, skills, and knowledge that create wealth in their community. The report also explores some of the characteristics that have generated strong social capital among these organizations and applies some of the concepts and ideas that have flowed from social capital research to unpack the situation that the researcher observed.

This report begins with a literature review that introduces the concept of social capital, and develops the related concepts of structural social capital and cognitive social capital, thereby framing an understanding of social networks and the relations and connections that flow from such arrangements. The review explores ideas relating to the linkages that make up social and organizational networks. It also explores some of the ideas developed by organizational and strategic management theorists regarding the ability of organizations to co-ordinate group behaviour and ensure the effectiveness of the team. Additionally, it provides a framework for thinking about and assessing social and organizational networks.

The third section discusses the methodology used to conduct the field research and then introduces and describes the organizations that make-up the South West Entrepreneurial Centre network of partner organizations. It highlights some of the formal and informal ways in which these organizations have interacted and worked together. Next, it presents an analysis of the relationships that exist between the two organizational groups that make up the E-Centre network — the community service organizations and the business/economic development organizations. The concepts of cognitive and structural social capital are also used to analyze the formation of network capital among the E-Centre network. The section concludes with a discussion of some of the issues and challenges that face the network and its member organizations.

The fourth section presents several lessons and recommendations that arose through the research and analysis stages. These lessons and recommendations are directed towards researchers, policy makers, and community developers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**I**DENTIFYING AND MAPPING interactions among community service organizations and business and economic development organizations is a first step towards understanding how these organizations and their members work together to build capacity, skills, knowledge, and wealth in a community. However, before one can identify and map these interactions, some understanding of how these interactions originate, what factors lead to the creation of relations in some spheres and not others, and the quality and scope of ties that individuals and organizations develop, will be offered. This section highlights some key concepts and ideas from several disciplines and notable theorists that will help to develop a deeper understanding of how community service organizations and economic and business development organizations interact among and within their own networks to meet their goals and deliver services to the communities in which they belong.

### **Social Capital**

Social capital is an important concept as it enables researchers, theorists, and policy makers to analyze and discuss the non-economic outcomes that flow from individuals or groups working together to promote a common interest or objective. The concept is generally used to account for those behaviours of individuals that economic theory and analysis find difficult to explain, such as the willingness of people to act co-operatively for each other's mutual benefit (Krishna and Uphoff 2002). However, defining social capital is problematic, as the concept takes on varying significance related to the level of analysis and the forms of social interaction that it is applied to. As a result, some articles do not attempt to define social capital, but rather describe the concept and its application. As Krishna and

Uphoff state, “Most references to it have been more descriptive than analytical” (2002, 86). For example, a report published by the Government of Canada’s Policy Research Initiative, describes social capital as a “concept ... [that] is generally associated with social and civic participation and with networks of co-operation and solidarity” (Franke September 2005, 1).

Knack (2002) provides a more analytical definition of social capital. He defines social capital as “[those] features of both government and civil society that facilitate collective action for the mutual benefit of a group, where a group may be as small as a household or as large as a country” (42). Knack’s definition highlights the importance that government and civil society have in the development of social capital. Moreover, he suggests that these sectors create two distinct albeit complementary forms of social capital, identifying government social capital as “government institutions [i.e., the enforceability of contracts, the rule of law, and civil liberties permitted by the state] that influence people’s ability to cooperate for mutual benefit” (2002, 42). Comparatively, he indicates that civil social capital includes “common values, norms, informal networks, and associational memberships that affect the ability of individuals to work together to achieve common goals” (Knack 2002, 42). These distinctions between government and civil social capital are important as they inform arguments for state intervention as government social capital may be used as a substitute for civil social capital and vice versa (See Collier 2002; Sik and Wellman 1999; McNaughton 2000).

Interestingly, Knack’s conception of government and civil society social capital has commonalities with Krishna and Uphoff’s conception of structural and cognitive social capital, respectively. According to Krishna and Uphoff, “[S]tructural social capital *facilitates* information sharing and collective action and decision making through established roles and social networks supplemented by rules, procedures, and precedents” (2002, 87; emphasis in original). The rules, procedures, and precedents that factor in the creation of structural social capital include those government institutions — enforceability of contracts, rules of law, and civil liberties permitted by the state — that Knack highlights.

Krishna and Uphoff indicate that cognitive social capital “includes shared norms, values, attitudes and beliefs, [which] *predispose* people toward mutually beneficial collective action” (2002, 87; emphasis in original). The similarity between Krishna and Uphoff’s concept of cognitive social capital and Knack’s civil society social capital highlights the important role that cultural institutions, organizations, and personal social networks have in the development of shared or common values, norms, attitudes and beliefs.

Krishna and Uphoff identify some important differences between cognitive and structural social capital. They indicate that structural social capital is external and objective, that is, it includes “elements that are visible and that can be devised through group deliberation” (2002, 88). While cognitive social capital is internal and subjective as it has “to do with how people think and feel” (2002, 88). In this way structural and cognitive social capital, like government and civil society social capital, complement each other. It is noteworthy that Krishna and Uphoff argue that both structural and cognitive social capital qualify as capital because “they both require some investment — of time and effort if not always money” (2002, 88).

Issues of scope are also critical for researchers and policy makers concerned with identifying and assessing the development of social capital among different units of analysis and at different levels of analysis. For instance, Knack’s definition of social capital indicates that “A group may be as small as a household or as large as a country.” For researchers, this variation in the scope of the concept of social capital can be problematic, as one looks for an appropriate methodology and conceptual framework to frame a discussion.

Grootaert and van Bastelaer (2002) also discuss this issue of scope as they identify how the concept is applied at three different levels of analysis, — the micro-level, the meso-level, and the macro-level. At the micro-level, i.e., individuals and households, Grootaert and van Bastelaer identify Robert Putnam as developing an influential analysis of social capital among civic associations in Italy. They state, “Putnam defines social capital as those features of social organization, such as networks of individuals or households, and the associated norms and values that create externalities for the community as a whole” (Grootaert and van Bastelaer 2002, 2).

The meso-level of analysis introduces a broader interpretation of social capital that examines relations among groups rather than individuals. This level of analysis considers the variety of groups that make up a social structure, and that facilitate the decisions of other groups within the structure (see Coleman 1990; Grootaert and van Bastelaer 2000). The concept of isomorphism (see DiMaggio and Powell 1983) is a useful tool for analyzing organizational decision making, and provides an explanation for the tendency of groups and organizations to imitate one another. According to DiMaggio and Powell, “Isomorphism is a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions” (1983, 149).

According to Grootaert and van Bastelaer, the macro-level of analysis provides the “most encompassing view of social capital [that] includes the social and political environment that shapes the social structure and enables norms to develop” (2002, 3). This approach examines the role of formal institutions and structures such as the political regime, the rule of law, and the court system that enable the development of social engagement and civic and political participation (Grootaert and van Bastelaer 2002; Franke, September 2005).

Some issues that arise from these various ways of conceptualizing social capital include: the notion of social capital as an individual or collective benefit, the idea that social capital can be positive or negative, and that social capital intersects or flows among the three levels of analysis and that change at one level can cause corresponding positive or negative change at another level (Franke September 2005; Grootaert and van Bastelaer 2002).

### **Social Capital and Networks**

Literature pertaining to social capital and networks is important to assessing and understanding the non-economic outcomes flowing from a community development group. These bodies of literature intersect as they focus on understanding the supportive aspects of social relationships among individuals and groups that enable people to work together to promote their common interests. From the perspective of social capital theorists, a *network* is a form of structural social capital that utilizes non-structural forms of social capital (i.e., shared values, norms, and aspects such as trust, generosity, fairness, and participation) to facilitate co-ordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Krishna and Upshoff 2002; Garcia 2006). Network theorists generally agree that networks are a form of social capital that can contribute to the further development of social capital. Sik and Wellman (1999) use the concept “network capital” to refer to those forms of social capital that derive from the use of pre-existing social networks.

#### *Building Network Connections*

Identification with a shared set of beliefs and values is a primary step in building a cohesive group, network, organization, or society. This cognitive social capital predisposes individuals towards working together to meet their common objectives, and is facilitated by structural social capital (community, rules, policy, norms, and public goods). In this way, these dimensions of social capital are the basis for the development of social networks. However, there

are a number of factors that determine the strength and scope of an individual's or group's social networks. With respect to the scope of a network, the ability to maintain and foster network connections that connect different social groups is key to building broad social networks (Granovetter 1974; 1983); whereas, strong network connections require the presence of social cohesion — identification with shared sets of values and beliefs — as a basis for effective group co-ordination.

Granovetter (1974; 1983) explores the advantages that different forms of network connections have for individuals. In doing so, he identifies three categories of ties based upon the strength (proximity) of the network relationship: weak, strong, and bridging (or bridging weak) ties. He indicates that weak ties, such as those with acquaintances, provide individuals with access to more information (i.e., job information) and resources than do strong ties, such as those with close friends; since “acquaintances ... are more prone to move in different circles than oneself” (1983, 205). He argues that bridging weak ties — ties that connect an individual in one group to an individual in another group — are of special value to individuals; and, that these weak ties are more significant in social groups that have certain commonalities (i.e., an occupational group). Comparatively, strong ties have greater motivation to be of assistance and are typically more easily available. However, for weak ties to be advantageous individuals must utilize them to acquire new information and seek out new opportunities.

For instance, Granovetter (1974) and Langlois (1977) suggest that managers and professionals were more likely to use weak ties to gain better information on job opportunities than other occupational groups. While Granovetter and Langlois studied the use of weak ties to discover new jobs, one would presume that managers and professionals are also using these weak ties to transfer other information that can be of benefit to organizations and network members. In this way, the constellation of weak ties that organizational managers are able to access in order to exchange information with other groups is an important form of network capital.

Granovetter found that professional, technical, and managerial workers were more likely to hear about new jobs through weak ties (27.8 percent) than strong ones (16.7 percent). Similarly, Langlois (1977) found that the most frequent users of bridging weak ties were by managers and professionals (in Granovetter 1983). While these studies focus on the exchange of job information, one might presume that this is true for other forms of information. In addition to Granovetter's argument that these occupations utilize the strength of weak ties to

a greater degree, one might also argue that these occupational groups have stronger communicative networks than other occupational groups do. As Pool suggests, “The number of weak ties is increased by the development of the communication system, by bureaucratization, population density, and the spread of the market mechanisms” (in Granovetter 1983, 210). In this way, the network capital of organizations that are a part of a community/business development network is improved when managers and professionals utilize their communicative networks to share information with those weak ties that are able to provide access to information from groups/individuals that have different commonalities.

The concept of social cohesion is useful when considering the type of factors that are characteristic of the ties that bind certain groups of people — social classes, professions, and persons of similar ethnic or religious backgrounds. Jenson (1998) defines social cohesion as “shared values and commitment to a community” (in Fairbairn 2004, 22). Interestingly, this conception of social cohesion is similar to the notion of cognitive social capital discussed previously. However, researchers and theorists distinguish social capital from social cohesion in terms of the scope of analysis that they apply. For instance, Dayton-Johnson suggests that social cohesion is a society-level characteristic inherent to a population (in Fairbairn 2004). Therefore, as cognitive social capital is present among individuals and/or groups, social cohesion is made possible. Arguably, networks that are capable of tapping into the social cohesion of their members are able to achieve stronger network connections that realize more bridge ties and are more effective in achieving their common goals.

### **Assessing Social Capital in the Workplace**

The way that people interact together in the workplace, as members of an organization or a team, provide different ways of thinking about social capital, cohesion, group behaviour — the elements that make up a community and a society. Moreover, different disciplines can frame the way that individuals think about themselves and their place in a community or organization. These ways of thinking frame how individuals identify themselves in the world and their place in it. For example, an individual’s occupation is often a key component of their identity that dictates how and who they interact with (i.e., it is quite likely that a doctor and a farmer will have very different networks or relational constellations from one another). The following section discusses this process of identification and identity building as it occurs in organizations. This process is important as the ability of members to

identify with common goals, objectives, and world-views, influences the efficacy of their organization.

### *Organizational Behaviour and Identification*

Organizational identification among members enables organizations to secure and co-ordinate the activities and behaviour of their members to meet organizational goals (Simon 2000). In this way, an organization is most effective when its members and decision-makers identify with the goals and objectives of the organization. Comparatively, organizations that are unable to secure and co-ordinate the behaviour of their members are less effective, as organizational members are more likely to use organizational resources to pursue their personal goals and objectives. These problems are widely discussed by property rights and transaction cost theorists (see Cook 1995; Fulton 2001).

In order for people to make sense of the world and their surroundings they make use of heuristics — cognitive sign posts that help individuals select information from the world around them according to the availability and intensity of the information (see Tversky and Kahneman 1974). Such heuristics are the basis of “the mental structures that people impose on the world to make sense of it” (Fulton and Gibbings 2004, 167). Fulton and Gibbings refer to these mental structures as cognitive models. Cognitive models provide a structure to the world: first, by classifying events, objects and people according to value-based criteria; and, second, creating a narrative that makes sense of and validates the classification (Heit 2007, 15). For the organization, a diversity of cognitive models can help organizations to process information and respond to changes in their environment. At other times, organizational co-ordination can be hindered when the cognitive models of organizational members are too different.

Similar to Fulton and Gibbings’s notion of cognitive models, Prahalad and Bettis (1995; 1986) develop the concept of a dominant logic that filters information from the external environment. According to Prahalad and Bettis, organizational managers use the dominant logic to first screen information from the environment and then incorporate this information into “the strategy, systems, values and expectations, and reinforced behaviour of the organization” (1995, 7).

This concept of identification (here, organizational identification) is discussed throughout this section, as identification with a shared set of goals/objectives, values, and beliefs is

critical to the formation of cognitive social capital and group and societal cohesion. Moreover, identification is an important part of an individual's or group's identity building process — a process that connects people to a particular place, culture, organization, team, or community.

### *Belonging and Efficacy in Organizations and Teams*

Walker (2007) provides some insight regarding the effectiveness of groups of individuals working together as members of organizations, communities, groups, and teams. His research applies an ecological perspective to identify and explain the various internal and external pressures that cause the performance or success of teams to ebb and flow. In so doing, Walker identifies several characteristics of effective teams: shared vision and purpose, collaborative culture, supportive and trustworthy environment, and an expectation of continued improvement and mindfulness. Walker's research supports the argument that positive social capital among group members is a requisite of effective teams.

Blatt and Camden (2007) studied the experiences of the temporary workers in the workplace to explore their understandings or sense of community. Their research takes the position that temporary employees can have positive relationships and develop a sense of community in the workplace. Blatt and Camden suggest that sense of community for temporary employees comprises four dimensions: *inclusion, felt sense of importance, mutual benefit, and shared emotions with others at work* (2007, 253; italics added). Interestingly, they also found that some of the respondents felt it was important to maintain an optimal level of social distance, so as not to mistake that the sense of community has permanence. Kahn (2007) also identified five dimensions of meaningful connections at work: *task accomplishment, career development, sense making, provision of meaning, and personal support*. These dimensions of meaningful connections at work dovetail with Blatt and Camden's dimensions that comprise a sense of community among temporary workers. Table 1 lists the dimensions of meaningful connections and work and a sense of community among temporary workers that Kahn and Blatt and Camden highlight, respectively.

This research suggests a connection between the positive/meaningful experiences of individuals in the workplace, those experiences that build group cohesion and social capital, and the characteristics of effective teams. Presumably, highly effective teams create an organizational culture that fosters positive/meaningful experiences that are quite strong and more frequent. Blatt and Camden's and Kahn's research also suggests that the positive/meaningful

work experiences of individuals in the workplace are comprised of both personal benefits (i.e., personal support, inclusion, and career development) and shared emotional experiences (sense making, shared emotions with others at work, and provision of meaning) that might foster or contribute to a sense of identity or cohesion among workers. As such, it is likely that highly effective teams are able to provide team members with experiences that are both personally beneficially and relationship building.

Table 1: Dimensions of meaningful connections at work vs. dimensions of a sense of community among temporary workers

Dimensions of Meaningful Connections at Work *	Dimensions of a Sense of Community among Temporary Workers **
Task accomplishment	Mutual Benefit
Personal support	Inclusion
Sense making	Felt sense of importance
Provision of meaning	Shared emotions with others at work
Career development	
* (Kahn 2007)	
** (Blatt and Camden 2007)	

*Analyzing Social Networks*

The concepts developed in the previous sections provide the basis for a social network approach that can be used to analyze the characteristics of various social networks. According to Wellman, this approach “focus[es] on social relations and social structures — wherever they may be located and whoever they may be with” (1999, 15). Wellman identifies three advantages that this approach offers:

1. It avoids the assumption that people necessarily interact in neighbourhoods, kinship groups, or other bounded solidarities.
2. Its ability to study linkages at all scales, ranging from interpersonal relations to world systems, facilitates the analytical linkage of everyday lives with large-scale social change.
3. It has developed a set of techniques, both qualitative and quantitative, for discovering, describing, and analyzing the presence, composition, structure and operations of interpersonal networks (1999, 17–18).

For Wellman, one of the key benefits of this approach is that it disengages the notion of community from its “traditional preoccupation with solidarity and neighbourhood” and examines the idea of community in terms of “the community relationships that people actually

have rather than on the places where they live or the solidarity sentiments they have” (1999, 17). In this way, the network approach enables researchers to discuss notions of community, as they exist among various types of groups and various settings — places of work, public spaces, and private spaces. Moreover, it appreciates reflexive relationships and attachments that occur as a result of the blending of cosmopolitan and local perspectives and identities.

Timo (2006) applies a social network approach to analyze and interpret network connections according to their spatial and social density. In terms of spatial density, Timo distinguishes between dense and sparse networks. He indicates that this measure “is intended to capture the location (or size of the area) where th[e] social network operates” (2006, 10). With respect to social density, Timo distinguishes between tight and loose networks. For Timo, tight networks have more connections between individual members, whereas loose networks have fewer connections between persons. This is different from Granovetter’s concepts of strong and weak ties, which refers to the “closeness” or intimacy among network members.

This social networks approach is useful in terms of characterizing the type of relationships that comprise a network of community-based organizations. Moreover, this approach is useful in terms of providing a comparative analysis of the relationships that comprise the different networks that exist within a large population of individuals, groups, or organizations. As such, these concepts are used to map and analyze the characteristics of the organizational networks presented in this paper.

## NETWORK ORGANIZATIONS, COLLABORATIONS, AND ANALYSIS

**T**HIS SECTION BEGINS with an overview of the methodology that was used to collect information from the organizations that were identified as participants in the research project and/or members of the E-Centre network. This is followed by brief descriptions of the participating organizations, including details of a number of the projects and collaborations on which these organizations have partnered.

This section then undertakes a qualitative analysis of the E-Centre network, applying the tools and methodologies of social network theorists. In doing so, it identifies and characterizes the relational constellations that exist among E-Centre network members. Additionally, it highlights some of the structural and cognitive forms of social capital that build and shape the relational constellations that exist among the network members. The section concludes with a discussion of some of the issues and challenges that limit the ability of network members to build a more cohesive, and thus stronger, network. Some of these issues and challenges might be characterized as negative forms of cognitive and/or structural social capital.

### **Methodology**

Primary research took place over a two-month period in the autumn of 2007. In mid-October, the researcher met with representatives from several of the agencies that were identified as members of the E-Centre network. A proposed research plan was presented to those in attendance. The group decided to adopt a research plan that included face-to-face interviews supplemented by e-mail questionnaires and a group interview/discussion. The face-to-face interviews were planned for late November 2007, in order to accommodate

provincial government agencies unable to participate in the research during the campaign period of the 2007 Saskatchewan provincial election.

Prior to the face-to-face interviews, two short e-mail questionnaires were forwarded to groups and agencies that were identified as research participants by the E-Centre or a partner organization. One of the questionnaires sought background information on the participating organizations in order to help the researcher to prepare/supplement the face-to-face interviews. The other questionnaire sought information that might be used to stimulate discussion in the group interview/discussion.

The researcher conducted eight face-to-face interviews over the course of three days in the community. Interviews ranged from twenty to ninety minutes in length. All interviews were digitally recorded. Some interviews included more than one representative of a particular organization. Generally, interviews were held at the organization's office, while in some instances they were held in a public space. The interviews were semi-structured and often took a conversational approach. Several questions probed the organization's linkage/connection with other network members or groups in the community. Other questions focused on the characteristics of the community, groups/individuals that used the services of that organization, and the characteristics/dimensions of successful and unsuccessful collaborations. The researcher transcribed each of these interviews in the following weeks.

The researcher also held a group discussion with five of the interviewee respondents to share some general observations and discuss issues of community, social capital formation and measurement and other issues relevant to the group. The discussion was semi-structured and often took a conversational approach. The discussion was digitally recorded and lasted for nearly two hours. The researcher did not transcribe this interview.

In late November 2007, the researcher conducted a phone interview with a representative of one the network organizations that was not able to take part in the face-to-face interview process. This phone interview was also semi-structured and took a conversational approach. It was digitally recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

In addition to the interviews, the researcher also met informally with stakeholders from the member network organizations at conferences and workshops in the spring of 2008. These meetings provided further background knowledge that the researcher has used to improve the discussion and analysis detailed in this report.

It is important to mention that two organizations that were identified as potential re-

search participants were not interviewed. These were Community Futures Southwest and Action Southwest. Short profiles of these organizations are included in this report as these organizations play an important role in the E-Centre Network.

### **Network Organizations**

The following organizations were identified as network members and project participants at two preliminary project meetings held in September and October 2007. A brief description of each organization is provided here.

#### *South West Centre for Entrepreneurial Development*

The South West Centre for Entrepreneurial Development (also referred to as “the E-Centre” or “the Centre”) is a non-profit organization that provides services to entrepreneurs and small businesses such as entrepreneurial training, business facilitation, a small loans program, and networking. It also provides a place that entrepreneurs, small businesses, and/or community groups can use as office space or event and meeting space. The Centre has actively participated with others groups to develop programs and events that focus on issues relevant to entrepreneurs, businesses, and other community members. For instance, the Centre worked with Canada Border Services to host an import/export workshop, and it has worked with Saskatchewan Economic Developers Association (SEDA) to offer a problem-solving workshop.

The Centre manager and two support staff direct the day-to-day activities of the Centre. The Centre manager reports to a board of directors that consists of local entrepreneurs. Some of the organizations that are housed at the Centre include: the Southwest REDA, Saskatchewan Regional Economic and Co-operative Development, Community Futures, and the Family Resource Centre.

#### *Southwest Regional Economic Development Authority (Southwest REDA)*

The Southwest REDA assists communities in the Southwest Region of the province to develop their local economies. The organization focuses on community development issues such as labour attraction and retention, which has been an important area of focus for the organization. The activities of the Southwest REDA are monitored by a board of directors

comprised of community leaders from around the region. The Southwest REDA also receives arm's-length funding from the provincial government, and reports to the department of Regional Economic and Co-operative Development. The Southwest REDA employs two full-time staff members.

#### *Saskatchewan Regional Economic and Co-operative Development (RECD)*

Regional Economic and Co-operative Development is the former name for the Saskatchewan Government's Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation. RECD works with partner organizations in the region to assist with community economic development and entrepreneurial development. The RECD office in Swift Current provides funding and support for four REDAs located in southwest and west central Saskatchewan. The two employees in the Swift Current office manage an area that extends from the Canada-US border to the north of Kindersley, SK. The area also went from the outskirts of Saskatoon, SK in the east to the Saskatchewan-Alberta border.

#### *Community Futures Southwest*

Community Futures Southwest is a federally sponsored agency that promotes community and economic development projects in the Southwest Region of Saskatchewan. Community Futures Southwest, like other community futures organizations across Saskatchewan and western Canada, operates under the arm of Western Diversification. Community Futures Southwest has been active on a number of different projects in and around the region, and has played an active role in co-ordinating Action Southwest. Community Futures Southwest is housed in the E-Centre.

#### *Family Resource Centre*

The Family Resource Centre supports parents in Swift Current. The centre provides services and programming that empowers parents providing them with skills and a supportive network of agencies, support workers, and other parents. The Family Resource Centre provides one-on-one support for parents, home visits, teen parent support, access to a resource library of current books and magazines, group parenting classes; and many other specialized programs (e.g., BREAK and KISS) that bring parents together with their children. The Family Resource Centre currently has one full-time staff and two part-time staff.

### *Swift Current Friendship Centre*

The Swift Current Friendship Centre provides youth with recreational and after-school programs. These programs are primarily aimed at engaging Aboriginal and Métis youth, but other members of the community are also welcome to participate in Friendship Centre programs. Perhaps, the most successful program that the Friendship Centre offers is an after-school boxing program that brings in between twenty-five and thirty children and adults twice a week, from communities as far away as Shaunavon and Gull Lake.

The Friendship Centre was previously located in the Entrepreneurial Centre, but has now moved to a location several blocks east of the downtown. The Friendship Centre's floor hockey program still operates in the E-Centre gymnasium.

### *Career and Employment Services*

Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services assists job-seeking clients in the finding job and career information, as well as finding ways to help clients improve their employability by providing them with training and skills development information. The organization also assists employers by advertising their position and connecting them with resource information and potential workers. The Swift Current office of Career and Employment Service employs six staff, and is located in the E.I. Wood Building a couple of block west of the city's downtown.

### *Services Canada*

Services Canada (previously known as Human Resources Development Canada) is the client service access point for individuals needing to make inquiries or deal with the federal government. For example, individuals wanting to apply for a social insurance number, for Canada Pension or unemployment insurance benefits can do so at a Service Canada office. Services Canada's Swift Current office manages satellite offices in the surrounding communities of Shaunavon, Maple Creek, Kindersley, Davidson, Gravelbourg, Assiniboia, and Moose Jaw. The Swift Current office is located in that city's downtown.

### *Fresh Start*

Fresh Start is a youth program that helps at risk youth in Swift Current. The program, which has been running since 2000, incorporates three components: education, employment,

and empowerment. The Fresh Start program receives funding from Services Canada. Fresh Start also received two years of funding from Career and Employment Services to add an adult component to its program. Fresh Start has six employees. It is not located in the Entrepreneurial Centre.

#### *Southwest Crisis Services*

Southwest Crisis Services is a non-profit organization that was originally formed in 1984 when two community service groups merged. One group was focused on helping victims of family violence, while the other group was concerned with victims of sexual assault. Today, the mandate of crisis services is much broader and in addition to its crisis phone line and safe shelter for women and children affected by abuse or family violence, the organization also offers a men's outreach program. The men's outreach program is operated in the Entrepreneurial Centre.

### **Types of Network Organizations**

The E-Centre network consists of several types of organizational forms that may be distinguished in terms of the organization's ownership and governance structures and/or the type of service it offers. In terms of ownership, the network organizations include not-for-profits (non-owned organizations) and government agencies/departments (publicly-owned organizations). Table 2 lists the E-Centre network organizations according to their ownership structure.

Table 2: Network organizations according to ownership structure

<b>Not-for-Profit</b>	<b>Government Agency/Department</b>
South West Centre for Entrepreneurial Development	Community Futures Southwest
Southwest REDA	Regional Economic and Co-operative Development
Family Resource Centre	Services Canada
Crisis Services	Can-Sask Career and Employment Services
Fresh Start	Swift Current Friendship Centre

Among the not-for-profit organizations list above, the governance structure of the Southwest REDA is quite unique. REDAs throughout Saskatchewan receive funding from

both municipal and provincial governments; and, since the mandate of REDAs is to promote regional economic development their boards are comprised of local municipal leaders and key stakeholders from the business community. However, because the REDAs receive significant financial support and direction from the provincial government they must also report to the provincial government on an annual basis to have their work plans and financials statements reviewed and approved.

E-Centre network organizations can also be differentiated according to the type of service that they provide to the community — business/economic development or community, social, and/or human service development. Table 3 lists the E-Centre network organizations according to the type of service they provide.

Table 3: Network organizations according to type

<b>Business/Economic Development</b>	<b>Community/Social Service Development</b>
South West Centre for Entrepreneurial Development	Crisis Services
Southwest REDA	Swift Current Friendship Centre
Community Futures Southwest	Family Resource Centre
Regional Economic and Co-operative Development	Fresh Start
Action Southwest	Can-Sask Career and Employment Services
Can-Sask Career and Employment Services	Services Canada
Services Canada	

Distinguishing organizational types according to these criteria is somewhat subjective as the mandates and programming of some organizations might be interpreted as having both economic and social dimensions, hence the inclusion of some organizations in both the business/economic development and community/social service development fields. However, for the purposes of this research project, it is useful to differentiate these organizations according to the types of services they provide. As the following examples of collaboration will illustrate, these groupings do exemplify some of the relational ties that exist among the E-Centre network organizations.

### **Examples of Collaboration**

The following collaborations highlight some of the relational constellations that exist among the network organizations and other groups operating in the Southwest Region.

This list is not exhaustive. It is meant only to illustrate some of the typical linkages or connections that exist among network organizations and the projects that flow from these relationships.

### *Southwest Tourist Map*

The Southwest Tourist Map collaboration brought together businesses, economic development organizations, and other groups from across the Southwest Region that shared a common interest in promoting the region's tourism destinations. In 2006, the map committee passed the initiative on to the private enterprise Mooseworld Inc. to continue the project. The success of the project earned the map committee recognition as a finalist in the 2006 Saskatchewan Tourism Awards of Excellence (Action Southwest web site).

Table 4: Southwest tourist map project participants

#### **The Southwest Tourist Map Team: Contributors and Committee Members**

Sask Landing Golf Resort (general manager, chaired the group)	Action Southwest
The Gravelbourg Inn and CeesBro Digital Service	EC
Red Coat REDA	Mooseworld Inc.
Southwest REDA	Anchor Marina
The Crossing Resort	Town of Mossbank
Community Futures Southwest	Marnie's Coffee Shop
RM of Gull Lake	RECD
And members of the map design team	

### *Manufacturing Week*

Identification and promotion of the region's manufacturing capacity has been an important project for business and economic development organizations in the Southwest Region. In 2007, a group was formed to create a video profiling five manufacturers in the Southwest Region. The project planned to provide participating firms with a copy of their profile to use as a promotional tool on their website or in presentations. Additionally, the group planned to develop a full-length video to highlight business and labour opportunities in the region (Action Southwest web site).

Table 5: Manufacturing week project participants

**The Manufacturing Week Team**

- Lead: Saskatchewan Industry and Resources
- Action Southwest
- RECD
- EC
- Can-Sask Career and Employment Services
- Community Futures Southwest
- Southwest REDA
- City of Swift Current
- Swift Current Chamber of Commerce

*Crisis Services / Can-Sask Career and Employment Services Job Skills Project*

A lack of economic independence is a factor that often contributes to women remaining in relationships with an abusive partner or spouse. Improving the ability of women to gain a good income and meaningful employment can help women to avoid or remove themselves from abusive relationships. Recognizing the importance of economic factors in cycles of domestic violence, Crisis Services and Can-Sask Career and Employment Services have collaborated on a series of courses directed towards Crisis Services’s clients that require support and assistance to build the confidence and skills required to find and successfully apply for a job. Additionally, Career Services has also worked with Services Canada (formerly HRDC) to access funding to provide clients with skills training (e.g., computer training) and resume-building and job-finding skills. It has also been indicated that some Crisis Services clients have been able to access employment funding programs through Service Canada to gain employment with other network organizations.

*Aboriginal Workforce Toolkit*

Since its early days, the Friendship Centre has had a close working relationship with the E-Centre. The Friendship Centre was first housed in the E-Centre building, and although the Friendship Centre has since moved into its own building, the two organizations continue to partner on projects and share resources. The Aboriginal Workforce Toolkit is one such collaboration. In this case, the E-Centre contributed a youth worker (hired through an HRDC program) to work with the Friendship Centre on developing the toolkit. According to one interviewee, the collaboration was especially beneficial to the youth worker, who has since moved on to pursue further educational opportunities.

*Think Futures Conference*

The Think Futures Conference was a labour attraction and retention conference that provided employers with resources and strategies to address changes occurring in the labour market. The conference was organized by the Southwest REDA in partnership with Swift Current's Labour Attraction and Retention Committee (LARC). The following excerpt from one of the organizations that partnered in the event provides some of the motive behind the conference:

... the feedback was completely positive, the employers that came were just so grateful for the information because they're realizing that, "Good grief, there's this labour shortage going on, and it's only going to get worse." So they need to start thinking differently, thinking futures, that's why that term was coined. So, employers that attended are saying, "Wow, you've got to do this again." And we've already talked about, maybe not next year, but in a year or two, and using those employers through their word of mouth and their networks for promotion of the event to bring more employers on, and it just came together really, really nicely — everything, from the facilities, to the flow, and the participants and the information, and it was really something great to be involved with. (Transcript 6)

As the excerpt indicates, the conference was considered to be a success by both the attendees and the organizers.

*Informal Collaborations among Community Service Organizations*

Collaborations among these organizations are often aimed at assisting a shared client or developing another organization's capacity. The collaborations are much more intimate or personal in nature given the type of the services that these organizations deliver. For instance, these organizations rely on one another for peer counseling, advice, and other forms of mutual support. The following quote describes the central role that the manager of Crisis Services provides to one of these organizations.

It's not a referral [based relationship]. I use her. I am connected to her. I would be linked to her in the sense that I tap into her expertise. She has been in this business for a long, long time, and sort of over the years ... I mean I was just working on some sort of by-laws and stuff for our board, sort of reformulating

that, and she knows how to do a lot of that stuff. So that's where I would go to her, it's an expertise sort of thing, or a resource for expertise. I just know that when I would run into a snag that she would probably have some ideas,... so that is how I would see my relationship with her. The rest of them are really just acquaintances; I haven't been partnered with them any way, shape, or form. (Transcript 9)

Another interviewee also indicated that her organization has received support from Crisis Services:

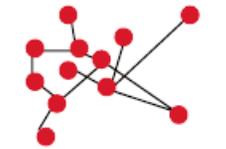
I have contacted them just to get suggestions of grant funding and applications and what to do. They've helped out a lot when it comes to finding additional funds and being supportive.... And, like some of our large equipment ... Crisis Services ... couldn't use [it] so they donated it to us. (Transcript 8)

As the responses of these interviewees indicate, Crisis Services is instrumental in providing information and capacity-building resources to these other community service organizations. In part, this is possible because of the high profile that the organization has within the community, which enables it to divert surplus resources to other organizations. As well, the organization has a strong leader that is accessible and willing to share information and knowledge with other community service organizations. For example, Crisis Services has helped these organizations apply for grants and other program funding. Additionally, Crisis Services has made donations to the Friendship Centre in the form of used office equipment, and food donations to the Family Resource Centre for its snack program and Fresh Start for its meal programs, as well as providing clothes and other necessities to the clients of these organizations.

### **Network Analysis**

Applying the network topographies used by Timo (2006), the participant organizations, as a whole, can be characterized as a dense/loose network (see Figure 1, overleaf). The network has significant structural (spatial) density, as many of the organizations are located in the E-Centre building, or have operated programs from that building. Moreover, none of the participant organizations are located outside of the City of Swift Current, although many of the organizations extend their services and program offerings to individuals, clients, and other stakeholders located throughout the Southwest Region.

The network relations may also be characterized as loose, since the economic and business development organizations generally collaborate with one another; whereas, the community service organizations generally seek out one another for assistance with funding



**Dense/loose**

Figure 1: Dense/loose network or relational constellation (Timo 2006)

applications or for additional support/resources to meet client needs. There are, however, a few bridge ties that connect these two groups that facilitate information sharing and collaboration. These bridge ties include the structural network linkages (capital) that the E-Centre builds, as well as the cognitive network linkages (capital) — collaborative organizational cultures and collaborative mindsets — that direct the decision making of many of the network organizations. It is these bridge ties that, according to Granovetter (1983), connect different

groups, allowing individuals or organizations to realize new opportunities, since information sharing among strong ties and/or weak ties of a similar group is less likely to reveal new information. These bridge ties are often described as the pathfinding/referral services that many of these network organizations provide to the public.

Alternatively, if the community service organizations and the economic development organizations are grouped accordingly, the resulting networks might then be characterized as dense/tight networks (see Figure 2). In this case, the relationships among the economic and business development organizations appear to be tighter than the relationships among the community service organizations, as the latter group appears to be more connected to one another than the former group. These apparently tighter relationships that exist among economic and business development organizations are in part a result of the formal nature of the collaborations that these organizations generate — partnering on grant applications and projects, working together on project committees, planning meetings, and attending each other's events. Since these projects require successive interactions to complete, these ties might be characterized as strong network ties. Moreover, since these collaborations and projects are more visible, they are easily identifiable to network members and researchers.



**Dense/tight**

Figure 2: Dense/tight network or relational constellation (Timo 2006)

Comparatively, the informal collaborations that generally characterize the interactions among the community service organizations might be characterized as “looser” than those

that characterize economic development organizations. One might hypothesize that the community service organization ties are somewhat “looser” since these informal collaborations are opportunistic or circumstantial encounters that occur when one organization has resources that it can lend/offer to another. However, these collaborations appear to be somewhat more frequent when the organizations serve a similar client population; as such, these ties can grow to become more formalized and “tighter.”

### **Structural Social (Network) Capital**

Structural social (network) capital is the skeleton for the collaborative relationships that exist among the study participants. According to Krishna and Uphoff, “structural social capital *facilitates* information sharing and collective action and decision making through established roles and social networks supplemented by rules, procedures, and precedents” (2002, 87). In this way, the existence of a social network is one measure of the structural social capital of the study participants. Importantly, some of the conditions that predetermine the formation of this social network include the decision to develop the E-Centre as a business development centre and business incubator, and the decision by stakeholder organizations (RECD, Southwest REDA, Community Futures Southwest) to co-locate in the same building — a decision based on common norms, attitudes, and beliefs (cognitive social capital) that predisposes people to work together (Krishna and Uphoff 2002). Subsequently, a number of procedural decisions have been made to encourage further collaboration among these early stakeholder organizations and later network members.

Some of the procedural decisions that have helped to build organizational collaboration and structural social capital include:

- **Autonomous Governance:** When the E-Centre was first formed, tenant organizations such as RECD, Community Futures Southwest, and Southwest REDA were representatives on the board. This governance structure was problematic, as the board meetings became a place where organizational differences and competing agendas were, from time to time, played out. As a result, the governance structure of the E-Centre was modified. Today, E-Centre directors include entrepreneurs and businesspersons from the community who have an interest in the organization.
- **Policy of Non-Competition with Tenants:** The E-Centre makes it a policy to not compete with tenant organizations for grants or other funding sources. This policy

enables a supportive and friendly working relationship between tenant organizations and the E-Centre. Arguably, the policy might also be a factor in the E-Centre's involvement in a number of different collaborations, as it is often viewed as a resource and support for organizations wanting to apply for funding dollars.

Additionally, there are a number of other characteristics or physical attributes of the E-Centre that enables it to build and develop structural social capital. Some of these characteristics are:

- **Location:** The City of Swift Current is the primary service hub for the Southwest Region of the province.
- **Office space:** The E-Centre building houses five business and economic development organizations active in the region. As such it is a meeting place for organizations that are working to improve the region's economic performance. Additionally, the E-Centre is a business incubator that provides office space to entrepreneurs and small businesses that may require additional or temporary space at an affordable cost.
- **Public space/meeting space:** The E-Centre also acts as a meeting place — it has a business library, office space, and meeting rooms that individuals and groups can access at low cost.

Importantly, the E-Centre also extends these services to community service organizations, such as Crisis Services and the Family Resource Centre. In this way, it contributes to the development of network capital by creating the conditions for business and economic development groups and community service organizations to build and strengthen linkages. One of the ways that the E-Centre does this is by extending incubation services to community service organizations that require an affordable rental space. These community service organizations are especially attracted to the E-Centre, as it can offer the tenant organization and their clientele access to a kitchen, group meeting rooms, a gym space, and other services, including Internet access. Community groups also use the E-Centre as a meeting place for events such as workshops, conferences, and community events.

### **Cognitive Social (Network) Capital**

There is a strong collaborative culture that exists among both the business/economic development organizations and the community service organizations. Interestingly, this collaborative culture is born of organizations that work hard and struggle to maintain

their autonomy. Connections arise from a desire to seek out meaningful or purposeful organizational relationships. Individual agency, in terms of autonomy and identification, is a critical part of the formation of relational constellations and cognitive social capital among the E-Centre network organizations. For example, the E-Centre would not have come into being if network members did not choose to situate themselves under the same roof as other economic and business development organizations. Moreover, what makes these collaborations effective is that while network organizations have strong collaborative tendencies, they are free to choose which collaborations they want to participate in, declining those that do not match their interests. Therefore, as organizations identify with a common purpose or goal, they create the foundation for cognitive network capital development.

According to Krishna and Uphoff, “[C]ognitive social capital ... includes shared norms, values, attitudes and beliefs [that] *predispose* people toward mutually beneficial collective action” (2002, 87; emphasis in original). The cognitive social (network) capital that exists among these organizations is the result of a culture that understands and values the importance of collaboration. As one interviewee stated,

I think we have to a large degree a common purpose or goal or vision, in that we want the people that we work with, and there are some common people and they’re common to agencies [while] some are quite separate, but overall we are wanting the best for the particular group that we work with.... (Transcript 12)

Moreover, network members generally have a positive attitude towards working together. They search for opportunities to partner and leverage each other’s expertise, skills, and relational constellations for their own (mutual) benefit. The following interview excerpt highlights the positive attitude toward collaborations:

I think another thing that brings us together as a community is the recognition, particularly in a centre the size of Swift Current and within southwest Saskatchewan, [that] we don’t have tonnes of different community-based organizations and agencies like in Regina or Saskatoon, where there’s lots and lots of bigger organizations. We’re each kind of small and doing our own thing, and we need to work together. And I think there is a recognition that “I can’t do it all,” but maybe if I phone [name withheld] at the Entrepreneurial Centre, for example, or whoever, we can put our heads together and come up with something — where she comes up

with something and I come up with something to help a client that is common to both of us, sort of a reliance on each other. (Transcript 6)

Additionally, network members appear to believe in the potential and opportunity that lies within their community. They recognize and exploit the assets within their community — whether they are economic, physical, human, and/or social capital assets.

Many of the network organizations, particularly those with scarce resources and/or strong histories or cultures of collaboration, were skilled at making asset assessments of available community and network resources. These groups were especially good at identifying or linking with groups that could identify resources that these organizations could benefit from. The E-Centre's own lack of resources (personnel and core funding) has forced the organization to become highly skilled at identifying community assets, programming, and collaborative partnerships as a means of developing new programs and services for entrepreneurs, and to acquire or leverage resources that the organization can use. The following excerpt indicates how the E-Centre has been able to use partnerships and collaborations to deliver programs that they would not be able to provide on their own:

We partner with other organizations to deliver workshops, and again it is always about doing things on a shoestring, because we are non-profit, we have no core funding, and we certainly don't compete with our tenants for funding dollars. Recently, SEDA [Saskatchewan Economic Developers Association] offered its collaborative problem-solving workshops. And so I put in a quick call and said, "I'll provide space in consideration for one seat in the program." So [we] partner[ed] with Action Southwest and we had a full house. (Transcript 4)

Some organizations also provide an important information-sharing and path-finding role for other organizations that face similar resource deficits. Often, these information and path-finding roles develop into counseling and support type roles. The researcher observed that those organizations experienced and skilled at providing path-finding services to their clients appeared more likely to provide similar services to network members and their clients.

### **Mindset — Values, Norms, and Attitudes**

Effective partnerships and collaborations are realized when an organization's cognitive model or mindset — values, beliefs, norms, and attitudes — identifies with a logic

of co-operation and mutual self-help rather than an individualistic logic which more often leads organizations to compete with one another for resources (Heit 2007; Bager 1995). The organizational mindsets of the network members highlight a number of attitudes, values, and belief systems that illustrate a shared identification with a logic of co-operation and a shared desire to partner to achieve their mutual goals, including obtaining resources to support their organizations. These mindsets are also influenced by the values and beliefs that are a part of the social fabric and identity of southwest Saskatchewan.

### *A “Bridging” Logic*

In order for community service organizations and business/economic development organizations to collaborate effectively on a continual basis, they must share a common belief or understanding as to how their working together can meet their common goals (albeit sometimes with distinct objectives). This “bridging” logic was most noticeable among the two organizations identified as “bridge” ties among and between the respective networks: the South West Centre for Entrepreneurial Development and Crisis Services. Both organizations expressed a broad, holistic approach as a requirement to achieve their goals or vision for their community and clientele. As the executive director for Crisis Services stated:

[O]ur biggest problem for our female victims and ... for our fellows too, is economic independence. That’s a huge thing. If you are economically independent or have the means to take care of yourself, you are not necessarily as likely to get mixed up with somebody who is not going to treat you well. But some of our women, frankly, they stay because financially they are so strapped on their own with young kids. So that economic piece is often very important, so we have partnered with [Can-Sask Career and Employment Services] staff to have groups for women. In fact, we just concluded one in the fall that was designed not only as self-esteem, power building, but also to learn how to write a resume, how to go to an interview. (Transcript 3)

As the example illustrates, Crisis Services understands that in order to improve the lives of their clients, they must look at some of the underlying economic issues that may hinder the ability of their clients to effectively deal with their problems.

On the other hand, the E-Centre believes that in order to have a strong and vibrant business sector, workers and their families must have the social supports that they require for their physical and mental wellness. As the manager of the E-Centre stated,

[W]e want to support entrepreneurship and community development, and we looked at some of the needs in the community and we could see where the economic development folks were key to this piece of the facility, but we could see there was a whole lot more. And that was if you look in the business community you can see that you have a balance between business and families, and the supports for the families are very important. Because healthy workers come from healthy families, and that creates thriving businesses. And that was kind of the approach that we used as we moved forward, and I saw that there was a need with some of the family organizations. (Transcript 15)

To this end, the E-Centre has worked with groups such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Crisis Services, the Friendship Centre, and the Family Resource Centre, and has provided them with a home in the Entrepreneurial Centre building.

One of the most important indications of this “bridging logic” are the many referrals that Crisis Services and the E-Centre provide to organizations and individuals (including their own clientele) that might benefit from the services and/or resources provided by their organizational counterpart. Representatives from both organizations indicated that client referrals were an important benefit that they provided to individuals and the community. More specifically, they referred to those occasions when an organization such as the E-Centre could follow-up and build upon the services of the other organization to help a specific individual improve their skills and get through a difficult time in their life as especially rewarding. Measuring the human capital outcomes that derive from these sorts of network relationships was identified as an area of research that the network and study participants would like to explore in the near future.

#### *A Belief in Organizational Autonomy as a Key to Effective Collaboration*

Respect for organizational autonomy is a key to making effective collaborations with other network organizations. This intersection of autonomy and collaboration are revealed in many of the collaborative efforts that the E-Centre and other network organizations are engaged in. For example, while E-Centre staff are quite willing to work with and support a number of organizations or individuals, they are also aware that at some point they must go their separate ways in order for both parties to develop:

When I see organizations come and go, I see that as a good thing, you know. I

mean, I remember sitting down at the Friendship Centre to write the first proposal for funding; it was great to see them get some funding to move forward; it was great to have them as a tenant, because it brought them together with other community players right here, and it created opportunities for them to share with some clients, it may have been clients with other organizations here. The gym created an opportunity for the boxing program and the floor hockey and other activities, and that was good because it starts to create a foundation. And it is great to see the Friendship Centre move on because what that means is that they have outgrown this place, you know, we're an incubator, and they've outgrown us. They're always welcome to come back if they want to for whatever, and they continue to offer the floor hockey program through here, so those links are there, and maybe we can help each other grow. (Transcript 15)

Flexibility is an important way of ensuring autonomy during the course of collaborative projects. As the E-Centre manager stated,

So when you go back to, what are your relationships? The relationships are flexible ... at the centre of the relationship is always respect for the other individual, a deep sense of respect. Understanding that we don't need to be on the same page, that organizations are autonomous, and it's about the freedom to do what they need to do, and the opportunity to come together and work together as it presents. (Transcript 15)

On other occasions, in order to be flexible and respect organizational autonomy, an organization might decide to remove itself from a particular collaboration. There have been occasions when a network organization has moved on from a particular collaboration because it no longer fit the organizations vision or mandate. For instance, the Entrepreneurial Centre decided to discontinue its participation in a conference that focused on women's issues, but has continued to work with the same organizations on other projects that are of common interest.

### *The Great Southwest — Pride and Self-Reliance*

The communities and people that make-up southwest Saskatchewan have a firm understanding of their place and identity. The rural and remote character of this region of the

province has fostered identification with a concept of self-reliance and a fierce pride in the history, geography, and character of the land and people of that region. This identification and resulting identity leads to a reflexive type of social cohesion. A cohesion that respects and promotes individual self-reliance as an important competency to engage in business and economic life, but a notion of self-reliance that is and can be expanded to include a conception of a community working together to meet a common goal. This is a goal or objective that is much larger than any one individual and that requires the efforts and talents of a community to be achieved. This identity explains the southwest's strong identification with the economic entrepreneur and the co-operative community-minded citizen. It also helps to explain the competition and collaboration that occurs among communities and groups within the region.

### **Issues and Challenges Facing Network Organizations**

Interview participants highlighted numerous examples of effective and successful collaboration with other network members. Despite these successes, many participating organizations indicated that there were some issues that hindered their ability to work more effectively. Some of these issues are discussed below.

#### *Underfunding and Territorialism*

Many of the E-Centre network organizations identified a lack of funding as their biggest challenge. Many of the network organizations suffer from persistent underfunding, which is causing some of these organizations to become increasingly territorial as they compete for scarce funding resources:

... at the same time, your biggest partner in terms of innovation and creativity is also your biggest competition ... there is no way that as organizations we can do what we need to do when we are fighting each other. And as long as things are chronically under-funded and you are territorial and you're looking to beat that person for money, I don't think that changes. (Transcript 5)

Other interviewees reiterated this point:

Anybody else that has been a non-profit for a really long time sure doesn't like to

share a lot of information. They're scared to give up anything, [be]cause I might take a little bit of their funding. It's not my intent because if I can help somebody out, I am sure winging them over to their area. And that's another big challenge for us, because it's like, "Ooh, another non-profit in the city. Oh no, horning in on our money." (Transcript 2)

It is difficult to determine the real extent to which territorialism affects the organizations in this network. There does appear to be some tension between a few organizations, as they position themselves to benefit from potential changes in the provincial government's economic vision for the province:

I think right now, there is huge competition for funding, and ... because there is a government change, there is a competition to become the priority of this government; especially here, because obviously the premier is from here.  
(Transcript 14)

There are also many groups that continue to share and co-operate rather than compete for scarce funding. In some cases, the decision to co-operate or compete is not easily made. And, while some organizations may from time to time act in a protective way, most of the interviewee comments suggest that network members were likely to share information about potential or new sources of funding. The following excerpt is one interviewee's characterization of the process of deciding whether or not to compete or co-operate for funding opportunities:

We always worry about that because ... I don't know if [any]one has mentioned, we have this really great woman in town, who rode in from somewhere else, and she runs the Noble Irwin Health Foundation. And, I mean, they're terrific at raising money. She's a crackerjack at it, and of course it is healthcare so everybody buys into that.... You gotta admire them. But I must admit there'll be the odd day where you go, "You know, if they weren't so successful, maybe people wouldn't be so exhausted when we come to the door." So I think there is a little bit of that. Every time one person latches onto something you want to make sure that you're sharing with others, that you're up front about these opportunities.... But I think there is the odd time where you will go, "Oh,... if I tell them, then they will apply next year, and we will be bumped." So, I think there is a little bit

of a competition there, but I think it is much less than the opposite....

[For example], I was talking to [name withheld] today of the United Way, and he introduced me to a woman from a private foundation in Alberta. And we ended up getting some funding from them; and I mean, nobody would know about that, it just kind of fell into his lap. So I've shared that with other people, because I don't think it's going to dilute my chances of appealing to them again. But there is a certain amount of that [thinking], and you do worry a little bit....

I think people are really very generous and I think that they believe what we're doing is sensible.... We have some really good credibility, so we maybe aren't as worried about that as [much as] people who may be struggling or don't have as many contacts as we do. So I may be speaking from a different point of view, maybe it comes from ... a bit more strength than some other groups.

(Transcript 13)

As these comments highlight, there are a number of factors that contribute to or exacerbate the unfortunately competitive environment in which these organizations compete for funds. Some of the factors that affect the ability of organizations to secure funds from donors or other agencies include the value the community/government places on the program or service being offered, the organization's track-record, donor fatigue, the organization's ability to use informal networks to influence donors, the number of organizations competing for funding, and the organization's information sharing capacity.

### *Mistrust and Hidden Agendas*

Mistrust and a belief that some organizations might have a hidden agenda in terms of their decision to partner or collaborate with other organizations is an issue that some organizations referred to as being problematic to the development of successful collaborations. This issue is closely linked to issues of scarce funding and territorialism, as these mindsets and behaviours occur among organizations that identify with a logic of individualism and competitiveness rather than co-operation and collaboration. The following excerpt highlights the lack of trust that one organization identifies as being a barrier to successful collaborations:

We have some programs, but all of our work is based on [our] ability to work with others to implement and develop [programs/capacity]. If you [and your partners] are ... not sure where you are going to be at the end of the year, or how much money there is, or who's got influence with this government or with this

municipal council, you can't have that [collaboration]. You can try to, but you don't know who then is going to turn around and step on your toes.... I think that's where a lot of those people at those tables get very jaded, because it is hard to have that openness when ... in the next minute you are competing with that group for funds or whatever else. And it shouldn't be that way.... There are lots of times when you do have trust in the individuals at the table ... like we have a few people that we work with very often because of that level of trust,... but as soon as you expand the numbers the less likely you are to reach that level of trust. (Transcript 5)

Other organizations also commented that a lack of trust or hidden agendas often led to collaborations that failed or did not meet the satisfaction of the partnering organizations.

While a lack of trust and hidden agendas can be a detriment to creation of social or network capital, and can in fact denigrate existing social and network capital, there are some benefits that accrue when organizations compete for resources. For example, organizations with similar mandates might adopt different approaches to address the same issue, thereby addressing the issue or problem at different levels and incorporating more stakeholders in the problem solving activity. Interestingly, when organizations and individuals both compete and collaborate to address common issues/problems they often achieve their desired outcomes more effectively and quickly than by the collaborative efforts of a group of organizations or the individual efforts of one organization working on its own.

It should be stated that for the most part study participants seemed to indicate that they had a trusting relationship with their network counterparts. It would be naïve to suggest that this network of organizations or any other organizational network was not affected by trust issues. Some of the factors that may have contributed to a lack of trust (either real or perceived) among network organization's and members include: competition for scarce resources; personal or cultural (organizational) differences; and, confidentiality requirements of government agencies.

#### *Intolerance, Misunderstanding of Minority Viewpoints*

While intolerance or misunderstanding of minority viewpoints was identified as an issue that affects the community of Swift Current and the Southwest Region as a whole, it deserves some special attention as it affects at least one of the network organizations in complex ways.

This issue is of particular concern to the Friendship Centre as it affects how they are approached and viewed by other members of the community, as that organization focuses on providing services to Aboriginal and Métis people. As a respondent for the Friendship Centre indicated,

I think one of the biggest things, with us being Aboriginal and being with the Métis nation, and with our Friendship Centre movement, is for the people to realize and understand who we are.... That's a big issue. As soon as you say that you are Aboriginal ... they shy away, because they don't understand. You are tattooed with that since the time you are born — that an Aboriginal is good for nothing. And it's a sad situation. Especially down in the south country here, because you see one Aboriginal in a hundred people,... where[as] in the north the population is fifty to sixty percent [Aboriginal]. (Transcript 7)

Essentially, much of what the Friendship Centre does in terms of community-based programming is aimed at addressing this issue of a lack of tolerance and understanding of Aboriginal people and issues. An important focus of the Friendship Centre is youth programming that focuses on empowering youth and breaking down stereotypes:

So we have to get communication out there as to, "Okay, this is what the Aboriginals are all about. This is what you think. No, this is what is the actual fact." So you just have to change their mind, and their way of thinking, and we're thinking that the youth is the way to get at that, before you are going to get to some of the elderly people in our time. (Transcript 16)

In addition to those programs, the Friendship Centre also runs drop-in floor hockey nights and boxing lessons, which attract youth and people of all ages and ethnicities to their centre. These programs have been instrumental in building social capital among program participants, while developing the individual skills and capacity of the participants.

### **Conclusion**

There is a strong tendency among E-Centre network members to collaborate and share organizational resources on projects and initiatives that are of common interest to their respective organizations. Clearly, there are some differences in how the different types

of organizations collaborate. It appears that many of the business/economic development organizations have adopted a regional/sectoral approach that directs the sort of partnerships and initiatives that they choose to join. The many types of initiatives and various stakeholders that comprise Action Southwest activities exemplify this approach. On the other hand, many of the partnerships and collaborations that community service organizations seem to focus on are short-term, client-specific projects. There is also a high degree of mutual support and sharing that occurs among these organizations. Importantly, organizations such as Crisis Services, the Entrepreneurial Centre, and to some extent CanSask Career and Employment Services, are able to act as bridges between these two groups of organizations thereby building network capital and expanding the range of connections — resources and services — available to the various organizations.

## LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**T**HIS RESEARCH has highlighted a number of recommendations for policy makers, community economic developers/practitioners, and researchers. There are many good examples of effective collaborations among E-Centre network organizations. Many of these successful collaborations are a product of the unique structural and cognitive social (network) capital that exists among these organizations. There are also some examples of collaborations and projects that were not as successful as network organizations may have anticipated. There is much that can be learned from both types of outcomes. The following sections highlight some of the lessons and key points that various stakeholders (researchers, policy makers, and practitioners) should consider in their own organizations, communities, and research/policy endeavours.

### **Lessons and Recommendations for Policy Makers and Community Economic Developers**

The following section highlights and describes several lessons that community and economic developers can learn from studying the linkages and structures that characterize the relationships among and between the South West Centre for Entrepreneurial Development and other economic and community-service organizations.

#### **1. Provide a common space (public good) to community members and organizations serving the community.**

The decision by the City of Swift Current to allow a community based organization, such as the E-Centre that has a large and inclusive mandate, to utilize and manage the school building has preserved the public good status of that building in a way that would not be maintained had the building been sold to private interests. As such the building continues to be

used by all types of community groups — businesses, families, support groups, civic organizations, seniors groups, educators, and students. In this way, the City of Swift Current created the foundation for the structural social capital that underlies the E-Centre network.

Policy makers and leaders in other municipalities should make similar attempts to retain the public status of similar types of public or common goods. This is important as a means to create/retain the structural social capital that public spaces provide. It is also important given that economies of many communities throughout the Province of Saskatchewan are on the up-turn, and as such many of the municipalities that have recently lost public goods such as schools or hospitals will be looking to regain them. This process losing public infrastructure could be reversed, if the public good, or capital, is not privatized.

**2. Cluster family and addiction counseling services with business development organizations or other types of service providers.**

In small communities, as in large communities, there is often a stigma attached to seeking addiction, abuse, or family counseling services. However, it is much more difficult for people living in small rural or urban centres that require these types of services to maintain their anonymity than it is for people living in larger urban areas. By clustering addiction and family counseling services under the same roof as business development organizations, the anonymity of the individuals and families that seek these types of counseling services is better protected. The anonymity that such clustering provides also improves the likelihood that individuals will seek out counseling services. Further, as some respondents indicated some of the addiction and family counseling clients may also seek business development or employment services from the economic development organizations located in the E-Centre and vice versa. There are also examples of clients of community service organizations finding employment with a business/economic development organization located in the E-Centre.

**3. Look for ways to promote positive cognitive social (network) capital among community development networks.**

Interviewees identified a number of concepts that promote strong cognitive social (network) capital. Some of these concepts included:

- respect for organizational autonomy
- awareness of the potential and power of synergies — collaborations and co-operative ventures

The literature on effective teamwork reveals a number of other ways that organizations

can promote cognitive social capital and group cohesion. Walker (2007) lists the following attitudes and thinking processes of effective teams:

- willing and creative learners; people who were constantly looking for or making opportunities for developing their personal, professional, and team competence
- people who led each other by doing, not just saying
- disposition among team members, also fostered with those beyond the immediate team, that the work was a team effort and that each person had roles essential to the collective success
- disciplined attention to purpose and goals
- demonstrated respect for persons, a transparency (what you see is what you get), and an attitude that accepted people despite differences
- meaningful and timely support in terms of resources and/or encouragement seemed to be always available for those taking initiatives that would ultimately support the common good

For the most part, the leaders of the network organizations that were participating in this study demonstrated attitudes and thinking processes (i.e., positive cognitive social capital) congruent with those of effective teams. While it is a difficult task for an organization to develop a policy framework to promote the positive attitudes and thinking processes of an effective team, organizations might begin such a culture shift by empowering lower level employees and enabling bottom-up decision making where possible.

**4. Make it a policy not to compete with tenants or network members for scarce resources.**

In order to respect the autonomy of partner organizations the E-Centre makes it a policy not to compete with tenant organizations for funding. This is especially important as the E-Centre relies on the support that these organizations provide in the form of rents paid to the E-Centre. Were the E-Centre were to compete with these organizations for funding resources, it would potentially risk losing the rents of tenants. Additionally, by adopting this policy, the E-Centre stands apart from others in the network, allowing it to assume new or different roles from other members. In this way, the policy enables the E-Centre to more effectively assume network roles of a co-operative nature — i.e., organizational counselor/mentor, project facilitator, etc.

#### **5. Look for ways to reduce competition among agencies for scarce funding.**

Competition for funding was identified as a major stumbling block towards more effective and trusting collaborations among the organizations that were studied. While there is no easy recommendation as to how to alleviate the competition that exists for program funding, government agencies and private donors should be cognizant of the repercussions that their decisions have on the organizational network that they are interacting with and look for ways to mitigate outcomes that create negative feelings among the members of organizational networks.

### **Recommendations/Suggestions for Further Research**

The following section presents several recommendations and suggestions that the researcher and the study participants have identified as important areas for further research.

#### **1. Examine how social (network) capital created by and flowing from the network connections of the participating organizations improves the capacity and skill development of organizational clients.**

An important area for further research is the human capital development that occurs when the clients of community service organizations (CSOs) are able to make use of the CSO's network connections with business/economic development organizations to improve their own skills, work experience, employment or entrepreneurial opportunities. Exploring and mapping these experiences was an important objective of many of the network participants. These experiences underlie much of the network relationships that these organizations share. However, it was important for the research team to first identify and analyze the unique and particular ways that these organizational relationships were constructed before moving on to an analysis of how these organizations improved the lives and livelihoods of their clients through their network collaborations. Many of the interviewees shared stories of how their collaborations improved the lives of their clientele, an obvious and key criterion in the identification of a successful collaboration.

This research report has attempted to outline and map the social (network) capital that exists as a result of the network relationships among these organizations. It is now appropriate and timely to analyze the human capital flows that occur as a result of the collaborations (both formal and informal) that occur among the network organizations.

**2. Investigate the social and human capital developments that occur as a result of informal collaborations among network organizations and, more specifically, among and between community service organizations.**

The analysis of collaborations among network members in the previous section included many of the formal collaborations (workshops, committees, and other outcome specific projects) that link the network members. There are also a large number of informal collaborations (client referrals, visits, client-specific activities) that link these organizations. However, because these informal collaborations occur infrequently and are of shorter duration, it is more difficult to identify, map, and measure the social and human capital that these collaborations produce. For instance, the connection between informal collaboration and human capital creation is also not well understood in the context of the E-Centre network organizations. Are these organizations generating more human capital through informal rather than formal collaborations? If so, what is it about these more client specific collaborations that are beneficial to individuals? Is it because these collaborations target client needs more directly than general or formalized approaches do? Future research should attempt to examine the dimensions of informal collaboration that effectively develop social capital among network organizations and the human capital of organizational clients. Related research could examine how researchers/practitioners might measure the effectiveness of client-centred collaborations, or it might examine the consequences of an unsuccessful client-centred collaboration on the social capital of network organizations.

**3. Investigate how gender affects the effectiveness of community networks and collaboration among sectors.**

With few exceptions, women managed most of the organizations (both business/economic development and community service organizations) that were identified as being members of the network studied in this report. Moreover, the researcher observed that many of these women were important leaders not only in the community but also in terms of the collaborations and projects that they developed and worked on with other network organizations.

Future research would benefit from an examination of gender in the construction of social (network) capital and effective organizational collaborations. Such an analysis might examine the organizational or network culture of female managers in comparison with those of similar organizational networks that are dominated by male leaders. One might hypothesize that female-dominated networks, such as the E-Centre network, are more likely to be directed by a caring managerial/organizational culture that lends itself to effective organiza-

tional collaborations, whereas male dominated networks are more likely to be dominated by an individualistic and authoritarian managerial/organizational culture that is predisposed towards organizational competition.

**4. Conduct a comparative analysis between the Southwest/Swift Current network of business/economic development and community service organizations with similar sets of organizations in other regions of the province.**

The Southwest Region is known among economic and community development organizations in the Province of Saskatchewan for its capacity to form effective partnerships and collaborations to address region specific issues. The region and the initiatives that have resulted vis-à-vis the collaborative efforts of participating members of Action Southwest were recently highlighted at a conference of economic developers in Saskatoon, SK in March 2008. Additionally, one of these initiatives and many of the stakeholders in this group were profiled in a special report in *The Western Producer* titled “Communities Seek Strength in Unity” (22 May 2008, 68). Furthermore, the Southwest Region is being touted by many in Saskatchewan’s economic development community as a model “High Performance Region,” a concept and a way of doing economic development that the Government of Saskatchewan is attempting to replicate throughout the province as it begins to replace the current system of Regional Economic Development Authorities (commonly referred to as REDAs) with a new system of “Enterprise Regions.” Moreover, the analysis provided in the previous section has indicated that there are a number of dimensions in terms of the structural and cognitive social capital of the business/economic development and community service organizations in the region that enable these effective partnerships and collaborations to occur.

Given the Southwest Region’s high profile and the ability of community leaders and development organizations to realize effective partnerships and collaborations, future research should map and identify the dimensions of structural and cognitive social capital of similar business/economic development organizations in other regions of the province. This would enable policy makers and community economic developers to identify potential policy tools and structural relationships that might be used to promote effective collaborations and partnerships in the new Enterprise Regions and to make improvements to the way that such collaborations occur in the southwest.

APPENDIX A:  
COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PROFILE

THE REGION REFERRED TO as southwest Saskatchewan, including the City of Swift Current, spans an area that extends from the US-Canadian border in the south to the communities of Eatonia, Eston, and Elrose in the north. From the west, the region extends from the Alberta-Saskatchewan border to the communities of Davidson, Mortlach, and Assiniboia in the east.

The region has a strong agricultural tradition. Agriculture and oil and gas continue to generate substantial wealth for the region. The City of Swift Current is the major service hub for the area, as it is located along the Trans-Canada Highway between Moose Jaw, SK, and Medicine Hat, AB. Swift Current has a population of 14,946 persons (Statistics Canada, 2006 Census). Outside of the Southwest Region, the closest major service centres are Moose Jaw and Regina to the east, and Medicine Hat, AB, to the west.

Interview respondents described the Southwest Region and the City of Swift Current as a wealthy community and region in the province. According to the 2006 Census, the median economic family income for the Swift Current census area (CA)\* was \$63,780. The median earnings for males working full time for a full year were \$42,866; for females, this figure was \$29,747 (these figures were slightly higher for individuals living in the City of Swift Current). The unemployment rate for 2006 was 4.5 percent for the Swift Current CA, and 4.6 percent for Swift Current proper.

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\* The census area includes the City of Swift Current and surrounding area.

Respondents also indicated that the Southwest Region has a very homogenous population — generally white, middle class, and Christian — with a small immigrant population and few Aboriginal communities. According to 2006 Census data, 4.1 percent of the population of the Swift Current CA were immigrants to Canada; 2.4 percent of the population were identified as a visible minority; and, 1.7 percent of the population reported an Aboriginal identity.

Respondents indicated that there are two reserves in the region with approximately two hundred people in total living on-reserve. It was also indicated that the region has a large and growing Hutterite population. According to one respondent, there are approximately forty-six Hutterite colonies in the region and the numbers have been steadily growing.

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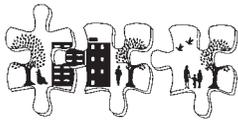
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