THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN ACHIEVING SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT
AND LONGEVITY OF COMMUNITY GARDENS IN FLORIDA

By

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To my parents, Ernest and Christine, and my siblings, Dustin, Kyrianna, Klairynne, Brodin, Kallysia, Landon, and Kassiera, for their endless love and support. And to Jason, my person, my best friend, who holds my hand and my heart forever and always.
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<td>Department of Health of Manatee County</td>
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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN ACHIEVING SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT AND LONGEVITY OF COMMUNITY GARDENS IN FLORIDA

By

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Previous research shows that community gardens can help to improve the physical, social, and mental wellbeing of individual participants and communities at large. In marginalized neighborhoods, successful community gardens have been shown to strengthen resiliency. However, considering the inherently social nature of community gardens and the need to access essential gardening resources, barriers to collaboration and resource mobilization can hinder their success. In order for UF/IFAS Extension agents, urban planners, community leaders and other stakeholders to successfully develop community gardens, understanding this lifecycle is necessary to overcoming these barriers. This study examined the internal and external social dynamics that can influence the successes and outcomes able to be achieved. This study used social capital theory to examine how social networks may facilitate or hinder resources from being acquired for community-based projects.

Data collection included eighteen semi-structured interviews, five focus groups and participant observation. The researcher also established a community garden in Alachua County, Florida and included that experience in her data analysis. Participants were recruited from across the state, including University of Florida Institute of Food and
Agricultural Sciences Extension agents, local government officials, and community
garden members and leaders. The findings of this study revealed participants’
perceptions of the benefits and barriers of their community gardens, their motivations for
participation, and their perspectives on what influences their success. Findings suggest
that the social capital fostered throughout the community garden lifecycle can impact
successful development and longevity.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Researchers from the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences examined the roles that social capital plays in the development and longevity of community garden [CG] projects in Florida. University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences [UF/IFAS] Extension agents, Master Gardeners, and local government officials are involved in many community development efforts around the state (Handel, 2016; J. Weber, personal communication, June 2, 2016; Jones & Moschella, 2015; Rhodes, 2016; UF/IFAS Extension Sarasota County, 2017). However the degree of support and involvement from these stakeholders in local CG efforts varies widely. There is also great variability in the levels of resident participation and collaboration experienced within and across Florida CGs; some regions have developed associations and/or coalitions for CG members to join, while other regions lack such organization and struggle to maintain resident engagement. Identifying the variables that contribute to residents’ engagement, or disengagement, in CGs is necessary to understanding why some CGs thrive and others falter.

A History of Community Gardens

Issues of environmental conservation and sustainability have gained societal and political attention on the international stage over the past 60 years. Milestones such as the publication of Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring in 1962 (Carson, 2002), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development of 1992 in Rio de Janeiro (Roddick & Dodds, 1993), and Michelle Obama’s White House garden and the Let’s Move campaign launched in 2010 (Horsley, 2016) shined a spotlight on environmental health issues and inspired behavior changes on a wide scale. These milestones
created high and low periods of engagement and support for the environmental movement over time; the trends regarding peoples’ interest in community gardens largely reflect this pattern of ebb and flow. As concerns of global climate change, rising human populations, and increasing threats to food security are gaining prevalence in common discourse, a period of greater interest in CGs could have been expected based on history (Ferris, Norman & Sempik 2001; Krasny & Tidball, 2009a; Lawson 2004).

The original movement of CGs dates back to the 1890s. Laura Lawson, a renowned researcher of landscape architecture with a focus on urban agriculture and CGs, outlined six phases since the 1890s when CGs experienced a resurgence; she also provides the historical context to explain this ebb and flow of engagement (Lawson, 2004, 2005). While Lawson’s works will be the central reference for the discussion of CG history in America, it should be noted that the unpublished master’s thesis by Thomas Bassett, a geography student attending the University of California, Berkeley provided the foundation for most future researchers investigating this topic (Basset, 1979; Pudup, 2008).

**Phase One**

The first phase of CGs began in response to the 1893 – 1897 depression when the mayor of Detroit suggested that unemployed residents take up gardening as a means of feeding their families and providing income for their household. Through a volunteer program established in 1894 - Pingree Potato Patches - land and resources were provided to 945 families for gardening. The yields from the first year were so great that participation became mandatory for all Detroit residents receiving charity assistance from the city’s commission (Lawson, 2004, 2005). The program quickly spread to 20 additional cities in the nation, providing numerous families with a garden plot to grow
their own food and/or offering laborers an opportunity to earn income by working on a cooperative farm. Though gardening efforts were not seen as the solution to the unemployment crisis, they enabled individuals to help themselves during this time of struggle and improved the visual blight of urban vacant lots, even if these lots were only made available for gardening on a temporary basis (Lawson, 2004, 2005).

Phase Two

The 1890s were also a time of expansion in school-based gardens. Not only did such projects add to the American value system at the time – enhancing students’ work ethic and addressing growing concerns regarding child labor issues – innovative styles of teaching were also developed via access to hands-on, experiential learning opportunities (Lawson, 2004, 2005). School gardens still continue to develop and thrive today and have earned the attention of researchers in a variety of fields (Lawson, 2004, 2005; Evans, Ranjit, Fair, Jennings, & Warren, 2016).

According to the United States Department of Agriculture [USDA] Farm to School census taken in 2015, 45% of school districts in Florida are participating in farm to school activities and 62% of those participating districts have school gardens, amounting to at least 556 schools in the state (USDA The Farm to School Census, 2015). School gardens are very different in structure and support than CGs and were excluded from the data collection of this study.

Phase Three

When the United Stated entered World War I in 1917, American civilians were encouraged to engage in local gardening projects to provide domestic food sustenance, enabling more food to be shipped to overseas as aid during the European food crisis. These ‘liberty gardens’ (Pudup, 2008) were supported by various governmental entities
and civic organizations, many of which promoted the message that gardening was democratic and patriotic; Americans of all social classes were encouraged to partake in 'liberty gardens' (Lawson, 2004, 2005). There was a strong network of partnerships that supported the war garden campaign during WWI and it was successful. However, at the end of the war the governmental support of these partnerships declined, as did engagement in CG activities and school garden development (Lawson, 2004).

Phase Four

For more than a decade after the First World War there was minimal engagement in CG efforts in America. However, during the Great Depression in the 1930s there was a revival of CGs in hopes to provide similar relief to that which CGs afforded in the 1890s. This fourth phase addressed issues of unemployment through the work-relief offered within some gardens, issues of food scarcity via backyard and community gardens, and issues of resource inaccessibility by industries offering former employees land and materials to garden with. The produce grown during this time was not allowed to be sold and participation was mostly voluntary; other forms of assistance were still offered whether a person maintained a garden or not. However, out of concern of fairness to farmers, the food stamp system was devised in 1937 and federal funding for state relief garden programs ceased in 1937, once again causing gardening efforts to experience overall decline (Lawson, 2004, 2005).

Phase Five

It was the attack on Pearl Harbor and America’s entrance into World War II that prompted the next phase of CG history, the development of victory gardens. Citizens were encouraged again to display their patriotism by joining the gardening efforts, even though technological advances in agriculture and the new food stamp system
diminished the efficiency of using gardens as a way to increase national food security. Victory gardens were instead promoted for the benefits they offered local communities and individuals: healthier diets, increased exercise, a positive activity to help cope with the pains and terrors of war, beautification of vacant spaces, and increased neighborhood morale. During peak production, over 20 million victory gardens existed in America and produced approximately 40% of the nation’s vegetables (Armstrong, 2000; Lawson, 2004; National World War II Museum, 2008).

Phase Six

Following a similar pattern after the first World War, a lull in CG history came during the 1950s and 60s, but a resurgence came again in the early 1970s in response to the drastic inflation of food costs, increasing abandonment of property, growing importance being put on environmental stewardship, and increasing desire for public open green-space. Urban gardening programs and support organizations began to emerge in major cities. By the late 1970s the USDA had established the Urban Gardening Program and the American Community Garden Association was formed (American Community Garden Association, n.d.; Lawson, 2004). Participation in CGs in the United States has thrived since this period, especially over the past 20 years. According to a five year report produced by the National Gardening Association, between 2008 and 2013 the number of CGs in America tripled from 1 million to 3 million and there was 38% increase in the number of households earning below a $35,000 annual income that were involved in some type of food gardening activity (National Gardening Association, 2014). As public interest and motivation for CGs has grown and evolved, researchers’ across a range of disciplines have placed greater focus on
identifying the benefits that CGs can offer (Draper & Freedman, 2010; Lawson, 2004, 2005).

**Other Local Food Initiatives**

Despite modern dependence on large scale agriculture and commercial markets, several types of local food production systems continue to operate in Western nations and have expanded significantly over the past 20 years. The publicity that CGs received via the contentious land-use disputes that occurred during the Giuliani Administration in New York City (Schmelzkopf, 2002), and through Michelle Obama's *Let's Move* campaign of 2010 and her revitalization of Eleanor Roosevelt's previous White House garden (Horsley, 2016), has increased awareness and advocacy for CGs on local and national scales. While CGs will remain the focus of this study, there are additional styles of local food initiatives that often strive to achieve similar benefits to CGs as well as other styles of gardens that incorporate non-food related activities. Because no universal definition exists to define “community garden,” (Alaimo, Reischl, & Allen, 2010; Firth, Maye, & Pearson, 2011; Glover, Shinew, & Parry, 2005), a brief overview of a selection of local food initiatives and gardens-based programs will highlight the differences between these efforts and the types of CGs that are the focus of this study.

**Community Supported Agriculture**

Community Supported Agriculture [CSA] is a method of food production that functions by community members investing money into a local farm up-front in order to receive a portion of the harvest. Out of a concern for food safety and urbanizing farm lands, the concept of CSAs was developed in Japan, Switzerland, and Germany to create a direct food distribution system between consumers and producers. The word
“teikei” was used in Japan to describe this concept of farming, holding the philosophical meaning of “food with a farmer’s face on it.” (Van En, 1992). Expanding into America in the late 1980s, several variations of CSAs currently exist, but all center on a commitment made between farmers and consumers. This commitment enables the community to make progress towards developing a local, more equitable food production system that incorporates land stewardship and economic productivity, as well as enhances the relationship between members and their food. Members pay the farmer in advance of the harvest being collected as a means of supporting the operations that will enable their produce to be grown, tended, and harvested. This up-front payment depicts the agreement of CSA members to fairly divide the total harvest amongst themselves; it is also a display of the shared risk they are taking if the crop should fail (DeMuth, 1993; Van En, 1992; Vasquez, Sherwood, Larson, & Story, 2017). While CSA farms do not require community members to engage in the labor of growing their own food, information sharing and community building can still occur through other activities. Some CSA farmers do offer members the opportunity to tour the farm and engage in social activities such as potluck meals with other members. Others allow, or even encourage, members to participate in some of the farm operations as means of gaining education on growing practices and reducing the overall expenses for the farm. Often voluntary participation is recognized by the farmer reducing the price that member pays for his/her share of the harvest (USDA Sustainable Agriculture Network, 2006; Van En, 1992).

**Subscription Farming**

Similarly to CSA farms, another type of community-based food production and distribution is subscription farming which also requires community members to pay an
up-front cost for their produce yet to be harvested. The main difference between CSA farms and subscription farms is that in the former the amount of produce provided to an individual is based on the total amount of harvest produce during that period of time. If it is an especially bountiful harvest of tomatoes, then all community members will receive a larger portion of tomatoes at the time of pick up. However, if disease infects the crop and reduces the amount of harvestable produce, despite having paid the regular payment, and individual will go home with less produce than is usual without any form of compensation. Subscription farms hold the farmer to providing each consumer with a specified amount of produce based on the cost paid up-front, even if a debt is carried over from one harvest to the next because a farmer was unable to provide the customer with their full share at a particular time. The deficit of produce the consumer receives is guaranteed to be provided by the farmer at a later date (Sattanno, Swisher & Koenig, 2016).

**Farmers Markets**

Farmers markets are another popular method of local food production and distribution that have some characteristics in common with CSAs, yet have fundamental differences as well. Similar to the philosophy of producing “food with a farmer’s face on it” that inspired Japanese homemakers to develop their version of a CSA (Van En, 1992), the ability for consumers to buy their food directly from the farmer provides a sense of safety of the food and connection with the producer. By keeping the produce local, the money spent at a farmers market not only provides consumers with fresher, usually organic produce, but increases profit for the farmers by cutting out the need for a supermarket or transport service to play the middleman (Farmers Market Coalition, n.d.; Shi & Hodges, 2016). Farmers markets are structured so that vendors gather at a
particular site that has been approved for use by the farmers market for a designated period of time on specified dates. The consumers who shop at the farmers markets are able to build relationships with the farmers, however they are usually not considered members of the farms and are not expected to offer additional support to the farm operations. Also, the payment for produce purchased occurs at the market when the food is presented to the consumer, much like a commercial market rather than a CSA.

Credits from food assistance programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infant and Children (WIC), Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) are often accepted at farmers markets as adequate forms of payment, (USDA Sustainable Agriculture Network, 2006) thereby increasing access to fresh produce for individuals struggling with food insecurity (Coleman-Jensen, Rabbitt, Gregory, and Singh, 2016). Depending on the bylaws of a particular farmers market, there may also be the ability of local gardeners to participate as a vendor within a farmers market. Each farmers markets can vary regarding the rules that govern what farmers can sell, how the market is operated, the times when the market is open, and how many vendors are able to participate. Therefore some initial planning and research should be done by a prospective vendor to ensure that a particular market is suitable for their sales (Farmers Market Coalition, n.d.; USDA Sustainable Agriculture Network, 2006). Often the rules are flexible and offer low-income residents involved in gardening with a venue to sell their fresh vegetables and/or homemade “value-added” items (i.e. food products prepared with garden produce that may not sell otherwise, such as salsa made with a slightly bruised tomato) for income (USDA Sustainable Agriculture Network, 2006; F.
Beckford, personal communication, May 16, 2017). Farmers markets have grown to be very popular in recent years in light of these benefits they offer. In America, the number of established farmers markets has increased from less than 2,000 markets in 1994 to over 8,600 currently (USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, 2017).

**Various Styles of Community Gardens**

While the CGs examined in this study are primarily vegetable producing gardens, alternative styles of CGs exist including, but not limited to, butterfly gardens, spiritual gardens, therapeutic/healing gardens, and school gardens. These CGs may or may not incorporate fruit and/or vegetable production into their practices, but each provide an intentional service for a community of people by using a designated shared landscape. Recently the practice of therapeutic horticulture, often taking the form of CGs, has been acknowledged for its utility as a preventive-care medicine for patients at-risk of chronic diseases (George, Rovniak, Kraschnewski, Hanson, & Sciamanna, 2015; Weltin, 2013). CGs are also being used as a recovery aid for individuals being treated for alcohol addiction (Seifert, 2014) and a healing tool for sufferers of post-traumatic stress disorder (Anguelovski, 2013b; Renzetti & Follingstad, 2015). Benefits of engagement in gardening practices related to aesthetics, physiological strength, increased mobility, and psychological healing are gaining increasing attention from the healthcare field as well as urban planners. Recognized within the framework of landscape multifunctionality proposed by Lovell (2010), several ecological benefits (i.e. nutrient cycling, biodiversity) and cultural benefits (i.e. recreation, cultural heritage) result when land is used for small-scale agricultural practices like CGs. These benefits are relatively impossible to achieve through industrialized agriculture.
Statement of Problem

Previous research shows that community gardens can help to improve the physical, social, and mental wellbeing of individual participants and communities at large. This is particularly evident in marginalized neighborhoods where successful community gardens have been shown to strengthen neighborhood resiliency. However, considering the inherently social nature of community gardens and the need for essential gardening resources to be accessed, barriers impeding collaboration and/or resource mobilization can hinder the successes achieved by community gardens. In order for UF/IFAS Extension agents, urban planners, community leaders and other stakeholders to successfully develop CGs that serve the needs of their respective communities, understanding this lifecycle of CGs is necessary so that potential solutions for overcoming barriers can be identified. This current study examined how social dynamics internal and external to community gardens can influence the successes and outcomes able to be achieved.

Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to examine the role that social capital plays in the development and longevity of CGs across Florida. Relying on the framework of social capital theory (Firth et. al., 2011; Putnam, 2000; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004), the researcher of this study aimed to accomplish the following:

1. Examine several CGs across Florida and identify how success – as defined by the mission statement / purpose of these projects – is being achieved
2. Identify commonly referenced variables that hinder success from being achieved during development and/or longevity of CGs. These factors will be referred to as “barriers” throughout the study.
3. Examine how these barriers within CGs relate to factors of social capital.
4. Identify how said barriers can be effectively overcome to contribute to a ‘Best Practices Guide’ for future development and longevity of Florida CGs.
Significance

While numerous individual and collective benefits offered though participation in CGs have been well documented by researchers (Alaimo et al., 2010; Anguelovski, 2013b; Glover et al., 2005), there are few studies that address the barriers faced during the developmental stages of CGs that can impede longevity. Employing a qualitative research design, this current study examines these barriers, thereby enabling researchers and community development professionals to more effectively assess how said barriers can be overcome. By analyzing the experiences of CG members throughout Florida in terms of the barriers faced and successes achieved in CGs, this study fills a knowledge gap, strengthening the development of CGs statewide and creating beneficial opportunities for the communities they serve.

Also worthy of note, the researcher relies on the mission statement of each CG in order to identify the initial intentions of each garden project and the relative success that was achieved based on those intentions. At the conclusion of the study, the researchers will contribute to the creation of a toolkit that conveys best-practice strategies for overcoming barriers within community development projects, specifically CGs. This toolkit will assist stakeholders in facilitating the development and sustainment of effective CG projects in a variety of settings, including disadvantaged neighborhoods. It may also help build residents’ confidence regarding their abilities to overcome adversity, thereby improving individuals’ sense of empowerment and increasing social capital throughout the community (Alaimo et al., 2010; Glover et al., 2005).
Assumptions

This study assumes that all participants in the study answered the researchers’ questions honestly and completely. Focus group [FG] participants were informed that all information would remain anonymous in research reports and that any records of their responses would be destroyed upon completion of the study. Participants were also reminded that their engagement in the FG was voluntary and the option to withdraw from the discussion was available at any time. These reminders allowed researchers to assume that FG participants provided truthful, accurate information to the best of their abilities, information that can be interpreted as being valid for each participant respectively.

Chapter Summary

Researchers studying the history of CGs have noted that rationales for developing and sustaining community gardens have differed based on time period and location. In some cases CGs develop to serve a specific need for a community, while other times a broader stimulus, such as national economic decline, can initiate these projects (Bassett, 1979; Lawson, 2004, 2005; Pudup, 2008). Individuals who are involved in developing a CG often determine the project’s overall mission and vision of success. However, success is a subjective terms that is based on a person’s values, goals, and experiences. Therefore, perceptions of a CG’s success can vary widely across individuals (Aptekar, 2015; Mix, 2011). Because the physical structure and management style of CGs are largely based on the social, environmental, and political context of a locale, definitions of success and adversity will also be contextually shaped (Drake & Lawson, 2015). Nevertheless, the existing body of CG literature indicates that across time and place, specific resources have been suggested by CG stakeholders
(i.e. members, coordinators, researchers, volunteers) as being fundamental requirements for effective the establishment and maintenance of CG projects.

This study examines the experiences of individuals across the state of Florida who are involved directly with a CG project, either as a garden member, leader, or partner. Using the CGs' mission statements as a baseline for measuring success, factors that benefit and/or hinder successful development and longevity of CGs will be identified. Gaining insight on Florida CG members' perceptions of the intended missions and successes achieved within their respective gardens, researchers can identify common barriers faced within CGs that prevent success. By understanding these barriers and the variables that contribute to their existence, alternative solutions can also be identified by the researcher that enable CGs to provide greater benefit to the individuals and communities they serve.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter previous researchers' works regarding the infrastructural components of CGs and contextual factors which impact their outcomes are discussed. This body of literature draws from a variety of academic disciplines to exemplify the diversity in structure, purpose, and context in which CGs exist. By providing a foundational understanding of the diversity that can exist between CG projects, a more comprehensive understanding of the CGs examined in current study is facilitated. The different styles, structures and reasons for initiating CGs are reviewed first. Next the principles of social capital theory are discussed in order to outline the conceptual framework that was used in this study to analyze the social dynamics within CGs. Potential issues that previous researchers have found to influence the outcomes of CG projects will also be addressed. Finally, the chapter will conclude by recognizing how community wellbeing can be impacted by CGs, focusing on the topics of public health, neighborhood morale, and social learning.

Overview of Community Garden Styles

While general characteristics such as 'placement on a single piece of land' and 'providing benefit to a community' are common characteristics of CGs, there is not a standard definition for what constitutes a CG. As a community-based initiative that is malleable to the contextual factors of the surrounding environment (i.e. economics, politics, culture, landscape), a standard definition for CGs remains unclear (Ferris et al., 2001; Firth et al., 2011; Pudup, 2008) and thus varies amongst researchers, stakeholders, and gardeners. In order for researchers to conduct purposive studies, produce clear findings, and compare said findings with the existing body of literature,
Researchers will often set specific boundaries for what is considered a CG within the context of their study based on whether certain characteristics are present in a given CG. These characteristics may define the population participating in the project, the parameters of the land size, the structural design, and the degree of public accessibility to the garden (Firth et al., 2011). Understanding the characterizations of different CG styles and the impacts that different characteristics have on overall outcomes of the CG is also beneficial for stakeholder groups (i.e. UF/IFAS Extension agents, urban planners, city officials) involved in the development and maintenance of these projects.

**Intent of Project**

In her analysis of America’s history of CGs, Lawson (2005) explains how shifts in the nation’s economy and political affairs caused different styles of CGs to rise and decline at different periods of time. The evolution of CGs has largely been determined by the needs of the proximal community and the beneficial outcomes being sought (Aptekar, 2015; Krasny & Tidball, 2009a; Poulsen et al., 2014). Also, because the term *community* can be flexibly interpreted to include specific groups of people defined by factors such as neighborhood residency, membership to an organization, cultural affiliation, or religious denomination, perceptions of who is to be served and/or engaged in a CG project varies. According to Poulsen et al. (2014), “Community gardens are defined by a growing diversity of gardeners, gardening motivations, and organizational and political support,” (p. 70) and exist across a diverse range of landscapes and social settings. Therefore, considering who initiates a given CG project and what they intend to accomplish can provide insight regarding the style and structure of their respective CG (Pudup, 2008). Researchers have noted numerous underlying intentions for the initiation of a CG: overcoming urban blight (Glover, 2004; Schmelzkopf, 2002);
improving neighborhood resilience (Ferris et al., 2001; Krasny & Tidball, 2009a; Okvat & Zautra, 2011); promoting ecological stewardship (Ferris et al., 2001; Krasny & Tidball, 2012; Lovell, 2010); improving community health conditions (Armstrong, 2000; Kingsley et al., 2009; Teig et al., 2009); encouraging socialization among neighbors (Draper & Freedman, 2010; Glover, 2004; Ohmer et al., 2009); providing positive experiences for youth (Gough & Accordino, 2013; Krasny & Tidball, 2009b), and more. These underlying intentions and the degree of support offered by local peoples and external stakeholders to fulfill these intentions have great influence over the physical, social, and management style of CGs.

**Common Typologies**

Researchers draw on several variables in their attempts to define CGs, categorizing gardens by their physical and functional structures is one of the most commonly used techniques. The distinction is often made between individual allotment gardens, where gardeners tend to a specific garden plot that is designated for their private use, and collective gardens, where the group of gardeners contribute as a whole to the overall maintenance and productivity of the garden (Alaimo et al., 2010; Drake, 2014; Firth et al., 2011; Flachs, 2010). Yet even with a common structure, there is still variability regarding how these two typologies function across different CGs and what outcomes they produce. As previously noted, the intention behind starting a CG, also referred to as the project’s mission, can influence the style. Whether gardeners are assigned individual plots or are expected to contribute to the garden as a whole may be influenced by the CG’s mission (Aptekar, 2015; Glover, 2004; Poulsen et al., 2014), however both types have successfully accomplished similar goals. For example, while The Strong Roots Garden in Berkeley, California uses a collective CG style to promote
neighborhood safety and decrease crime among the neighborhood, the Victoria Hills Community Garden in Kitchener, Ontario has successfully used an individual allotment structure to decrease crime activity in the area since 1993 (McKay, 1998; Victoria Hills Community Garden, n.d.). It is also common for a single CG to include both structures, providing a mix of individual plots and communal spaces for collective gardening. These gardens can be initiated in light of a variety of intentions and may stimulate greater displays of community engagement by offering the option of independent and shared gardening activities (Drake & Lawson, 2015; Mix; 2011; Okvat & Zautra, 2011).

**Management Structure**

Beyond physical typologies, the initial mission of a CG also influences how the project is socially organized and managed. Unlike home gardens where all decision making power and responsibilities are held by one individual, community-based efforts like CGs require the involvement of at least a small group, if not a large array, of individuals. Whether the CG is the product of a community grassroots effort or was driven by external parties can play a large role in the management structure adopted (Aptekar, 2015; Krasny & Tidball, 2009a; Poulsen et al., 2014). In addition, external entities such as grantors, corporate sponsors, government officials, or neighborhood associations may impact how a garden is managed. These entities may set certain requirements of what is allowed to be included in the garden, how decisions are to be made, and how benefits are to be distributed amongst garden members and/or the community at large (Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014; Pudup, 2008). In a study that examined performance of community within differently organized CGs – grassroots, externally-organized, and those managed by active nonprofits – Drake and Lawson (2015) acknowledged that each style yields different results in terms of community
building. However, they also noted that garden leaders’ expectations of how community should exist within the CG and the ways leaders’ interacted with other community member can be more significant in determining the outcomes of inclusivity and participation in the garden.

In Florida, the typologies used by UF/IFAS Extension agents to categorize CGs often reflect the specific purpose and management style of a given CG. In Lee County, for example, the five types of CGs are listed as donation gardens, school gardens, therapy gardens, neighborhood/allotment gardens, and market gardens (UF/IFAS Extension Service of Lee County, 2010). This research study focuses primarily on neighborhood/allotment gardens, although several of the CGs examined also have features typical of therapeutic gardens and donation gardens.

**Social Capital**

Considering the diversity that can exist between CGs in regards to their style, purpose, and outcomes achieved, it is evident CG projects are much more complex than simply planting seeds and harvesting produce. In fact, Glover’s (2004) assessment that “community gardens are less about gardening than they are about community” (p. 143) is a sentiment echoed by many other researchers as well as CG participants (Alaimo et al., 2010; Glover et al., 2005; Ferris et al., 2001; Poulsen et al., 2014). Therefore, even though community itself is a term that raises debate, social scientists across disparate disciplines agree that understanding how social networks and relationships exist within a community is essential to the study of sociological phenomena (Glover et al., 2005). Many have employed the concept of social capital to gain such understandings, examining social relations as a dynamic of investments and profits between actors. While variations do exist among the specific definitions of social
capital adopted by social scientists, they are all based on the premise that social
connections provide beneficial outcomes to individuals who invest personal resources
into those relationships (Alaimo et al., 2010; Coleman, 1988; Glover et al., 2005; Lin
2001; Putnam, 1995). In this way, social capital can be seen as analogous to the
concepts of capital that exist in realms of economics, politics, and labor. Investing one’s
time, energy, skills, finances, and/or other personal resources into social relationships
can increase one’s opportunities for resource acquisition (Glover 2004; Glover et al.,
2005; Lin 2001). Commonly referenced within the field, Bourdieu defined social capital
as:

[T]he aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of
a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual
acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—
which provides each of its members with the backing of collectively-owned
capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the
word. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248-249)

Putnam expanded upon this definition by suggesting that relationships formed informally
through participation in social leisure activities (i.e. gardening, dinner parties, bowling)
also play a key role in the development of social capital (Glover, 2004; Putnam, 1993,
1995). His definition focuses on the principles of trust and reciprocity as being
fundamental to social capital development because they enable cooperation between
actors that eventually results in mutual gains (Putnam, 1995). Szreter and Woolcock
(2004) have further refined this concept of social capital by incorporating more technical
relationships into their framework and clarifying the distinctions between three different
types of social capital.

Categorizing relationships based on their respective levels of closeness and
connection between the given parties is neither novel nor uncommon, as seen by the
plethora of terms existing within social capital discourse; “strong ties” and “weak ties” (Glover, 2004; Lin, 2001), “homophilous” and “heterophilous” interactions (Lin, 2001) and “integration” and “linkage” (Woolcock, 1998). This is largely due to the significant ongoing debate among social scientists over the definition social capital. As Szreter and Woolcock (2004) hypothesize, because of the high political and ideological importance researchers ascribe to social capital terminology, “it seems that social capital is destined to become, like ‘class,’ ‘gender,’ and ‘race,’ one of the ‘essentially contested concepts’ of the social sciences.” (p. 654) Nevertheless, social capital theory enables researchers to examine how different types of relationships can facilitate and/or hinder the acquisition of resources needed for community-based projects. The current study uses the concepts of “bonding capital,” (Putnam, 2000) “bridging capital,” and “linking capital” (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004) to examine how different relationships impact the development and longevity of CGs in Florida. Resources identified by previous studies that are regarded as necessities for CG success include land tenure, water, funding, and community participation (Drake & Lawson, 2015); these resources and others are explored in this study.

**Bonding Capital**

Representing the more intimate of connections between individuals, bonding social capital is associated with interpersonal relationships where the individuals view themselves as being similar to one another, sharing a common social identity (Putnam, 2000; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). Individuals’ perception of belonging to the same group as others and/or sharing characteristics that elicit closeness bonds them together in relationships based on trust and reciprocity. The more that is held in common between individuals and the more frequent their interactions, the stronger their bond
and greater their mutual investment (Alaimo et al., 2010; Glover, 2004; Lin, 2001). Results from studies conducted on a variety of neighborhood-based organizations indicate that when individuals display higher levels of participation in activities and/or decision making processes within their neighborhood, higher degrees of bonding social capital are facilitated (Alaimo et al., 2010; Glover, 2004; Mix, 2011; Ohmer et al., 2009).

As CGs are inherently community-based, it not surprising that several researchers have explored the relationships built within CG. It is commonly noted that social networks expand via participation in CG project and lead to strong bonds forming between garden members (Firth et al., 2011; Krasny & Tidball, 2012; Alaimo et al., 2010). By providing a central meeting place where individuals can connect and engage in a shared activity based on a common interest, CGs facilitate a sense of collective ownership of the place, as well as a shared feeling of community identity and neighborhood pride (Gough & Accordino, 2013; Angeluvoski, 2013b; Firth et al., 2011). The following examples - drawn from interviews conducted by other researchers’ with CG members and volunteers across the world - express how CGs have facilitated introductions and lasting relationships between neighbors who may have not met otherwise. In a study of a CG in a mid-sized Midwestern city in America, one garden member reported, “Now I know people that I have things in common with. [The garden brought] a bonding to neighborhood.” (Glover, 2004, p. 150) This bonding stimulated a sharing of personal resources between the gardeners, both material and skill-based, which helped maintain and preserve the garden over time (Glover et al., 2005). Similar sentiments were expressed by a garden volunteer from Western Pennsylvania who stated, “It’s really fun to get together with neighbors, it draws different kinds of people
out who might not sit around in meetings, but [who would] rather come out and get their hands dirty.” (Ohmer et al., 2009) The common interests and frequent interactions that garden members share enable trust and reciprocity to develop, motivating individuals to sustain their participation (Armstrong, 2000; Anguelovski, 2013b; Glover et al., 2005; Kingsley et al., 2009). These bonds foster a true sense of community because, as a garden member stated, “When you know them, find out something special about them, or maybe they shared something with you, you come together.” (Glover, 2004, p. 150).

For low-income, minority residents living in degraded neighborhoods of Havana, Barcelona, and Boston, Anguelovski (2013a, 2013b) found that participation in the CGs offered individuals reprieve from sentiments of being “second-tier citizens” whom were forgotten by public authorities (p. 166). The gardeners attested that the safety of the community and their sense of belongingness improved via CG participation (Anguelovski, 2013b). Considering the basic premise of social capital – investment in social relationships to yield beneficial outcomes – Anguelovski and several other researchers evidence the ability for CGs to foster social capital and improve resource accessibility (Chan, DuBois, & Tidball, 2015; Glover et al., 2005; King 2008). However, opportunities to participate in CGs are not always equal distributed throughout a neighborhood and can even diminish accessibility to resources and social networks for some individuals (Firth et al., 2011; Krasny & Tidball, 2012; Alaimo et al., 2010). Further discussion of this concern and others associated with social capital and CGs will continue in a later section entitled “Issues Associated with Community Gardens.”

**Bridging Capital**

Glover’s (2004) statement, “community gardens are less about gardening than they are about community,” is supported by the strong bonds developed in numerous
CGs and the positive sentiments voiced by garden members invested in these relationships (p. 143). However, CGs are not isolated entities but rather exist as part of larger neighborhood communities. Relationships with parties outside of the garden (i.e. local non-profits, faith leaders, unengaged neighbors, local professionals) are necessary to maintain adequate resource acquisition and support for the projects’ development and maintenance (Glover et al., 2005). Different than bonding capital, relationships characterized by bridging capital are not based on shared social identities or commonalities between individuals. Bridging instead reflects relationships of respect and mutuality between parties that differ on some socio-demographic characteristic (Lin, 2001; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). Examples of such relationships can be seen during disaster relief efforts where individuals from diverse backgrounds, locals and non-locals, come together to offer aide (Hawkins & Maurer, 2010). In her study of environmental justice coalitions, Mix found that when groups of activists from different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds joined together as a coalition advocating for a common cause, a network of support and stability was created that enabled innovative strategies and collaborative tactics to be employed. Bridges offer opportunities for resource sharing among groups of equal levels of accessibility, reducing the amount of competition and increasing the parties’ overall effectiveness (Mix, 2011).

Despite the socio-demographic differences that distinguish between bonding and bridging capital, both types of relationship exist on a metaphorically horizontal, egalitarian plane where power imbalances are not present (Lin, 2001; Putnam, 2000; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). In the context of CGs, bridging social capital can connect garden members with entities engaged in other community-based projects (i.e. art
clubs, environmental groups, science education programs) and with residents uninterested in gardening themselves. Referring to the main principle of social capital theory, separate parties are motivated to engage in these relationships based on the opportunities for mutual gain (Glover et al., 2005; Alaimo et al., 2010). For example, a local plumber may agree to help gardeners install an irrigation system in their garden and in exchange he will benefit from building positive rapport with residents who could become future clients. The benefits reaped the parties differ based on the needs and interests of the participants, but developing such external relationships plays an essential role in acquiring the necessary resources and support for the garden that cannot be derived internally (Firth et al., 2011; Glover et al., 2005).

**Linking Capital**

The concepts of social capital theory overlap greatly with the principles of resource mobilization theory, the latter of which examines how resources necessary for social movement organizations to function are acquired (Glover et al., 2005). The intersection between these two theories provides the foundation for the third type of social capital, linking capital. Debate among social scientists over the definition of linking capital has resulted in inconsistent meanings and uses of the term throughout social capital literature; some researchers have used linking capital synonymously with bridging capital. However, this paper references Szreter and Woolcock’s (2004) definition of linking capital to recognize the distinction between bridging and linking capital. While both are based on norms of respect and networks of trust, linking involves interactions between people that cross “explicit, formal or institutionalized power or authority gradients in society” whereas bridging does not involve power differentials between the parties (p. 655). The researchers found this distinction to be
relevant to the current study of CGs because they are place-based projects that often exist on public lands and require significant tangible resources to function. Therefore, power differentials can have great impacts of the development and longevity of the CGs, directly effecting the individuals involved (Anguelovski, 2013b; Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014; Schmelzkopf, 2002). Significant social, economic, and/or political inequalities can prevent bridging capital from developing organically between neighborhood residents and higher authority personnel due to lack of trust and respect that cannot be spontaneously overcome. Therefore, in such cases relationships will need to be formed with strategic intent, being initiated by one party in a respectful manner and met with respect and appreciation from the other (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004).

Linking capital can connect parties across a wide spectrum of power differentials (Mix, 2011; Nicholls, 2009) and has been shown in CG settings to link small neighborhood groups with local nonprofit organizations, corporate sponsors, local government officials, and even national grantors (Draper & Freedman, 2010; Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014; Putnam, 1995). The connections enable critical resources to be attained by a grassroots group that are not internal to the group and are not accessible through personal social networks (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). In some instances a chain of links may be necessary to overcome extreme power imbalances between two parties, relying on an intermediary entity to help foster a connection. Ghose and Pettygrove (2014) identified local nonprofits that served as “gatekeepers” between politically marginalized grassroots groups of community gardeners and more powerful state agencies with greater access to resources. Connecting with entities of greater
and lesser power than their own, intermediaries can widen their networks of prospective clients/volunteers in the community and increase cooperation with more powerful decision makers (Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Benefits such as gaining rapport of local constituents and fulfilling community service obligations are also realized by the more powerful entities engaged in linking capital (Gough & Accordino, 2013). However, in order for linking capital to sustain, mutual trust and respect for the goals and needs of each party must be upheld (Mix, 2011; Pudup, 2008).

**Resource Mobilization Theory**

Social movements of the 1960s caused a major shift in sociologists’ conceptualization of social movements, a shift that eventually led to formulation of resource mobilization theory. Transitioning away from viewing social movements as the disorganized products of individuals’ grievances and irrationalities - framing them as entirely separate from institutionalized actions of change - sociologists began to acknowledge the strategy, organization, and rationality behind social movements which enabled participating individuals to address major societal issues (Jenkins, 1983; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Many sociologists have contributed different perspectives to the discourse of resource mobilization theory, however many view ‘mobilization’ similarly. It is framed as a process through which a group secures collective control over resources that are needed by the group members to perform a collective action (Jenkins, 1983). These resources can refer to tangible items such as money, meeting venues, communication materials, and tools, as well as intangible assets such as political clout, manual labor, leadership skills, and time (Freeman, 1979; Glover et al., 2005; Jenkins, 1983). The resources immediately available to a given group will be determined by members’ collectively pooled resources, the breadth of their social
networks, and the group’s overall structural organization (Bourdieu, 1986; Freeman, 1983; Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014). Grassroots efforts have greater access to intangible resources because they are attained through bonding capital and human capital, the latter referring to “the value embedded in individuals themselves.” (Glover, 2004, p. 144)

In order to gain access to tangible resources such as water, land, and tools which are necessary for CG development, bridging and/or linking relationships are often established between CG members and external entities who can facilitate resource mobilization on the gardens’ behalf (Armstrong, 2000; Baker, 2004; Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004).

Resource mobilization theory has been used by many researchers to explore various community development projects and collaboration efforts (Glover et al., 2005; Jenkins, 1983; Putnam, 2000; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). Conducting a content analysis that reviewed 55 journal articles written on CGs, Draper and Freedman (2010) showed that social capital established via CG projects has the potential to mobilize resources and/or widen the social networks of each party involved. Linking capital fostered between stakeholder groups can mobilize tangible and intangible resources for all parties. Draper and Freedman (2010) state that as funding and infrastructural support are made available to CGs:

> The empowerment and mobilization effects that are often instigated from these relationships lead to the enactment of policies, making the profession’s agenda more visible and secure on a local, state, and federal level. In this sense, community gardens can serve as a bridge between community organizing and legislative advocacy work. (p. 488)

**Issues Associated with Community Gardens**

All three levels of social capital – bonding, bridging, and linking - have the potential to provide essential support to community-based projects and the
neighborhood at large. However, self-interests of an individual or organization are also possible outcomes that could limit the public good that is served by the social connection (Firth et al., 2011; Jenkins, 1983). Several researchers have noted that when stakeholders’ differ in their intentions and desired end-goals for a particular project, the degree of social capital invested in the project suffers (Aptekar, 2015; Tan & Neo, 2009; Teig et al., 2009). It is commonly assumed that CG projects offer benefit to the general public and are considered an asset with a community, however, the benefits reaped from CGs vary depending on individuals' perspectives of “success” and their personal experiences of needs being met. While there are plentiful examples of CGs that have increased social capital within formerly fragmented neighborhoods, it cannot be ignored that CGs are shared public spaces and therefore differences of opinion are inevitable (Drake, 2014; Tan & Neo, 2009). When the requirements for participation in a CG are seen as more stressful than beneficial, minimal commitment will be displayed by participants, weakening the degree of bonding social capital (Teig et al., 2009). Bridging and linking social capital can also suffer when stakeholders (i.e. real estate developers, government officials, industry leaders, well-established non-profits) exert their higher positions of power in ways that hinder the successes of CG projects and the benefits offered to the community (Chan et al., 2015; Gough & Accordino, 2013; Lawson, 2004). In fact, throughout the literature many researchers define CGs solely as “grassroots initiated” projects where the investment of community members’ bonding social capital serves as the projects’ primary support. The researchers of this study chose to recognize externally initiated projects as being legitimate CGs worthy of study;
these gardens offered the opportunity to examine how differences in social capital influence the successes achieved within the CGs.

**Food Justice**

The increasing recognition of CGs’ utility in overcoming issues of food security, accessibility, and sovereignty within traditionally marginalized populations has introduced concepts of ‘food justice’ and ‘community food security’ movements into the discourse (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011; Baker, 2005; Ferris et al., 2001; Gottlieb, 2009). From the perspective of locally-focused food security activists, CGs offer individuals the opportunity to become “food citizens” who disconnect from the global corporate food system and instead engage in democratic food practices of greater economic and ecological sustainability (Baker, 2005).

In some cases city governments have recognized these benefits and developed initiatives and policies which support CG development. As an example, in the late 2000s the City of Baltimore’s mayoral administration took action to resolve the issues of severe food insecurity facing 20 percent of the city’s residents by promoting the benefits and supporting the development of CGs. This was an aim to reduce the number of food deserts in the city (Poulsen et al., 2014). While urban CGs tend to be the foci of most researchers, examples of CGs that have developed in rural settings to combat issues of food security also exist. In McDonough County, Illinois, although it is known as ‘the breadbasket’ of the United States, food-insecurity is a predominant issue. Despite the seeming abundance of food in this area, 21 percent of the population is food-insecure due to low-income, high costs of fresh produce, inadequate transportation, reduced numbers of food markets, and a lack of green space to grow their own food. Considering the expensive nature of CSAs and market food costs, community activists
and low-income residents of McDonough County developed community gardens in efforts to grow fresh food for their families and increase healthy food access for the community at large (McIlvaine-Newsad & Porter, 2013). The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services attests that diet-related health outcomes in urban and rural areas are directly related the accessibility of quality retail grocery stores. In a report produced in 2014 that analyzed the impacts of food deserts on diet-related deaths across Florida, “evidence suggests that policies, programs, and market action that improve healthy food access can substantially and measurably improve public health…nutritional education and transportation support are also needed. [but] access is foundational.” (FDACS, 2014, p. 2)

**Local Politics and Urban Planning**

Since the late 1970s, the beneficial outcomes of urban green space have been increasingly recognized by government officials in cities such as Portland, Seattle, and Philadelphia and have resulted in superior parks systems and community garden programs (City of Portland Parks & Recreation, 2017; Hou, Johnson, & Lawson, 2009; Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, 2017; Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, 2017). While public awareness has certainly risen and other municipalities have also taken to this trend of “greening,” residents’ ability to access these benefits is often bias towards more affluent residents (Lawson 2004; Gough & Accordino 2013). Because environmental hazards (i.e. landfills, incinerators, refineries, industrial waste sites, etc.) are common sources of suffering for marginalized neighborhoods, the additional strain of inadequate environmental services can lead to significant degradation in the health and livability of the community (Anguelovski 2013a; Wolch et al., 2013). Limited access to functional parks, safe green space, fresh food options, and recreational services
coincides with the socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity of a community (Anguelovski, 2013a). For example, in the San Francisco Bay area, the community gardens available to marginalized communities were most located on rustbelt lands that were known to be contaminated with toxic chemicals (Ferris et al., 2001). Examples from other urban areas show that wealthier residents - who tend to have connections to urban elites - are able to wield disproportionate control over the design, rules, and structure of community gardens, leaving less-powerful, minority residents at a disadvantage (Aptekar, 2015; Firth et al., 2011; Lawson 2004). Therefore, the physical presence of CGs should not be assumed to equally benefit the residents in the area, nor should residents’ participation in the garden be assumed to foster empowerment (Staheli, 2008).

Gentrification

In many cities great tensions exist between governmental entities and grassroots groups over urban planning decisions and restoration efforts that involve neglected greenspaces in the area. Marginalized neighborhoods have much to gain from improved access to greenspaces and neighborhood beautification. However, depending on the power dynamics at play and underlying motives that drive planning decisions to be made, a project that had potential to increase social and environmental justice may end up only serving the wallets of the elites while the needs of the low-income residents remain neglected (Anguelovski 2013a; Perkins, 2010; Wolch et al., 2014). CGs are often incorporated into neighborhood beautification projects in efforts to overcome urban blight and increase neighborhood morale among locals. Many researchers have found these efforts successful in increasing the aesthetic appeal of low-income neighborhoods (Alamio, Reischl, & Ober Allen, 2010; Draper & Freedman,
2010; Gough & Accordino, 2013), however, it is not always the local residents who benefit (Aptekar, 2015). As restored green spaces and CGs enhance the desirability of a neighborhood, investors and families of higher income are drawn to the area. This can quickly cause property values to increase and may result in gentrification, “the displacement and/or exclusion of the very residents the green space was meant to benefit.” (Wolch et al., 2014, p. 235). Higher property values equate to higher costs of rent and can force low-income residents into nearby properties of lower value or to take up residence in another neighborhood where issues of poverty and marginalization are eminent (Aptekar, 2015, Chan et al., 2015). In such situations low-income residents are displaced from their homes, disconnected as a community, and may face increased risks to their health and safety by being forced into degraded living conditions (Agyeman et al., 2016; Wolch et al., 2014). Thus there is a need for urban planners and city officials to work with local peoples when planning and implementing neighborhood revitalization projects such as CGs. Such collaborations can help to ensure that the needs of the community are not dismissed in lieu of economic gains for the government (Anguelovski, 2013b; Aptekar, 2015; Wolch et al. 2014).

**Community Impacts**

The number of households involved in food gardening activities and public interest in joining community-oriented projects that inspire civic engagement have both risen. These increases have led several researchers across multiple disciplines to examined how CGs may impact individuals' physical and emotional health (Anguelovski 2013b; Agyeman et al., 2016; Pastor & Morello-Frosch, 2014; Teig et al., 2009) as well as a neighborhood’s overall resilience (Draper & Freedman, 2010; Krasny & Tidball, 2009a; Lawson, 2004, 2005; National Gardening Association, 2014). The following
discussion offers an overview of benefits that commonly appear throughout CG literature, yet it is not intended to be an exhaustive list, nor does it insinuate that all participants profit equally from their engagement. Due to the personalized nature of CGs and the contextual nuances that shape peoples’ experiences, perceptions of CGs’ outcomes will vary. As Armstrong (2010) found in her study of CGs in upstate New York:

Individuals involved in community gardening may provide an even more integrated perspective to health promotion and empowerment designs; for example, by improving local, sustainable food systems, improving job skills and employment opportunities, addressing problems of depression and other mental health issues, especially in lower income neighborhoods, addressing the need for green spaces, aesthetics, and lowering crime in urban neighborhoods. (p. 326)

Public Health

There is a growing body of health research that takes a more holistic perspective on human wellbeing. By incorporating physical, as well as emotional and social elements into their research, health advocates state that human wellbeing is dependent upon satisfactory human relationships, meaningful occupation, opportunities to connect with nature, ability to express one’s creativity, and opportunities to give back to society (Kingsley et al., 2009). Community gardens meet many of these needs via healthy food production (Evans et al., 2016; Hancock, 1999; Tieg et al., 2009), opportunities for exercise (Armstrong, 2000; Draper & Freedman, 2010; Okvat & Zautra, 2011), and leisure activities that can provide therapeutic benefits and positive social experiences (Anguelovski 2013b; Baker, 2004; Glover et al., 2005; Pastor & Morello-Frosch, 2014; Teig et al., 2009).

Increased access to fresh, affordable produce is a main health benefit of community gardens, particularly within low-income neighborhoods labeled as “food
deserts”. Residents in these areas suffer from limited access to supermarkets, high costs of fruits and vegetables, and limited ability to purchase culturally familiar foods, all factors which inhibit the consumption of a balanced, nutritious diet (Alaimo, Packnett, Miles & Kruger, 2008; Alaimo et al., 2010; Anguelovski 2013a; Evans et al., 2016; Flachs 2010; Okvat & Zautra, 2011). CGs enable residents to use traditional methods of growing to produce foods more common to their culture, foods that appeal to their taste preferences and knowledge base of cooking. However, the social nature of CGs also provides opportunities for individuals to diversify their diets by sharing cultural knowledge with each other about the crops and recipes traditional to different garden members (Baker, 2004; Hancock, 1999; Krasny & Tidball, 2009a). Researchers have also found that when people engage in the process of growing their own foods, both adults and children tend to become more invested in their food choices and are more likely to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables (Alaimo et al., 2008; Evans et al., 2016; Flachs 2010).

Increased physical activity is another health benefit often associated with CGs (Alaimo et al., 2008; Kingsley et al., 2009) and can even be a primary motive for individuals to become involved (Ohmer et al., 2009). When residents live in close proximity to their respective CG, many take advantage of the opportunity to walk or bike to the garden site (Armstrong, 2000). Gardeners also acknowledge the physical activities associated with gardening (i.e. turning compost, mulching, and weeding) as helping them to build muscles and maintain physical fitness in a space that is preferable to the interior of a local gym (Kingsley, Townsend, & Henderson-Wilson, 2009).
Researchers in the medical field have begun to empirically assess whether presence and/or participation in a local CG can mitigate health issues such as obesity and diabetes (Weltin, 2013; Zick, Smith, Kowaleski-Jones, Uno, & Merrill, 2013). A study was also conducted in 2013 that identified 110 hospitals and academic health centers within the US as having a CG affiliated with the institution (George et al., 2015).

Using gardens as a healing aid is not a novel concept, considering as early as 1798 Dr. Benjamin Rush, the so-called “father of American psychiatry,” showed evidence of mentally ill patients receiving positive impacts when engaged in gardening (Diehl & Park Brown, 2004). Since the 1970s nature-based therapy has gained respect from psychologists and medical professionals, eventually leading to horticultural therapy being recognized as a legitimate therapeutic practice (American Horticultural Therapy Association, n.d). As CGs have become more prevalent in America, some researchers focused more intently on the mental health benefits to be gained specifically through CG engagement. As urbanization makes it more difficult for people to access natural greenspaces, CGs can serve as an everyday sanctuary for some residents, providing a safe place where they can destress and reconnect with nature in a way that rejuvenates their mind, body and spirit (Kingsley et al., 2009, Poulsen et al., 2014).

**Personal Wellbeing and Neighborhood Morale**

According to Tieg at al. (2009), CGs serve as “a community-based environmental change that transcends age, ethnicity, race, income, and education, and thus provides an important example of a place-based strategy that can strengthen and sustain neighborhoods and improve residential health across the lifespan” (p. 1116). Several case studies indicate that individuals’ personal wellbeing and the collective morale of a neighborhood can both improve (Anguelovski, 2013a; Chan et al., 2015; Kingsely,
Townsend, & Henderson-Wilson, 2009; McIlvaine-Newsad & Porter, 2013; Okvat & Zautra, 2011). In a study of residents who suffered the everyday traumas of living in impoverished, crime ridden neighborhoods, Anguelovski (2013a, 2013b) noted that CGs provided a sense of safety, support, and encouragement for residents. CGs have also been shown to serve as sites for refuge after natural disasters occur, providing survivors with a gathering place to validate and support each other as well as an activity that could symbolize regrowth and resilience in the wake of trauma (Chan et al., 2015). Some residents plant trees or flowers within the gardens as a symbol of regrowth and new life, helping to memorialize lost loved ones and gain closure during the grieving process (Chan et al., 2015; Anguelovski, 2013a).

Though the potential for gentrification does exist, the beautification that results from CGs being built in marginalized neighborhoods is widely seen as catalyst for positive transformations in the wider community (Ohmer, Meadowcroft, & Lewis, 2009; Schmelzkopf, 2002). Racial barriers can be broken down as neighborhood cohesion and pride increases, inspiring garden members to become engaged in other community-based improvement projects (Shinew, Glover, & Parry, 2004). Krasny and Tidball’s (2012) research on socioecological stewardship projects supports these claims, stating that CGs which foster cooperative participation among the members can redirect communities away from “vicious cycles of crime and unhealthy behaviors to virtuous cycles of greening and community well-being” (p. 270). Whether or not crime is actually reduced by the presence of CGs is contested (Gorham, Waliczek, Snelgrove, & Zajicek, 2009), but community gardeners across the globe share the perspective that CGs contribute to the safety and stability of their respective neighborhoods (Ghose &
Pettygrove, 2014; Glover, 2004; McKay, 1998; Ohmer et al., 2009). Crime prevention is even cited as one of the top motivators for CGs to be initiated, both by grassroots groups and local organizations (Draper & Freedman, 2010).

**Social Learning**

Another opportunity for community resilience to be fostered via CGs is through social learning where the diversity of garden members can contribute to a shared pool of knowledge. The cross-generational and cross-cultural learning that takes place between gardeners strengthens individuals' bonds of trust and provides a diverse information-base regarding gardening practices, recipe sharing, and where certain resources can be acquired (Armstrong, 2000; Krasny & Tidball, 2009a; Tieg et al., 2009). Many participants express enjoyment around getting to know other gardeners of different cultural backgrounds than their own; often these social connections are unique to the garden setting and would not have formed without a shared involvement in the CG (Anguelovski, 2013a; Krasny & Tidball, 2012; Teig et al., 2009; Firth et al., 2011). In a study based in Toronto, the 110 CGs examined throughout the city were said to “reflect the city’s increasing ethnocultural diversity in the faces of the gardeners and the varieties of plants they grow. Immigrant gardeners bring local knowledge from around the world and adapt it to urban gardening spaces in the city of Toronto” (Baker, 2005, p. 307). From a racial justice perspective, residents in the St. Louis area reported that CGs provided a leisure space where people of different races were able to come together and interact positively in a common activity (Shinew et al., 2004).

Local knowledge acquisition can also be stimulated via CGs; awareness of local ecological systems, urban natural resources, local infrastructure, and city policies are examples of such outcomes cited within the literature (Krasny & Tidball, 2009b; Chan et
There is also opportunity for individuals to learn leadership skills and practice methods of conflict resolution within CGs because interpersonal and/or political issues can arise internally between CG members or with external stakeholders. Differences of opinion, power hierarchies, racial biases, threats of gentrification, and loss of land can create barriers between gardeners that, if gone unresolved, can diminish the resilience of the community. However, as Aptekar (2015) stated, "It is through struggles over scarce resources and clashing visions that people engage and form ties with others across multiple categorical differences, creating some openings for resistance of existing hierarchies and a rewriting of the gentrification narrative" (p. 210). It is out of these situations of conflict and deliberation that mediation tactics are practiced, tolerance is gained, and neighborhoods are eventually able to become more cohesive (Aptekar, 2015; Teig et al., 2009; Tan & Neo, 2009). As participants continue their involvement in community gardens, increasing their understanding of the garden’s ability to improve food security and promote overall wellbeing within the neighborhood, motivation to engage in other community improvement projects increase and leadership skills are fostered (Flachs 2010; Lawson 2004; Anguelovski 2013a; Krasny & Tiball, 2009a).

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter began with an overview of diverse CG styles, describing the range of intentions and goals, physical layouts, and management structures that characterize different CGs. The main principles of social capital theory were then discussed, highlighting the important role that trust and reciprocity play in different types of relationships and how these social connections can influence resource mobilization for various entities. The differences between bonding, bridging, and linking social capital
were described and examples of how each type of social capital can influence the outcomes of community-based projects were provided. Potential issues that can arise during the development and maintenance of CGs were addressed and examples of how such issues can inequitably impact marginalized neighborhoods were noted. The chapter concluded by acknowledging some the main benefits that previous researchers have associated with CGs – improvements to public health, personal wellbeing, neighborhood morale, and social learning.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

This chapter discusses the methodology used by the researcher to examine the role that social capital plays in achieving successful development and longevity of CGs. First, the theoretical perspectives of the researcher will be provided to explain how the lines of inquiry, objectives, and methodologies of the research study were formulated. A discussion of the researcher’s ontology and epistemology will clarify how her worldview influenced the direction of this study. Next the researcher will discuss the research design, including the diverse methods employed during data collection, the sampling techniques used, and the timeline of the study. The third section of this chapter will cover the data analysis techniques used to discover emergent themes within the data that contribute to the overall findings of the grounded theory approach. Finally, strategies used to address the validity and credibility of the findings are provided.

Theoretical Perspective

A general qualitative approach was employed in this study. Unlike quantitative research which relies on “objective measurement in a controlled setting to gather numeric data that are used to answer questions or test predetermined hypothesis” (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2014, p. 24), the structure of qualitative research is less prescribed. Quantitative methods require the use of reliable instruments to take valid numerical measurements of predetermined variables during the data collection process, often with the aim of studying cause and effect relationships (Ary et al., 2014). Alternatively, in qualitative research the individual(s) collecting and analyzing the data are themselves the key instrument(s) because they are the ones actively gathering the information (Creswell, 2007, 2012). Both styles of research are concerned with rigor and
both are influenced by philosophical and theoretical assumptions held by the researcher, despite the fact that “researchers sometimes are not aware of these influences because they are embedded in the researchers’ suppositions about the nature of reality and knowledge” (Glense, 2016, p. 5). Especially within qualitative research, which is inherently prone to a degree of researcher bias, it is imperative that the researcher be transparent about their own assumptions. Transparency allows others to understand why a researcher engaged in certain practices and how certain conclusions were drawn, thereby adding justification to the findings and increasing the potential transferability of those findings (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002; Yin, 2016).

**Conceptualization of Worldviews**

In its most simple definition, a researcher’s worldview - also referred to as *paradigm* - is the basic set of beliefs that guides his/her actions within a given study. Worldviews can be flexible from one study to the next and may to shift and evolve as one’s research focus also evolves; one study may also incorporate more than one worldview at a time (Creswell, 2007). The body of literature discussing different worldviews has also evolved over time, causing some confusion among the terminology and categorization schemes existing in the literature. Therefore, to achieve transparency a researcher needs to go beyond identifying their own worldview, but must also explain the epistemology behind his/her perspectives. Epistemology refers to how one comes to know what he/she knows, or in other words, how one’s personal beliefs govern his/her acquisition of knowledge (Ary et al., 2014). Researchers’ epistemology are influenced by ontology – one’s beliefs regarding the reality of the surrounding world
– and thereby influence the theoretical assumptions, research designs, and methodologies selected by researchers for their studies (Glense, 2016).

This researcher’s experiences assisting with the development of CG projects and her training in community-based social marketing – an approach to behavior change that utilizes community-based participation and principles of social marketing (Monaghan, 2014) – influenced her worldview. Considering the community-based nature of CGs and their evidenced ability to benefit marginalized neighborhoods, elements of interpretivism and critical theory guided the researcher to take on a worldview most closely aligned with pragmatism. As described by Creswell (2007), pragmatist researchers are more concerned with the outcomes of a study than adhering to a specific methodological structure; they employ a diverse array of methods and techniques in order to be most productive in addressing the problem at hand.

Application of Worldviews

The researcher of this study became invested in researching CGs through her role as a community advocate and partner within a larger neighborhood resilience initiative. Also influenced by her personal interest in studying topics of environmental justice, the researcher was initially interested in exploring whether a relationship existed between CGs and environmental justice issues, particularly within marginalized neighborhoods. These interests were characteristic of the critical theory approach (Creswell, 2007; Glense, 2016) and led the researcher to delve deeper into the literature to explore whether a link could be drawn between environmental justice issues and CGs. Indeed previous researchers have illustrated a connection between CG development, marginalized neighborhoods, and environmental justice issues facing numerous communities (McIlvaine-Newsad, & Porter, 2013; Schmelzkopf, 2002; Wolch
et al., 2014). However, the researcher’s own experiences as a participant observer within the local neighborhood resiliency initiative indicated that social dynamics and resource mobilization were topics of greater relevance within the context of the researcher’s study. Therefore, based on her pragmatic worldview, the researcher chose to diverge from her initial interest in environmental justice issues as related to CGs in order to pursue a more significant line of inquiry based on social capital theory.

Considering the social nature of CG projects, the researcher sought to collect experience-based insights from CG members across Florida regarding how social networks supported and/or hindered the process of CG development and maintenance. Throughout the study the researcher maintained the belief shared by interpretivists and pragmatists: that there is no singular universal reality to the world (Creswell, 2007) because humans are too interconnected with the social realities of their environment to be considered separate from the contexts in which they exist (Ary et al., 2014; Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2016). In the following section a description of the research design will further illustrate how a variety of methods were incorporated into this study, again depicting the pragmatist worldview of the researcher.

**Data Collection**

Fundamental to pragmatism is the notion that individual researchers are able to choose the methods and strategies of data collection and analysis that best meet the purposes of a given study (Creswell, 2007, 2012). The current researcher embraced this philosophy by incorporating several different methods of data collection into her study such as semi-structured interviews, FGs, participant observations, basic archival analysis, and community-based participatory research. This use of multiple methods allowed the researcher to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the lifecycle of
a CG as well as how different stakeholders perceive the outcomes. Each method offers unique strengths to the study and can help to balance some of the weaknesses of the other methods (Patton, 1999). It was expressed in the proposal submitted to the Internal Review Board that these methods would be employed. It was also acknowledged that the design of this study would remain iterative and recursive, allowing the methods used and questions asked during the study to evolve as new insights are gained (Yin, 2016). The drafted interview guides and letters that would be used to recruit participants were also submitted to the review board. All of these documents can be viewed in appendices A – E. Funding Approval was granted. Thus, under the sponsorship of the Center for Landscape Conservation and Ecology at the University of Florida, data collection for this research study began.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are a style of one-on-one interview that combines the free-flowing nature of unstructured interviews with some of the formal directions of structured interviews. A pre-written list of guiding questions and prompts are used to guide the discussion with the interviewee, however the interviewer has the discretion to follow leads in the conversation that may veer from the guiding questions if it is deemed useful and appropriate by the researcher (Bernard, 1988, Harding, 2013). Though the researcher was most interested in obtaining the perspectives of CG members and coordinators throughout the state, in order to first gain a more general understanding of the CG scene in Florida, semi-structured interviews were conducted with CG stakeholders who were professionally involved with CGs. Because the purpose of these interviews was to provide the researcher with a more general understanding of the existing state of CGs in Florida, the researcher permitted a flexible structure to guide
the interviews. Eleven UF/IFAS Extension agents from eleven different Florida counties were interviewed by phone, as were four local government officials representing three different locales. In addition, three CG professionals actively engaged in several CG programs in Gainesville, FL (i.e. UF Family Nutrition Program, local non-profits, active CG coordinators, UF/IFAS faculty) were interviewed face-to-face; this was possible because of their close proximity to the researcher herself.

The snowball method of sampling was used to recruit interviewees for this first stage of data collection. The PI on this project reached out to a UF/IFAS Extension agent who had access to the contact information for several other UF/IFAS Extension Agents involved in sustainability-based projects throughout the state. In early November 2016 a blast email was sent to about 40 agents, some of whom provided additional contact information for the CG specialists in their area. Based on the responses sent to the researcher from this initial outreach effort, a more descriptive letter was then sent to the agents who had direct experience working on CG projects in their county. This letter explained the purpose of the ongoing study, provided a list of five preliminary questions that were of interest to the researcher, and requested a phone interview with the UF/IFAS Extension agent. 13 interviews were scheduled between the months of November 2016 and February 2017; these interviews provided insights that were used to design the FG question guide. Five additional interviews were held with CG professionals between March 2017 and June 2017, allowing the researcher to pose questions asked during FG discussions to UF/IFAS Extension agents and government representatives in areas where FGs and/or participant observations also were conducted.
The interviews were scheduled via email based on the availability of the interviewee with each interview lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. This interviews were not audio recorded, but the interviewees were asked to give their consent for the researcher to take notes during the conversations. Five main questions were posed during each interview, the answers to which led to probes that were generated in response to the individual perspectives and information offered by the respective interviewees. The five main questions focused on gaining the interviewees’ perspectives on the strengths of CGs, perceived barriers, characterization of resident participation, broader impacts to the community at large, and management structures. These responses enabled the researcher to devise a list of questions that would be asked of CG members during FG discussions. These questions were tailored to address some of the differences of opinions expressed by professionals and to clarify which factors of development seemed most important to the participants. This would also offer the researcher the option of comparing the insights offered by the professional stakeholders versus CG members to see any patterns of similarities or differences could be identified. The data from these interviews is not presented in this thesis study because the main purpose of the interviews was the enable a well-informed FG question guide to be produced. The list of guiding questions used in the interviews can be viewed in Appendix A and the list of FG questions that were derived from the interview data can be viewed in Appendix D. However, the analysis portion of this thesis focuses on the perspectives of the CG participants and site coordinators rather than on the CG professionals.
Focus Groups

A focus group, according to Krueger (1988) is a “…Carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (p. 18). It is a style of group interview that usually includes a six to twelve participants who share a common experience or opinion and are likely to engage cooperatively in a group setting. There will also be a moderator who facilitates the FG, aiming to keep the conversation naturally flowing and to ensure that all participants are contributing equally; there may also be a note taker who observes and takes notes on the social environment of the FG (Bernard, 1988; Yin, 2016). The goal of a FG is to keep the conversation relaxed and fluid so that participants feel comfortable to authentically share their thoughts and experiences regarding the topic being discussed, however moments of tension can arise (Krueger, 1988). There can also be the issue where one participant dominates the conversation and may cause others to contribute less to the discussion. Group think is another potential concern because some participants may end up agreeing with the others’ opinions rather than voicing their own perspectives (Bernard, 1988; Creswell, 2007; Krueger, 1988). Nevertheless, when an interactive dialogue is likely to yield the most comprehensive information on a given topic, FGs are a highly valuable.

In this study FGs were conducted with members of CGs who either were participants and/or site coordinators within their respective gardens. Six FGs were conducted in six different counties between late March 2017 and early May 2017, however, only five of the six FG transcripts were included in the analysis of this study. The sixth FG was only attended by five participants, two of which represented two different school gardens. The other three participants were all affiliated with the same
A CG project that had been experiencing a period of inactivity for the past two years. Because the discussion among these members pertained more to the functioning of school gardens and offered limited insights on the development and/or maintenance of CGs, the researcher and the PI of this study opted not to include this FG in the data analysis. The first four FGs took place in central Florida while the fifth was held in northern portion of the state.

The counties where the FGs would take place were selected based on the information provided by CG professionals during the previous round of interviews. While the researcher and the PI of this study had initially considered focusing only on CGs located in marginalized neighborhoods, based on the diverse range of social networks and infrastructural support involved in CGs across the state, it was decided that the researcher’s goal would be better served by incorporating a more diverse array of CGs. Thus, once each interview was complete, the researcher inquired if the respective UF/IFAS Extension agent or government representative was able and/or willing to assist in recruiting local CG members to participate in a FG in their area. If the CG professional agreed, the researcher emailed a drafted letter-of-request for prospective participants that could first be reviewed by the agent/government representative and then sent to the CG members in their respective locale. This letter explained the general premise of the research study, the purpose for conducting FGs, the logistics of how the FG would be operated, and the researcher’s contact information. A copy of this letter can be viewed in Appendix B. Then, depending on the preference of the CG professional, either a contact list of CG members was provided to the researcher so she could take on the recruitment process, or the CG professional
personally contacted the individuals in their locale themselves. The latter technique was employed for three of the five FGs because the respective CG professionals believed that local CG members would be more likely to attend a FG upon the request of a familiar name, rather than an invitation from an unknown researcher.

All participants were sent an invitation to attend their respective FG at least two weeks prior to the event. If there was minimal response from the prospective attendees, a second email or phone call was made to ensure that the CG member was aware of the invitation to attend the FG and was encouraged to RSVP. Confirmation emails were sent to the researcher so that the number of attendees could be estimated ahead of time. The day before the FG took place the researcher sent a reminder email and/or phone call to each prospective participant who expressed an intention of attending. The CG professionals also provided the venues where the FGs were hosted, each of which was free of charge. In the cases where UF/IFAS Extension agents were acting as a liaison to help coordinate the FGs (i.e. FGs one, two, five and six), their respective county UF/IFAS Extension office served as the venue. FGs three and four were coordinated by local government representatives who played an active role in the development and maintenance of CGs in their area; they both secured an alternative venue for the FG to be held.

Between six and eight individuals participated in each of the five FGs, yielding a total of 34 participants who represented 25 different CGs in Florida. Each FG lasted between 90 minutes to two hours and were hosted on a weekday evening; this was the time that was most convenient for the majority of participants. Three audio recorders were used for each of the FGs, providing backup copies of the recording in case there
were technical issues with the recorders’ functioning. The researcher also provided baked goods for the participants attending the FGs; this was the only form of compensation provided. The rooms were arranged so that the participants could sit in a circle for the duration of the FG discussion. In two instances the researcher was unable to remove the table from the center of the circle due to restrictions by the venue staff, however in all cases the members were facing each other in a circular position to encourage interactive dialogue. Prior to beginning the FG discussions, the participants were asked to each fill out a form with their contact information, as well as some preliminary information regarding the CG they were representing. A copy of this form is available in Appendix E. The researcher also read an introductory script to the participants which had been approved by the PI. This script informed the CG members about their rights as research participants, provided brief instructions for how the FG would be run, and asked for verbal consent from all participants to approve the use of audio recorders. A copy of this introductory script can be viewed in Appendix C. Upon gaining verbal consent the recorders were turned on and the researcher began the discussion with an ice breaker question posed to each participant and then opened the discussion with subsequent questions taken from the FG question guide.

As the moderator, the researcher strived to maintain a consistent structure across all five FGs, however there were some differences which should be noted. The first FG was the only one attended by the PI, who served as a note taker. In addition, two UF/IFAS Extension agents from this county requested the ability to sit in on the FG and observe the discussion. While the transcript of this FG did not seem to reflect any hesitancy by the participants because of the presence of the UF/IFAS Extension agents,
the researcher and the PI both agreed CG professionals should not be present during future FGs. In addition, not all questions were able to be addressed during each FG due to time constraints. The researcher aimed to allow a free-flowing nature to the conversation so that the researcher could learn about the issues of greatest relevance to the participants, but also strived to balance this flexibility with the need to adhere to the question guide for the sake of collecting data relevant to the research purpose. Following each FG the researcher uploaded the audio recording to a secure computer file and transcribed the recordings word-for-word using Express Scribe Transcription Software. These transcripts were saved in a secure file for later analysis via coding procedures.

**Participant Observation**

Participant observation fieldwork is said to be the basis of cultural anthropology and in some cases, it can be used as the sole method of data collection for ethnographers who immerse themselves in a given culture for months or years at a time (Bernard, 2006). In this study the researcher did not spend extensive periods of time within one cultural setting and did not rely on participant observations as a main source of data collection. Instead the researcher took the opportunity to visit various CGs in Florida when invitations were extended by CG representatives, often times coming from participants of the FGs. The researcher attended three CG workday events, was given tours of ten different CG sites, and attended the Earth Day celebration events hosted at three different CGs. These site visits occurred between February 2017 and July 2017. During these visits the researcher conversed informally with CG members as well as local residents who enjoyed visiting the garden even though they did not tend a plot. Some of the individuals offered their perspectives on what the CG offered the
community, personal motivations for being involved, and some of the greatest challenges that faced the CG. When permission was granted by these individuals being observed, the researcher recorded direct quotes regarding their experiences to offer supplemental data to the FG findings. By capturing some of the lived experiences within the garden and observing the social interactions among the members, the researcher gained contextual knowledge that would help to complete the descriptive case studies reported in Chapter 4.

**Follow-up Interviews**

One of the key features of qualitative research is that it requires a process that is iterative and recursive throughout the data collection and analysis phases of a study (Harding, 2013). Though not all qualitative researchers follow the rigorous set of procedures for data collection and analysis that are required for grounded theory, data collected at earlier stages of a qualitative study are often used to provoke new questions that then require different strategies for data collection to be incorporated into the study. As insights are gained and data from different sources and methods are collected and reviewed, patterns emerge within the dataset. This inspires the researcher to think critically about the categories which are emerging and the ultimate direction in which the study is headed. Eventually the researcher will draw conclusions about themes that take into consideration all phases of research process. However even at this stage of the research process new inquiries can be sparked that may stimulate additional research studies to be conducted in the future (Yin, 2016).

Once the researcher had completed two rounds of coding of the FG transcripts and debriefed with the PI, it was decided that case studies would be written for a selection of the CGs that were represented by FG participants. The CGs to be featured
in these case studies were selected based on unique characteristics of their development processes (i.e. the partnerships foraged during development, the role of the local government, the challenges faced) and were CGs which the researcher was most knowledgeable about based on the previous data collected. Nevertheless, because neither the interviews, FGs, nor participant observations were aimed at collecting a full chronological description of the development process of any CG, the researcher needed to request follow-up interviews to gather more detailed information.

The researcher contacted two CG professionals and three CG members by email to request follow-up interviews. The researcher was already familiar with these individuals from previous interactions during interviews and/or FG discussions, thus allowing these requests to be personalized to the individual. The researcher explained her interest in featuring the individuals’ respective CGs as case studies within her research. All five individuals consented to a follow-up interview. These interviews were held between June 2017 and August 2017. Four interviews took place over the phone and were audio recorded for later transcription by the researcher. The fifth interview occurred face-to-face on site at the interviewee’s CG; the researcher was offered a tour of the garden and then a shady spot was found where the interview could take place. This fifth interview was not recorded (due to the noisiness of the surrounding park environment) but copious notes were taken.

The researcher prepared for each interview by reviewing the previously collected data of the respective site in order to identify gaps in the chronology of a CG’s development and statements that needed clarification. From these gaps and points of confusion the researcher devised a few general questions which would help prompt
conversation with the interviewee. However, the researcher also recognized that the interviewees themselves were the experts on these CGs and therefore the researcher was likely to gain more valuable information by allowing the interviewee to guide the direction of the conversation. The information offered by the interviewees would later be corroborated against the data from the semi-structured interview notes, FG transcripts, and recorded participant observations. The researcher had also reviewed archival materials that were relevant to the CG’s development process - local government documents, nonprofit program materials, and newspaper articles – to offer an additional resource to triangulate the data and increase the credibility of the case studies.

Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, at the end of which the interviewee was informed that he/she would be provided with a drafted copy of the case study prior to the publication of this report. The purpose of sending a draft was to provide the interviewees with an opportunity to check that the information recorded in the case study was accurate and that no compromising details were included. These four descriptive case studies are provided in Chapter 4 of this paper.

Data Analysis

Based on the iterative and recursive nature of qualitative research studies, it is expected that researchers will use complex reasoning skills via inductive and deductive logic throughout the process of collecting and analyzing data (Creswell, 2012; Harding, 2013). Qualitative research does not follow a linear trajectory (Charmaz, 2006). In order to draw credible conclusions across multiple sources of data, and even within one given dataset, the researcher much interact with the data in a manner that questions, compares, checks, and revises the themes which emerge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin,
The researcher accomplished this through several rounds of analysis that involved the use of coding techniques associated with the practice of thematic analysis within qualitative research (Gibson & Brown, 2009; Harding, 2013).

**Thematic Analysis**

As defined by Gibson and Brown (2009), “[T]hematic analysis refers to the process of analyzing data according to commonalities, relationships and differences across a data set. The word ‘thematic’ relates to the aim of searching for aggregated themes within data” (p. 127). It has been argued by some researchers that thematic analysis detracts from the richness and authenticity of a dataset because it decontextualizes information shared by participants regarding personal perspectives and experiences in order to treat them as a more generalized ‘type’ of information that can be labelled and categorized (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Nevertheless, it is also widely recognized that thematic analysis enables researchers to depict data in a narrative form that conveys a story to their reader. Themes serve as a tool which can illustrate the linkages between different examples and features of data that may offer new insights regarding the similarities, differences, and relationships across cases (Gibson & Brown, 2009; Harding, 2013; Yin, 2016). However, depending on the research question and the researcher’s worldview, the specific steps taken to carryout thematic analysis can differ across qualitative studies.

In the case of purely inductive studies that aim to generate new theories, a grounded theory approach would likely be employed during data collection and analysis (Harding, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2016). As was defined by the originators and early practitioners of grounded theory, this approach to qualitative research resembled the prescriptive, technical approach characteristic of quantitative research
studies that aim to discover new theory (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007). Grounded theory - traditionally aligned with the positivist paradigm - relied on empirical findings to inductively drive the course of discovery; a priori codes and themes were not considered in these analyses. However, in recent decades many qualitative researcher have challenged this prescriptive framework of grounded theory, offering more flexible versions of the approach to theory generation within qualitative research (Charmaz, 2006; Harding, 2013). Considering the researcher’s worldview as a pragmatist as well as her interest in exploring the development and longevity of CGs through the framework of social capital theory, the specific procedures prescribed by grounded theorists were not appropriate for this study. However, the research did draw on concepts from Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist approach to grounded theory to enhance the credibility and rigor of her own thematic analysis.

The original intent of grounded theory - to stimulate a process of examination that led to abstract interpretive understandings of a set of data – was applied. According to Charmaz (2006), grounded theory should not be prescriptive but rather follow a flexible set of guidelines that offer a principles and practices which can help the researcher to make discoveries from their data. She notes that methods of grounded theory can complement other approaches in qualitative data analysis; they do not need to be adopted as a singular approach but rather can be combined with other methods of analysis. Within the constructivist approach, the process of coding data is seen as the link between data collection and theory development. Themes that emerge from initial phases of coding – where the researcher goes line by line through a transcript and labels each line or segment – then lead to further data collection processes as well as
subsequent phases of more focused coding. Focused coding allows the researcher to review the labels and memos notated during the first phase in order to select the codes which can be applied throughout the transcripts to help the researcher organize, synthesize and make sense of large amounts of data (Charmaz, 2006). Plainly stated:

During initial coding, the goal is to remain open to all possible theoretical directions indicated by your readings of the data. Later, you use focused coding to pinpoint and develop the most salient categories in large batches of data. Theoretical integration begins with focused coding and proceeds through all your subsequent analytic steps. (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46)

In this research study, each phase of data collection and analysis influenced the structure and direction of the following phase. Initial coding was used to analyze the semi-structured interviews held with CG professionals in order to gain a preliminary understanding of some of the barriers, benefits, structures, and levels of participation seen within CGs throughout Florida. The initial codes from each interview helped to inform the questioning of the subsequent interviews. When a particularly intriguing comment was made or an interviewee expressed a firm opinion about a given topic, the researcher recorded memo notes regarding the comment itself as well as the researcher’s own thoughts concerning the statement. Sometimes the comments of one interviewee would be transformed into a question that could be asked of other interviewees to identify whether this might be a valuable concept to code for, or if this was an unique perspective that did not transcend the context of that single interview. Upon analyzing the notes taken during the semi-structured interviews, the researcher met with the PI to discuss which elements should be incorporated into the guiding questions derived for the upcoming FGs. An initial list of questions was drafted by the researcher and then was reviewed by the PI as well as another graduate student
in order to check the clarity and tone of the questions’ wording. Revisions to the question guide were made and the revised draft was then used in each of the six FGs conducted. This list of questions can be viewed in appendix D.

**Initial Coding**

Following each FG the researcher uploaded the audio recordings to a secure computer file and used Express Easy Scribe Transcription software to transcribe the discussion. Once the transcriptions were complete, the files were uploaded into the MAXQDA11 data analysis software. This is the program that the researcher used to perform all phases of coding for the FG transcriptions. Memos and comments were made within the MAXQDA11 program throughout each round of coding to help keep track of the researcher’s evolving thoughts and curiosities regarding the data.

The initial round of coding began in mid-April 2017, after the first two FG recordings were transcribed, but before all six FGs had been conducted. The decision to engage in this initial round of coding for only the first two FGs was discussed between the researcher and the PI. The benefits of being able to evaluate the quality of the question guide as well as the researcher’s performance as a moderator were weighed against the deficits of potentially bringing a predictive bias into future FGs based on what categories emerged during the initial round of coding. Agreeing that pros of being able to make necessary modifications to the question guide and/or the moderation tactics outweighed the potential cons, the researcher completed the initial round of coding for FGs one and two. The researcher used the guiding questions as a basic framework to begin the coding process, making note of the participants’ responses to specific questions. Broad categories were created to separate the data into general themes such as “needs,” “barriers,” and “benefits,” but sub-categories were
also created as more specific examples were noted in the transcript. The researcher conducted this initial coding phase using inductive and deductive reasoning skills, relying on a priori codes based on the main research question, but also allowing codes to emerge empirically as the researcher read through the transcripts. The code book continued to evolve throughout the initial coding phase for FGs one and two.

The researcher then reviewed her initial code book with the PI after he too had completed an initial round of coding for the first two FG transcripts. Strategies taken by each researcher to perform this initial coding were discussed and it was decided that the guiding questions and FG moderation tactics had both produced valuable results and thus did not require modifications. The initial code book was also well received by the PI, but he did caution the researcher to be mindful of the tendency to jump too quickly into the interpretation stage of analysis without first gaining a deep understanding of the descriptive data. The PI informed the researcher that after keeping an open mind during the additional rounds of coding that had yet to be done, the researcher would become more familiar with the data and have greater success determining which codes should be selected for further analysis (see Charmaz, 2006). Heeding this suggestion, the researcher was mindful to use the same moderating tactics in the remaining FGs as were used to the first two FGs.

Because the sixth FG was attended primarily by school garden coordinators rather than CG participants, it was decided that the data collected from the sixth FG would not be incorporated into this study. Therefore, once the researcher transcribed and uploaded the data from FGs three, four and five into MAXQDA11, the initial code book expanded as the last three FGs were initially coded. Modifications to the code
book continued as new categories emerged and unique insights were shared by participants. Once all transcripts were initially coded, the researcher exported the coded segments to Microsoft Excel so they could be visually grouped under their respective categories and sub-categories. This allowed the researcher to question the choices she had made in the initial coding phase, reassess whether the codes created still seemed as relevant as they did at the time they were created, and consider other ways that the data might be categorized and what themes might emerge.

**Focused Coding**

Before engaging in the second round of coding, the researcher decided to return to the body of literature on CGs. The researcher aimed to reacquaint herself with the perspectives of other CG researchers, putting much attention on understanding the style of the research studies conducted, the methods employed during data collection and analysis, and the themes that were found to be most significant by these researchers. This process of conducting a supplementary literature review (as a previous literature review had been completed prior to beginning data collection) helped the researcher to remain mindful during the next stage of coding, keeping her researcher lens in check in order to gain a deep understanding of the lived experiences of the CG members who participated in the FGs.

The second round of coding began with the researcher rereading each of the transcripts in the same order that they were initially read. Based on the codes established in the initial coding phase, the researcher evaluated which codes seemed to make the most analytic sense to be used as categories during further rounds of coding. Keeping in mind the purpose of the study – to examine the role of social capital in the achievement of successful development and longevity of Florida CGs – the researcher
selected codes which focused on describing the social relationships and partnerships within CGs. This caused the researcher to read through the transcripts several more times, making notes of the factors that were most frequently mentioned by CG members and sometimes adding these new categories to the code book. The new insights gained from the extended literature review and recent participant observations helped to inform this process.

A new code book was started in order to keep the two rounds of coding separate, allowing the researcher to remain aware of her shifts in perspective as well as the emergence of new codes that had not previously been used. Several of the segments that were coded under a certain label in the initial round of coding were included again in the second round, usually under a code label that was either synonymous or identical to the code label from the initial code book. In some cases the researcher decided to move a coded segment to an entirely new code based on new insights gained from the literature review. There were also instances where the researcher found that some of the codes used to categories certain segments were more reflective of the researcher’s own bias than the expressed sentiment of the FG participant. This exercise of focused coding proved very beneficial in helping the researcher to maintain self-aware of her research lens.

It was an iterative process where the researcher oscillated between reviewing each FG as an individual unit and reviewing the set of five transcripts as a whole. The researcher searched for similarities and difference across participants’ perspectives at both levels of analysis. The researcher also created a matrix to organize the demographic information provided by each FG participant and link the individuals with
the CG they were representing. Details about the participants’ respective CGs were included in this matrix (i.e. land ownership of the CG site, the basic management structure of the CG, the individual’s role within the CG, and the participant’s perception of the CG mission). As similarities between participants’ perspectives and experiences were identified from the transcripts, this matrix enabled the researcher to more readily notate other characteristics that the two individuals and/or CG site had in common.

Some of the themes emerging from this second round of coding also aided the researcher in writing the four descriptive case studies mentioned previously in this chapter.

**Thematic Coding**

A final round of coding was performed by the researcher once all data collection was complete, case studies were written, and the researcher met with the PI to collaborate over how the final round of coding should be conducted to derive the final set of themes that would be reported in this thesis. As an anthropologist by trade, the PI valued the inclusion of rich description in data analysis and suggested to the researcher that themes which seem less related to the concept of social capital within CGs still may offer valuable information to the study. These were the lived experiences of the participants and exemplified the complexity and context-specific nature of CGs processes. Thus, it was decided that it would be unproductive for the researcher to engage in a process of axial coding as it is outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990): “A set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. This is done by utilizing a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences” (p. 96). As Charmaz points out, axial coding has the potential to limit the researcher’s
exploration and deep understanding of a research topic. Therefore the current researcher opted to engage in what she has referred to as “thematic coding.” This process did not follow an explicit framework like that of axial coding, but still sought to answer questions such as “when, where, why, who, how and with what consequences” that are included in axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 125). The researcher sought themes that would help answer what factors supported and/or challenged the development of CGs, why and when these factors were present, and how these factors manifested in the outcomes of a CG’s longevity. This process of analysis continued as the researcher wrote Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis, continuing to seek a deeper understanding of the CG participants’ perspectives.

**Justification of Methods**

According to Yin (2016), the most critical and fundamental characteristic of all qualitative research studies is that they must demonstrate their trustworthiness and credibility. However, because qualitative research encompasses a range of paradigms that are guided by different philosophical and theoretical assumptions, there is also great diversity in the importance that researchers ascribe to ensuring researcher credibility, as well as validity of the findings (Patton, 1999). Some qualitative researchers have even questioned whether “rigor” should be used to assess the quality of qualitative studies. Without being able to find the definition of “rigor” within any qualitative methods reference material, Davies and Dodd (2002) surmise that “rigor encompasses detachment, objectivity, replication, reliability, validity, exactitude, measurability, containment, standardization, and rule. It becomes clear that inherent to the conception of rigor is a quantitative bias” (p. 280). Therefore, while all researchers must attend to the validity and reliability of their study, the mechanisms for doing so and
the criteria used to make this evaluations need to be tailored to the type of research and the methods employed within a given study (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Davies and Dodd, 2002). In this current study on CGs in Florida, the researcher aimed to be transparent, employ strategies of triangulation, and record thick descriptions to improve the credibility, validity, and transferability of the research.

In the previous sections of this chapter the researcher has provided extensive detail about her theoretical assumptions, the preliminary design of the study, the iterative nature of the data collection and analysis processes, and the goals which guided the final stages of analysis. Through these descriptions the researcher aimed to be as transparent as possible in order to establish her trustworthiness and creditability as a researcher (Yin, 2016). The researcher acknowledged that her previous experiences working on a CG project in a marginalized neighborhood, as well as her training in community-based social marketing, influenced the theoretical assumptions on which this study is based. By reporting how each step in the data collection and data analysis processes were designed and performed, the researcher practiced reflexivity, a core component of qualitative studies. While quantitative analyses rely on statistical calculations of validity and reliability to evaluate the quality of one’s data (Creswell, 2007), qualitative researchers are concerned with reflexivity, a process which “involves a reflective self-examination of our own ideas and an open discussion and comparison of our research experiences” (Davies & Dodd, 2002, p. 286). The researcher maintained this practice of reflexivity by keeping record of her own thoughts and curiosities as the research process unfolded and reviewing this audit trail in order to keep her research lens in check.
There was also a significant deal of collaboration between the researcher and the PI of this study that enabled peer debriefing and triangulation during the various stages of data collection and analysis. Patton (1999) states that the purpose of triangulation – the comparison of data across multiple sources, methods, analysts, and/or theories – is to test for the consistency of data sources and inquiry approaches. The point is not to find perfect replications of results because depending on the questions being asked and the topics being studied, the variables of different research styles may reveal different insights. Accordingly:

[A]n understanding of inconsistencies in findings across different kinds of data can be illuminative. Finding such inconsistencies ought not be viewed as weakening the credibility of results, but rather as offering opportunities for deeper insight into the relationship between inquiry approach and the phenomenon under study. (Patton, 1999, p. 1193)

The use of several different methods of data collection within this study on CGs enabled methods triangulation to be employed. The use of several different sources of information (i.e. archival documents, FG transcripts, semi-structured interviews, participant observations) enabled triangulation of sources (Patton, 1999). The themes noted during the researcher’s initial round of coding of FG transcripts were discussed and compared to those of the PI. When differences between the researcher’s and PI’s initial code books were found, a discussion ensued about how codes were created and why certain segments were categorized. These peer debriefing sessions helped the researcher to think critically about the themes which were emerging and encouraged the inductive analysis process to continue (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2016). New codes were considered by the researcher based on the findings of the PI, showing that the researcher was able to keep an open mind during analysis rather than being swayed by the pursuit of a predicted outcome.
This process of remaining open-minded also allowed the descriptive case studies and the reports from the five FGs to portray the authentic perspectives of the participants. While all qualitative research is subject to the researcher’s bias (Creswell, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Yin, 2016), the researcher was able to keep her own perspectives in check by reminding herself that the goal of the study was to convey the lived experiences of others, not make predictions or generalizations. By audio recording each FG and all-but-one of the follow-up interviews, the researcher was able to produce transcripts that brought her a deeper level of understanding of the data (Charmaz, 2006). Direct quotes from the transcripts were used to support the thick, rich descriptions offered by the researcher which not only added to the credibility of the study, but also helps readers to assess the transferability of the findings to external contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

One final strategy employed to increase the credibility of the study was member checking with regard to the descriptive case studies included in Chapter 4. The individuals who engaged in follow-up interviews that informed the writing of these case studies were invited to read a draft of the case study and offer any additional insights, make suggestions for modifications, and indicate any mistakes that the researcher had made in reporting on the respective CGs (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process ensured that there was no compromising information included in the case studies that might negatively impact the participant, and that the information provided an accurate portrayal of the development process of the CGs, based on the perception of the interviewee.
Chapter Summary

This chapter began by describing the researcher's worldview as a pragmatist and explaining how previous experiences as a community-based researcher and partner on neighborhood resilience project influenced her research lens in this study. The various data collection methods were explained, detailing the relative timeline of the research process and the reasons why each method was selected. The logistical details of how the data collection was carried out were also provided, highlighting the assistance offered by local stakeholders that resulted in a snowball method of sampling to be utilized.

In describing the iterative nature of this qualitative study, the researcher acknowledged the need for the methodology to be flexible and exploratory. As Creswell (2012) states about his own process of conducting qualitative research, “I refrain from assuming the role of the expert researcher with the ‘best’ questions. My questions will change and become more refined during the process of research to reflect and increased understanding of the problem” (p. 52). Adhering to the pragmatic worldview adopted by the researcher, the purpose of identifying these themes was not to draw generalizations or conclusions regarding the how social capital must be integrated within a CG to achieve successful development and longevity. Instead the use of coding allowed themes to be discovered which may yield transferable insights regarding how different levels of social capital can help achieve success based on the environmental context and intended mission of a given CG. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the strategies that were employed to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the researcher, the methods used, and the findings produced throughout the study.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter offers an in-depth report of the data collected using the qualitative research methods described in the previous chapter. In the first section the researcher summarizes the main themes that emerged from the five FG discussions, themes which illustrate the roles that social capital played with the CGs as portrayed by the participants. Following the discussion of the thematic findings, four exploratory case studies are included to provide in-depth, contextual insights that further illustrate how social capital has influenced the development and longevity of four specific CGs in Florida. These case studies were compiled using the insights offered by the garden site coordinators during interviews. The perspectives of garden participants provided during FG discussions, personal communications, and participant observations were also included. In addition, information found in public documents and reports aided the researcher’s explanation of the contextual environment in which the CG developed.

Focus Group Emergent Themes

This first section of Chapter 4 offers a comprehensive review of the five FG discussions included in the analysis of this research study. To maintain confidentiality of all individuals involved in the study, all identifying information has been removed from the participants’ quoted statements. Each participant has also been ascribed an identification number that corresponds with the FG he/she attended (i.e. #304 indicates that the individual was the fourth participant attending the third FG). The main themes that emerged during the iterative process of coding, as described in Chapter 3, led to the researcher’s decision regarding the formatting of the following discussion. Rather than presenting the findings of each FG as separate from one another, the researcher
has opted to organize the information based on the emergent themes which were most salient across the five discussions. Because each of the CGs examined in this study have unique characteristics and are influenced by different sets of contextual variables, the researcher deemed it more appropriate to organize this analysis based on the common themes discussed, rather than by FG attendance.

The first three sub-sections provide descriptions of the FG participants’ responses to specific questions used to facilitate the FGs. These questions captured the participants’ perspectives regarding the meaning of the term *community*, their personal motivations for participating in a CG, and the overall mission of their respective CGs. By analyzing the participants’ responses to these guiding questions and noting the similarities and differences between responses, the researcher identified salient themes which persisted throughout subsequent topics discussed during the FGs. This is shown in the last two sub-sections of this portion of Chapter 4 - Factors Influencing Support and Factors Influencing Organization – through the discussion of factors that influence the successes of CGs. This discussion is also relevant to the four case study analytical summaries provided later in this chapter. By providing in-depth descriptions of the life-cycle of four specific CGs, the researcher illustrates specific examples of how social capital influenced the processes of development and longevity or these four CGs. These analytical summaries are also relevant to the concluding discussions included in Chapter 5.

**Meaning of ‘Community’**

To help ease participants into a productive FG discussion with one another, the researcher initiated each FG by asking the participants to define what the word *community* meant to them. The researcher’s original intention for this question was to
simply serve as an ice breaker for the conversations. However, through iterative coding of the FG transcripts, the researcher found that the most salient descriptors of community were words and/or phrases that continued to be used throughout the FG discussions. Considering that community is an inherent aspect of community gardens, understanding the themes which pervade the FG participants’ perceptions of community can serve as an asset in understanding the following analysis regarding CGs.

The notion of togetherness was particularly prominent across the participants’ responses. In several cases the word “together” appeared directly in the participants’ description of community, phrased in a manner that indicated the relevance of social relationships within the concept of community. As #103 stated, “The word community makes me think of people, together, doing something, enjoying each other's company.” This was similar to #305’s perspective of, “Community to me means bringing people together.” Other words such as “belonging,” “extended family” and “all-inclusive” also spoke to the social aspect of community where people are together with each other.

#101: I think of community as all-inclusive... we are thinking more local, but it actually radiates out worldwide.

#306: Community, what does it mean to me? People interacting in a positive, and sometimes negative, manner. Blood family members, extended family members. That’s it.

#201: Community to me I think relates to a sense of home, of belonging, nurturing and having friends. When you are in a community it is welcoming and again, playing off that sense of belonging.

#104: Community to me means a space that is peaceful, comfortable and fulfilling to live in. Shared with others.

However, as some participants noted, togetherness does not automatically mean that the relationships within a community are always be amiable.
#503: I think of it as an extended family, however large that happens to be. Whether it’s as a member of an organization, or literally family.

#502: I am glad that you used that term extended family because I think in a community it should encompass everybody, but sometimes it doesn’t.

Several participants also conveyed more specified drivers of the social interactions which took place in a community. For example, #405 stated that her perception of community is “people fellowshipping together around a common interest” and #501 said, “Community means a group of people who work in the interest of each other.” The idea of working towards a common goal was repeated by many participants who also spoke to this theme of togetherness.

#103: The word community makes me think of people, together, doing something, enjoying each other’s company and doing something that is healthy and safe and fun.

#106: The word community to me means, a group brought together by circumstance, or space, or interest. And working together towards that goal.

#406: So community to me means, like when a lot of people in a certain community need help, a lot of people in the community get together, like in the garden.

#304: To me the term community means people who may or may not live in close proximity, but work together for the good of each other.

#207: Community. It means together with others… Being with other peoples and helping anybody that I can afford to help.

There were some participants who perceived geographic proximity to be a defining feature of community, as shown in #502’s statement that “the word community is the conglomeration of neighborhoods.” The theme of togetherness continued to pervade many of these more proximal-based descriptions, noting that when people live in the same area they are able to come together to share in common activities.
#401: To me community means a group of individuals living in the same area with a common goal and that is to keep the community safe and healthy.

#402: A group of people that have something in common that keeps them in proximity to each other.

#301: When I think of community I think of the people surrounding the area and just, families, seniors, everyone is a group in that area.

#302: Community is a residential area where a lot of people reside and they like to communicate to each other and keep their assets increasing in value, like their homes and their properties. Make everything more aesthetic.

Each of these themes associated with participants’ definitions of community – togetherness, social interactions, common interests, and proximity – are also applicable to the definition of social capital. Although this first question posed to the FG participants was not intended to reveal great insights, the researcher found that the characteristics associated with community were often the same characteristics used by participants to describe the ideal social dynamics within CGs. These themes continued to be mentioned and elaborated on throughout the remainder of the FG discussions, providing further insights regarding how social capital related to the relative successes of the CGs examined.

**Personal Motivations**

Each of the participants’ descriptions of community highlighted the social nature of the term, speaking to some of the individual benefits that can be gained by spending time with others. The themes of bringing people together in an accepting environment, sharing in a common activity that is mutually enjoyable and/or beneficial to a larger group, and uniting people within a proximal area were said to yield feelings of belongingness, purpose, and overall wellbeing. These benefits also appear to the
underlying reasons why FG participants became involved in their respective CGs, as depicted through the answers participants gave to the second and third questions posed by the researcher during the FGs. The participants were first asked to “Think back to when you first got involved in your community garden. Can you tell us about that process?” Their responses were then followed by the question, “What is the best part about being involved in this community garden?” The responses showed that whether one wished to broaden their existing social network, engage with others whom they were previously connected to, or nurture a personal passion while sharing their experience with others, social relationships played a key role in most participants’ decisions to join a CG as well as the benefits they gained through their involvement.

#102: I think it’s really like, all the people you meet. Your neighbors. We call it ‘urban isolization’ and you just break that and you meet people. Everybody who belongs to this garden says the same thing, “I meet people that are my neighbors that I never knew.” And we are doing a lot of other things together. You know, biking together and doing other activities. So you know, it is really fun to see that. Now we have a kids’ playgroup. It’s really cool. There is just so much going on.

#104: We’ve met neighbors that I don’t know if we would have met… and with all of us sharing this common garden interest it has just exploded into this bigger-than-gardening community of connection. So it’s fruitful in more ways than just produce. Many more ways.

#201: Being involved in an active 55 [age] community, having a sense of community, of being home, belonging, friends, meeting new people. So it is cool to be able to go to our 30 plots… you know, you communicate with people. You hear interesting stories…”

#305: It [our CG] is the greatest thing. I met this dude [#306] and I met Miss Wonderful [#305] and you know, it is great. It is like you just always walk past these houses and suddenly you know who lives there. So I love it.

The majority of FG participants became engaged in a CG through their existing connections with other individuals/groups. In some cases the participant was asked to
assist with a CG project because he/she was known to be an experienced gardener and was already affiliated with the group launching the project.

#206: I got involved in the community garden after I had some pretty good success [at my home garden]. A friend of mine was involved with a CG project and he was asking me for some advice and asked if I would attend the meeting? I did and I just kinda got involved because of necessity. I mean that gave me purpose to be involved with the community garden. And I became the “technical” resource for the garden.

#306: Alright, in 2008 the city came up with the concept of an organic urban community garden. So some dignitaries from the city had a lot that they said they would donate to us if we wanted to start a community garden. So they started the recruiting process, first they brought partners in: The health department, the police department, [etc.]… they funded us to start the process. We started recruiting people from the community, we got together and elected officers. The next step was to get experienced individuals.

#503: Well [my reason for becoming involved] was a sheer accident, happenstance. I am a member of a church that has a very small satellite church. That small group thought what a wonderful idea it would be to have a community garden... Well as a member of this smaller church, I couldn’t escape quickly. … And then the real accidental nature of it was that I was a relatively new Master Gardener and I had absolutely no interest in vegetables whatsoever.

In other cases participants volunteered to assist with the development of the CG based on their passion for gardening and/or their desire to benefit the community.

Some had more experience than others with gardening, but all were willing to work collaboratively with other members of their group to develop the CG.

#504: A member [of a local church] donated this property years ago to her church… she came to our neighborhood meeting and she said that she wanted to do a garden but she was unable to… but she didn’t want the land just to sit there. So we talked about it, and we voted on it.

#303: The concept [for our CG] came from one of the church members who actually addressed the Neighborhood Association on three occasions. Finally the third time was a charm and the association established task force, a steering committee… I was the first one to say I would help the timid individual [who proposed the idea]… she was afraid and everybody wanted [a CG] and I just figured we could learn together.
I started off just interested in health, kids and health. So I joined a CSA but it was pretty far from my house and you really don’t have to participate, you just pick up stuff. So my kids weren’t getting involved. So I was part of an HOA and we had a bunch of land. We had a meeting and a lot of people were interested in starting a garden, so it was just a lot of opportunity, just meeting the right people. And just staying involved with getting a garden built… It was just a lot of coincidences that came together.

There were also a few of the FG participants who were the primary initiators of their CG project. Some of these individuals were able to use their existing relationships within a group to gather support for their CG project once underway, but the original idea for starting a CG project came from them.

I joined the local Garden Club mostly thinking of [my husband]… I was trying to figure out if these were my people… then came this gardening challenge for the garden clubs in the country to get involved with a community-based organization, with a soup kitchen or some type of feeding-the-hungry program or a youth organization. And I thought, “This is totally like me, I’m there.” So I just asked the garden club if they’d let me start a community garden.

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I would say ‘intention’ [is why I got involved]. I had an intention to want to start a community garden. And that connected me with three other people who kind of had the same intention.

Seven years ago I moved into this 55+ active community… I love gardening and got involved in our local garden club. We were going doing all these nice excursions to all the [professional gardens] around, but I’m going, “you guys aren’t doing any gardening.” …So I said, “You have to have a garden,” and they weren’t really keen on that, but I kept pushing and pushing.

Of the individuals who joined an existing CG, their involvement sometimes stemmed from their interest in growing food for their families or a desire to reconnect with positive childhood memories of gardening. However, in addition to these unique intrinsic motivations, most FG participants also stated that a desire to connect with others and develop social relationships drove them to become involved in their CG.
#106: I had just moved to the city and was tired of just talking to my cat. I was trying to figure out how to find people that I could relate to because this city was a little bit of a culture shock for me. So I found a community garden and I really like to eat, so I was like “Alright, these people are growing food. This is going to be good. These are my people.” So I connected with them without knowing anything about gardening.

#104: [My interest in gardening] comes from childhood. My first community garden was at a neighbor’s backyard in Louisiana where we grew up… There were three or four families, maybe more… we all took care of our rows and we all shared the produce. That was normal, I thought, but evidently that is something you do have to cultivate… But joining a CG here was a no brainer. We’ve met neighbors that I don’t know if we would have otherwise met… Now with all of us sharing this common garden interest it has just exploded into this bigger-than-gardening community of connection. So it’s fruitful in more ways than just produce. Many more ways.

#307: I was raised with a garden in Texas… I have fond memories of gardens. I think everybody here [at the focus group] probably has a memory where we had a garden so we wanted to share what we knew with the community that we live in now. And it has been a great success.

#404: I started because my husband and me are trying to garden. I have a big backyard and we always wanted to build [a garden] for the kids, but we never started. I said I am going to start with this CG to see how it goes and then I can do it at home.

#105: My background does not come from the garden side of it… So that’s where my views are coming from now, with the idea of me learning more. You know the fact that there are so many really good people at that garden and you learn so much more from the people around you. It’s really, it’s utterly fantastic and it is something that I would have never ever thought of.

Based on the totality of these responses to this second FG questions, it is evident that many participants became involved in their CG out of a desire to connect with a social group that shared common bonds. While some participants also referenced more personalized reasons for becoming involved in their CG, the mutually beneficial social relationships sought and/or realized via participation in CGs was the dominant theme in FG participants’ responses.
Mission of the CG

In addition to learning about what motivated the participants to become involved, the researcher was also interested in how successful the participants perceived their gardens to be. Considering the social nature of CGs and the collective action that is inherent in any community-based activity, the researcher believed that achievement of a collective goal within a CG could serve as an indicator of success. Therefore, the researcher relied on the mission statements of the various CGs, as portrayed by the participants, to define success for each CG. The questions “What do you see as the overall mission of your garden?” and “Do you think your garden is successful?” both aimed at understanding the participants’ perspectives of what success would look like within their CG. Because the researcher’s main interest in this study was to examine how social capital plays a role in the success of CGs, it was essential to learn from the participants whether the collective goals and visions associated with success were achieved in their CGs and how social dynamics influenced these outcomes. Many of the responses given to this question mirrored the reasons that participants decided to become involved in their CG, both for those who initiated the project themselves and for those who joined an already existing CG. Many of the mission statements, formal and informal, also spoke to the perceived benefits that participants believe are outcomes of CGs.

The majority of FG participants stated that the mission of their respective garden was to improve the wellbeing of the community in which the garden was located. Some mission statements focused on goal of increasing access to fresh, healthy food for their community at large. Several of these gardens promoted organic growing practices and
saw their CG as a means of making healthy food more affordable and accessible to CG participants and other local residents.

#107: My garden’s mission was to provide a place for the community to garden but also to provide food for the community… Half of our garden we donate to a food bank… We initially took [the produce] downtown to an organization serving the homeless, but now we keep it exclusively in our area. We wanted it to be just to help the people in our direct radius of our garden.

#203: I am promoting healthy eating to our congregation… And you know, I make my announcements ‘cause sometimes eating healthy is not what some of us like to do. So I’ll say, “Hey, we’ve got kale, tomatoes. They are calling you.”… Ultimately our mission was to promote healthy eating to our community.

#307: It seemed like at that time [we got started] organic was so expensive. It was so out of reach for most families… so we built a community garden and we have organic and we are not paying high prices at whole foods or fresh market or anything.

#106: Our garden started 8 years ago and was, to my understanding, the first garden in the city. I think a lot of the work with that first garden was introducing the idea of community gardens to this city… we were looking to create a green space and provide educational programs and etc. I feel selfish when I say this but I think our mission now is to grow food and eat it. I think that’s what it comes down to. We are a collective garden, so we just grow as much food as possible and give it to all of our selves as much as possible, but we also like to share with our neighbors… basically anybody who walks into our garden will get greens shoved into their hands.

Some participants referenced ‘education’ as a major component of their CGs’ missions. These statements show that participants valued the element of social learning often present within CGs. Many participants stated that the knowledge shared amongst CG members enabled greater productivity of the garden as well as enhanced social connections. In terms of social capital, this element of social learning encouraged greater trust and reciprocity between the garden members, sometimes even extending beyond the boundaries of the garden as individuals expressed a desire to share their
acquired knowledge with the wider population. Teaching other community members about how to grow fresh food in a sustainable, often organic manner, was highlighted as a common goal.

#401: And I think extending our knowledge too, once we learn, because this is kind of new for us. But once we learn it we can teach others and hopefully eventually everyone in the whole community will want to do it. Because it really is something that most people should do. It’s not only fun, if you know what you are doing you enjoy it, you are eating your own food.

#405: You need to provide an environment where people who don’t know what to do what they are doing can learn, which I think is what is happening in our garden.

#102: Our non-profit mission is education, so that’s a big part of it. So of course we had to learn first. And so that was part of the mission too, to learn… Also, part of our name is ‘sustainable technology,’ so we wanted to have a place for people to learn about solar energy, micro-irrigation, ways to reduce our carbon footprint. So they come here to our garden to find out [about those things] in addition to learning how to grow.

Other CGs focused on increasing neighborhood morale and positive socialization among residents. The goal of benefiting youth was also a large component of this these missions as many participants expressed that their gardens sought to provide positive experiences for the local children. Different strategies were employed in the various CGs to accomplish this mission of revitalizing their neighborhoods, but the notion of bringing people together to build amiable relationships was a common theme.

#502: My garden really to me goes beyond just raising food… I have seating around [the garden] and my whole thing is that I am looking at the community as a whole, [the garden] is a place where people can come and kind of just enjoy themselves and associate. So that is what I really want to see. That is why I am really hard on the aesthetics.

#103: So the mission was always about having a community garden available to inspire the community, to make the community a healthier, safer place. But also for the educational component for the children in the community.
The community gardening is a focal point to try to get the community to come together to try to put aside all of their differences because the only difference that you are trying to make is growing something. And I like that... I would say the overall mission is to bring the community together under one common idea. It is just about growing. It is just getting people of all backgrounds together.

Initially I think my personal focus was that I just saw that both parents were out working... there was a different dynamic in communities where neighbors don’t really know neighbors. I think my initial thought was that this [CG] is going to be a common space for people to come together to do something that is as essential as growing food. So that was my initial interest.

However, not all CGs had success with achieving their mission. Despite one’s passion for gardening and a desire to provide a beneficial service to their larger community, without adequate social capital to provide internal support as well as access to external resources, a CG will likely struggle to find success.

Yeah that was the intention when the said a “community” garden. That was the whole key. The whole key was community... And trying to get them out there to help. In some communities you are going to have people who are going to come in and help and you are going to have a community where they are not going to come in and help. But you still have to go on whether they come and help.

Factors Influencing Support

Within the five FGs the participants shared their perspectives regarding a range of factors that were said to influence the degree of success a CG was able to achieve. Personal experiences were shared that illustrated some of the main barriers to success, many of which were related to issues of acquiring and maintaining adequate external support for a CG. Considering the different contextual factors impacting the 34 participants who engaged in FG discussions, it is not surprising that an array of different opinions and experiences were shared. Nevertheless, through an iterative method of thematic coding, the researcher identified key factors related to issues of support that
were repeatedly discussed across the FGs. How each of these factors have been experienced within the participants’ CGs is discussed in the following two sub-sections below. The first section focuses on the influences that local politics and partnerships have had on the various CGs’ successes, particularly in terms of the financial support offered. The second section will address how different forms of gardening expertise has influenced the CG, noting whether the educational resources are found internally or externally to the gardens.

**Politics, partnerships, and funding**

Securing funding sources can play an important role in the process of developing and maintaining a CG. There are essential resources required for a CG to exist (i.e. water, land, healthy soil, etc.) and in order to effectively access such resources, often linkages need to be made between CG members and external partners within the governmental, nonprofit, and business sectors. As #503 stated, “Our UF/IFAS Extension agent is just a wealth of information, but support also needs to come from other resources because in organizations like this, it is money that holds you back, not necessarily people.” Throughout the FGs participants provided numerous examples of how politics, partnerships, and funding acted as supports and barriers to success within their CGs. Much emphasis was put on the importance of building relationships based on trust and reciprocity with agents external from the CGs in order to gain access to resources. There was not universal agreement amongst CG members or CG professionals regarding the debate over whether funding or participation should be considered the greatest barrier for CGs. Nevertheless, this connection between social relationships and access to resources highlights the relevance that financial burdens and funding sources have within the overall discussion of social capital within CGs.
Policy requirements and regulations - Property ownership often determined who was responsible for covering the water expenses and also influenced factors such as insurance fees, costs of land permitting, and land tenure for the garden site. In the case of #502’s CG, the city government had donated a vacant lot of land to the nonprofit #502 worked with in order to support the initial development of a CG on the property. The partnership between the government and the nonprofit began amiably; the land was provided by the city and the water bills were covered by the nonprofit. However, when this agreement was made not all terms of the agreement were understood, causing the agendas of the nonprofit and the city officials to become misaligned, thereby threatening the stability of the partnership. Because the expectations of the city were unrealized by the nonprofit, after five years of maintaining a thriving CG, the site was reclaimed by the city government and the nonprofit was at risk for losing the CG altogether. In order to prevent this loss, #502 worked to rebuild trust with the city as well as leverage an existing partnership between his nonprofit and another local organization.

#503: Right now it [the CG site] is with the city. I have talked to them and all, and we are working to have it donated to #501’s nonprofit because for 10 years I worked with that organization and they have done remarkable things in the area.

#501’s organization is willing to take over the CG project because of the shared goal of providing positive services to residents of the local community. As #501 expressed, the CG had already proven helpful in achieving his organization’s mission and therefore, agreeing to take over responsibility for the CG would be an investment that would offer mutual benefits to the existing CG members, #502, and #501’s organization.
Another example of how local government can impact the development and/or maintenance of a CG was conveyed by #505 as she described the process of establishing her CG which is located in a certified historic district of her city. An active nonprofit in the area initiated the project after it was agreed upon by community members that a CG would help to meet their organization’s mission of preserving the historic integrity of the neighborhood and improving the local amenities. As a member of the organization, #505 agreed to lead the project, but the process of development was more complex than she had anticipated.

#505: Because we are in an area with a Certificate of Appropriateness Historic District we had to do a design charrette… we had to send those to the city and we had to go to hearings because we are in a public park. The nonprofit has a memorandum agreement with the city for the use of the park so they have to carry insurance and the water bill and the electric bill. So we have all of that very formal mechanism because it is a public sight and so we had to have full ADA compliance.

These legal requirements and regulations imposed by the city government could have hindered the development of #505’s CG if it were not for the political clout of the nonprofit supporting the project. In addition, the social networks associated with the nonprofit provided access to local resources that enabled the CG to be developed in a manner that met the requirements of the city.

#505: So we had designs and a contractor put out our paving because we have a paved area that all has to meet the ADA standards. We have an ADA raised bed for wheelchair access… I am a landscape architect so I’ve done this kind of stuff for a long time and it was great. We had about 10 people who built the garden… we got a couple of contractors, a couple of architects, we probably had 10 people every Saturday for 6 months that came out for 6 hours and we built it.

**Supportive sources of funding** - The positive relationship existing between the city government and the historic district’s nonprofit organization provided the CG initiators with access to skilled laborers, volunteer support, and funding provided by the
city council to purchase of high-end materials for the garden’s construction. A metered irrigation system was bought with these funds and the installation of the system has enabled the water bills for the CG to remain low enough that CG members’ annual rental fees for their plots cover the costs.

Similarly, many of the gardens represented by participants in FG3 received significant support for the city government which in turn catalyzed sponsorship from local entities. The first CG in the city was initiated by the city government in 2008 and has continued to receive financial support since.

#306: In 2008 the city came up with the concept of an organic urban community garden. So some dignitaries from the city came to our neighborhood and said they had a lot they would donate to us if we wanted to start a community garden. So they started the recruiting process, first they brought partners in: The health department, the police department, and others. They funded us, they gave us $10,000 to start the process. We started recruiting people from the community, we got together and we elected officers. The next step was to get experienced individuals… In 2009 we had our opening ceremony… We have a $30 fee, an annual fee. We had to charge something because we have repairs that must be made…. we have sustained, we have survived.

After the city put the official CG program into place and designated personnel within the Office of Sustainability to oversee the program, several other gardens have been launched in the city. Several offices within the city government have shown support for CG initiatives. In addition, the director of a major nonprofit based in the city has funded the construction of several local CGs based on her mission to improve the overall health of urban neighborhoods. With a local big-box store already serving as the corporate sponsor for this major nonprofit, the materials and volunteer labor needed to construct several CGs have been provided through this relationship over the past few years. Each of these connections exemplify linking social capital, depicting relationships
established between local residents and more powerful entities that enable otherwise inaccessible resources to be mobilized for the CGs.

#307: We were really blessed. Our process was very quick. Our city commissioner came to our community garden meeting and we told her that we wanted a community garden. Within a few months we had the owner of the [major nonprofit] come to our meetings. She made it happen. With her nonprofit and her big-box store corporate sponsor, they donated everything. So the day of the install we had all these people come from the nonprofit and from the city… I could not believe how quick it went. The big-box store brought their staff, they sawed all the boards there and it was all done. It started at 9:00 am and by 1:00 we had 18 plots and the soil and then we had a big stack of mulch.

However, the sponsorships offered to CGs in the city are not limited to coverage for the initial building costs, but are also provided to help sustain the gardens. Recalling a situation where his garden had been broken into and the water hose and several vegetables were stolen, #307 described the support that was offered by city officials and corporate sponsors.

#307: They took it all. I should have reported it to the police but I didn’t… But it was so sad. I called our commissioner right away and she was out of town, on her cell phone, and she is really an awesome, awesome person because she cares about our community, she helped us get the CG built and she helps us replace things that get stolen. So it really is a great thing when you have Commissioner that backs you up like that….and I went back to that manager at the big-box store. We have a sign that says “This was built by ______.” I told him we got broken into and he did something extraordinary… I was charged just one penny to get a new hose.

Other FG3 participants agreed that city officials and sponsors were essential to the successes of their CGs. The mayor’s office contributed a great deal to the development of CGs in the city via the Mayor’s Matching Grant program.

#303: Our community garden is on private property. We did apply for a Mayor’s Matching Grant through our neighborhood association, so that is how we got our funding… you can apply for however much money you need, and of course you have to present a budget and we did. And you can either match the money or you can match it in labor hours… that is
how we did it… On the first day we had 75 volunteers, we tracked 365 hours. When we submitted all of our reports at the end to close the deal for that it was a lot of hours… I think we received like $8000.

#306: We also utilized the Mayor’s Matching Grant, but we try not to take advantage of that connection so we only ask for what we need… Also, after a period of time you have to change the wooden beds out because the wood deteriorates and so another organization assisted us with that process.

The majority of FG4 participants were also involved in a CG that received a great deal of external support because unlike most of the other CGs examined, this project was initiated by government agencies rather than stemming from a grassroots effort. These participants were members of the Manatee Square Garden [MSG] which will be discussed in Case Study 1 of this chapter. As will be later described, this garden was built on county lands at the health department and was the product of a county government health initiative to improve access and consumption of fresh, nutritious foods throughout the county. The funding for this project was covered in full by county government agencies and was organized by officials at the health department. In light of this strong investment in the CG project, the participants from FG4 who were members of the MSG had a unique perspective regarding the financial aspects of developing a CG as compared to the other FG participants. Both employees and local residents who participate in the MSG contributed to this discussion.

#403: This concept [of a CG] that was introduced at the health department really got my attention… We were told we were not going to have to pay a fee, which we probably will later on, but they said free to start, water provided, and seeds. Wow, that got my attention. It made it very interesting

#405: I was amazed at how quickly things got moving here and that people were willing to set up the plots for us, to provide us with soil, to provide us with seeds, to provide us with expertise and to get us started. And as a bonus it is free for the first year, or however long it is free for.
Without the burden of spending their own money to develop or join the MSG, some health department employees and local residents who lacked prior experience gardening - and thus may not otherwise have joined - were still inclined to participate. As #402 conveyed, there was less risk associated with her involvement because money was not an issue.

#402: I wouldn’t have done it if it wasn’t here [at the health department]… especially because if I was putting my own money into it then I would be really concerned with how [my garden] was doing. And I would feel like there was a lot less room to make mistakes just because I wouldn’t want to keep putting all this money into it if I didn’t have some way to at least learn from it and do better the next time… I mean the support has been pretty crucial if you want to be involved with it.

Lack of support for funding – Despite the political formalities that were required in terms of getting project approved by the city, the financial support provided to the #505’s CG – located in a historic district of her city - eased the process of development. However, such financial support was not provided to all CGs. Some FG participants reported that the absence of political support and funding had hindered the successes of their CG due to inadequate resource acquisition. Expenses related to water for the CGs were of particular concern, both in terms of the costs to purchase and install water systems as well as the continuous payments of water bills.

#502: Watering is a real concern. People say they are going to come and water but they don’t come. They come when they want to. But the garden needs constant watering… “What we did initially is that we had the drip lines, but I had a lot of people involved in the garden and people would come out and turn [the water] on and then two days later they would come back and turn it off. So you know, it got to be ridiculous.

The following dialogue between FG1 participants further exemplifies some of the complexities associated with provisioning water for CGs and how local policies can result in increased costs for the CG.
#101: Water is probably the number one cost.

#104: It would be nice if we didn’t [have to pay for our water] because it is exorbitantly high.

#107: Do you control the water usage from your gardeners? Because some of my gardeners go bonkers with the water.

#102: We have a solar well… we have solar collectors. You don’t need too many, just one panel. The pump itself runs very well

#101: You could check into shallow wells too. You don’t need a permit or anything for that and that is really easy to do here.

#103: In this city we don’t get to just dig a well. We have thousands of dollars’ worth of some kind of approval process for any kind of well… We pay for our water. It comes off of a city water line that is right at the corner of the garden. They allowed us to tie ourselves into their line and quarterly they send us a bill.

FG1 the participants also stated that the costs associated with obtaining the necessary permits and liability insurances required by local government prior to developing a CG heightened the financial burdens facing the CG. Several of the FG discussions indicated that the party responsible for paying these costs is often determined by the property ownership policies within their locale, as well as whether the local government supports a city and/or county-based CG program.

In the case of #504’s CG, the garden is located in a low-income, food desert neighborhood on private property managed by a local church. The land was offered to the community by the church for use as a CG site. Motivated by her passion for gardening and her desire to improve the health of her neighborhood, #504 took the lead on launching this CG in 2012, but has continuously struggled to obtain funding to support the garden.

#504: The church gave us the property and they have the insurance, but they cannot afford to do anything else for us except for maintain that property… So I have sent out emails to councilmen at large and the city
councilmen and say, “Hey, we produced these vegetables with two water hoses going across the street to the neighbor’s house, just imagine what we could do if we had an irrigation meter.” And so far we are still asking.

Despite living in the same city and contacting representatives from the same city council board, #505 and #504 and their respective communities had very different relationships with the local government. While support was offered to #505 and the historic district nonprofit, #504 reported, “I have a harder challenge than everybody else [at the focus group] because we get absolutely no funding… We had to get donations from friends and family.” Eventually a grant was provided to the CG by a local nonprofit organization that was used to purchase basic garden supplies and a fence. According to #504, because of the lack of political support, the survival of the CG was dependent upon this grant. She stated that “Without that grant, I don’t think I would have stayed.” This speaks to the significant influence that external partners have on the process of development and longevity of CGs. Without sufficient political clout to foster a trusting relationship with the local government that offered reciprocal benefits to both parties, establishing partnerships with other community-based local entities became of vital importance to secure access to essential resources.

#206 and #207 were also involved in a CG on private land that is owned by a local church. A parishioner who wanted to support the pastor’s vision for developing a CG donated the land. As #206 recalled, “The property belonged to one of the [church] members. He leased the property to the community garden for one dollar, forever, you know it is one of them forever-leases.” However, funds to cover the insurance, water bills, and other essential materials are paid by the CG members’ rental fees for their garden beds. Minimal support was offered via the local government.
#206: In our area your water bill is tied to sewer bill… but we have actually
 got the city to commit that we will only have a water bill and not pay for
 sewage because there is no sewage out there…That is the only thing that
 the city has committed to with respect to our garden.

With only 5 individuals having pledged to join the garden and pay their rental fee, #206
expects there to be only enough funding to cover the annual water bill. It is unclear to
both #206 and #207 what the future of their garden will hold because at this stage
participation remains low and channels being used to access resources are not stable.
Creative measure have been taken to try to increase external support for the garden,
such as donating a garden bed to the police force. It was hoped that a positive
relationship would be fostered between the police officers and the CG members, one
that could provide the benefits of gardening to the police force and in return increase the
safety of the CG through an increased presence of police on site. These efforts have
been unsuccessful thus far; none of the police officers have come to tend to their
garden bed.

However, according to #206, “We have friends in different places” and those
friendships did offer some support to the garden. Donations and discounts on garden
materials were provided by the manager of a local big box store due to his personal
friendship with one of the CG initiators. Similarly, friends who worked for the local
energy company said that the street lights around the garden could be shifted slightly
towards the garden site in order to illuminate the lot in the evenings. However, none of
these relationships ensured access to resources or provided sustained support over
time. Without assistance from the local government and without secured partnerships
with other organizations, this CG remains vulnerable to failure.
In FG4, participants #406 and #407 also conveyed that lack of funding and external support were significant hindrances to the success able to be achieved by their CG. Recruited by their pastor to help build and oversee CG at their church, #406 and #407 have worked diligently to establish a CG that can provide fresh produce to the surrounding food desert neighborhood. During the first year of CG development a grant was given to the church to support the CG project, allowing a well to be purchased to source water to the garden. However, after that initial grant no additional sources of funding have been received.

#407: We was told that we could not get another grant for the garden. So we looked at each other with my being retired and him [#406] being retired… I said we will do what we can do. So me and him, we had to take money out of our pockets because we had no grant and so everything we bought came out of our pockets… We had to buy our pipes to do our water system with, we input those… we bought all our plants...

#406 and #407 agreed that this lack of funding has hindered the ability to effect positive change in the neighborhood through the CG.

#407: Now I’m a mentor because I coach football for a local High School, so as a mentor I’m working with kids all that time and trying to keep them out of trouble. It’s a job. It really is a job. You see things happening in your community that you wish you had the power to change. And this is one of them is with the garden… We really need that grant because we have lots of land behind us that we are trying to develop and trying to get the kids involved… but we don’t have the machines to clean the land off.

**Barriers to grant funding** - Because many of the CGs examined in this research were grassroots initiated, grant funding was heavily relied on by a majority of the FG participants as the primary source of financing for their CG projects. However, for anyone who is familiar with the community development-based work, it is known that applying for grants and meeting the requirements of the grantors is often an intensive
process that requires resources of its own. In two of the FGs participants specifically addressed the issues they have experienced with grant funding.

#502: Through the years that I have been in community development certain things become a fad. This is a fad, that’s a fad. And with the competition of that we make it very complicated, even with grant proposals. Years ago when I started I wrote all my proposals, but now if you want a proposal they have a checklist, like the people have already perceived how [your project] is supposed to go… often times the people who set these criteria [for grants] make it beyond your reach… And another thing, if you want to put in a grant for one year then you have to tell them what you are going to do in one year. But nobody ever does everything in one year so about 10 months down the line you have to give them a report and then you got to put in for another grant for doing something else. By the third year you are at the end of the line."

A similar sentiment was expressed by #204 in regards to financing the upkeep of the CG she manages as a part of her larger nonprofit cultural arts organization. This CG does not have regular participants who tend to the plants and therefore no annual dues are collected as rental fees. Instead the garden is managed by these two individuals who do the majority of the work. Various groups of individuals, usually student volunteers, schedule visits to the garden and provide voluntary assistance with some of the more laborious projects. During the FG2 discussion these participants agreed that the CG had been a huge undertaking for them and required a great deal of personal effort and partnerships with external entities. The city provided the land and irrigation for the garden; a church sitting adjacent to the garden has offered to cover the water bills; UF/IFAS Extension provided the original landscape design for the garden and continues to offer plant and soil; and local organizations provide the volunteers to participate in the garden. However, as a nonprofit organization that received little financial assistance via donations, it is was a constant challenge to come up with the money needed to maintain the upkeep of the CG. Although #204 recognized that as a
nonprofit she was able to apply for grant funding, she stated that more time and resources had to be put into the process of applying for and reporting on grants than was worth it.

#204: As an educational resource UF/IFAS has been great. They did have a grant program at one time, we applied for it and I think we got $1500. But because it is a state organization, it was a complicated process… Not only is the application process very detailed and time consuming… then the reporting system that we had to go through afterwards… we probably spent $3000 on the project for the $1500 we got… I mean, it's okay, we know what we are doing, we know what we are in for, but I think it is not enough.

When asked for her opinions regarding how some of these challenges with securing reliable sources of funding could be overcome, #204 stated her desire to have access to improved systems of communication and collaboration with other CG stakeholders. From her perspective, increasing the social networking amongst CG members would enable social learning, problem solving, and broader access to resources for all parties involved.

#204: You know this [focus group] is good, what you [the researcher] are doing is good, what IFAS is doing is good because it helps people sort of network together and figure out what are the challenges and of course the benefits. I would like to have a list of all of the community gardens in our county. That would be great. And then contact information so we can continue to communicate in some ways and see if we can continue to share ideas and resources.

**Education and expertise**

Many FG participants recognized the value of having access to educational resources that provided information via hands-on training. This was particularly relevant for individuals who were novice to gardening in Florida. In the case of the MSG, the educational support was provided via a partnership between the health department and UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County.
#402: I didn’t really know why certain things weren’t growing and [our county UF/IFAS Extension agent] has been able to help me… I have asked what I thought were pretty dumb questions, but she is just so nice and so knowledgeable… they have us online resources to look up information, but it seems like with gardening you kind of have to look at [a plant] and know it, be familiar with what it actually looks like.

On the days when the UF/IFAS Extension agent is able to visit the garden, the MSG members have the opportunity to schedule individual appointments with her to work hands-on in their own garden plots, addressing the specific issues that the garden member is facing. The majority of members take advantage of this opportunity, saying that it helped to boost their confidence and excitement to continue gardening, even when mistakes were made. As #402 said, “Every time she [the UF/IFAS Extension agent] comes I am like “Wow! This is great!” It is so helpful. She came and put that fertilizer on our plots and then all of a sudden it was like everything was exploding! It was awesome!” Other participants echoed this sentiment and also hypothesized that perhaps a lack of experience and knowledge around gardening practices could be a barrier preventing other local residents from taking part in the CG.

#401: But some people don’t think they can do it. Because I asked some people, even some people that work here, I said, “why don’t you do the community garden?” and they said, “oh I can’t grow anything.” You know.

#406: Most of the people that I know didn’t know how, but they have to give it a try.

#405: That is why I think free in the beginning was a bonus for people who thought, “Well I can’t really grow anything but I will give it a try.”

In the case of the garden managed by #201 and #202, the CG members varied in terms of their knowledge and personal experience with gardening practices. Although the garden leaders were experienced themselves, they valued their
partnership with county UF/IFAS Extension agents because the educational resources agents provided had bolstered confidence of their garden members.

#201: We requested help in regards to pests in the garden. [Our UF/IFAS Extension agent] was very helpful and came over and you know, that was very informative because people were disheartened... [The members] give their money to end up having a garden plot and then they are saying, “My gosh, my stuff is getting all eaten up.” So IFAS has been very helpful as far as helping to give them a sense of not being defeated, that they could end up overcoming those particular problems.

#201 and #202 also conveyed that beyond just offering advice on how the produce a fruitful garden, their UF/IFAS Extension agent had also helped them address issues of low resident participation in the garden. Despite their garden being in a 55+ active community with thousands of residents on site, the FG participants expressed a struggle with getting residents to become involved and stay involved in their CG. Therefore, both #201 and #202 appreciated the UF/IFAS Extension agents addressing the question, “How do you establish a sense of community within a community garden?” during publicly held presentations. Addressing this question allowed for collaborative discussions and a sharing of different techniques for community engagement across various CGs.

Participants of FG5 also described their UF/IFAS Extension agent as being “a great encouragement,” “a wealth of information,” and offering “a wonderful partnership.” They spoke about the educational support they had personally received from the UF/IFAS Extension agent, as well as the support that was offered to the other members of their CGs. When #503 was asked to assist with the CG his church was developing, he sought guidance from the UF/IFAS Extension agent because he did not have a background in vegetable gardening; “I became one of her volunteers at the urban garden here, so it has been a wonderful relationship.” In the case of #502’s CG, when a
daycare center expressed interest in renting some of the garden plots to engage their children in gardening activities, the UF/IFAS Extension agent helped to train the daycare teachers on gardening practices. In addition, FG5 participants frequently referenced the 'starter packet kit' that their UF/IFAS Extension agent had developed, commenting on the benefits of utilizing this packet when launching a new CG.

#504: I would advise that if anyone is thinking about doing a community garden, they need to come to [our UF/IFAS Extension agent] first. They desperately need to know all of the ins and outs in her starter kit packet, it is a layout… She gives you all the nightmares in here. She gives you everything, she gives you the total cost, she gives you expenses from insurance to installing, permits, tools, everything… I took this packet home and I read it very carefully.

However, not all FG participants considered UF/IFAS Extension to be the primary educational resource for their CG. More often than not it was an internal garden members who were credited as being their garden experts within their CGs. In some cases these experts were Master Gardeners whom had graduated from the UF/IFAS Master Gardener Program. Three FG participants were Master Gardeners themselves and several other participants commented that there was a Master Gardener either working as a volunteer or as a member within their CGs. There were also many instances where FG participants stated that they had not received any formal training, but rather relied on the knowledge they had gained from a lifetime of experiences.

#306: I’ve been doing this since I was 6 years old with my father from my farming background in Tennessee, so it is second nature to me. I can read the stars and tell you when to plant, when not to plant. I just picked it all up from my grandfather and my father.

#502: I am not a master gardener and I’ve never been a master gardener and I probably won’t ever be one, but ever since I was a kid my mama made me work in the yard.

#201: My grandfather was a gardener… He lived across the street from me where I grew up so at a very young age, you know, you were out in the
garden... So you know, being on a farm, it teaches you tenacity as far as going to get things done.

As stated earlier in this chapter, many of these individuals were motivated to become involved in their current CG due to positive childhood memories of gardening. While their engagement in the CG fulfilled a personal interest for these individuals, other participants also recognized the benefits of having access to such expert knowledge within the bounds of their own garden. The ability to learn from others and share traditional knowledge from their childhoods not only improved the productivity of the gardens’ produce but strengthened the social capital and overall successes achieved by the garden.

#305: I didn’t really know that much about gardening, so the lady [in the plot next to me] is really good, so she taught me everything. She is teaching me. And #306.

#307: That is how it works. The community helps each other.

#306: You’ve got to teach one another.

But the idea of teaching one another was not limited to boundaries of a single garden; it was also discussed in terms of inter-garden collaborations. Participants from FG1 spoke about the coalition of CGs they had created in efforts to overcome the lack of institutional support offered to CGs in their county. Working together as a collaborative team, the site coordinators from the various CGs participating in the coalition came together for a monthly meeting that took place at a different representative’s CG each month. Knowledge, skills, and resources were shared between the different CGs as a variety of topics are discussed (i.e. pest management, seasonal planting, fundraising efforts, volunteer recruitment, and irrigation systems).
Many of the FG1 participants agreed, with #103’s statement, “Collectively we are a lot better than individually.”

#201 and #202 also indicated that more collaborative efforts between different CGs were taking place in their area via the association of CGs initiated by their county’s UF/IFAS Extension office. #201 said that five members from his garden had signed up to participate in the association and he was hopeful that they would benefit from the hands-on collaborative trainings provided through the program. In addition, at the end of the FG discussions several participants expressed gratitude for having the opportunity to collaborate with each other during the FG itself. As #504 conveyed, “We shared resources and information from [everyone], it was just a lovely, lovely thing.”

Participants frequently stayed after the FGs concluded in order to continue sharing information with each other, those with expertise offering suggestions to participants with less gardening experience. As new connections between FG participants were forged, bridges between various CGs were made, widening the social network of the participants as well as their access to resources. Many participants elected to share contact information with each other in order to continue fostering their newfound relationships, each party perceiving the connection as a mutually beneficial endeavor that could increase the successes of their CG.

**Factors Influencing Organization**

In addition to expressing struggles with acquiring resources considered to be necessary for CG success, the FG participants also discussed the internal struggles faced within their gardens. Many of the descriptions of *community*, personal motivations for joining a CG, and CG mission statements provided by the participants depicted the inherently social nature of CGs, yet later discussions amongst the FG
participants also revealed how internal social dynamics can also create barriers to achieving togetherness. Through the processes of coding described in Chapter 3, the researcher identified key factors related to the internal organization and management of CGs which can act as barriers to success. The following two sub-sections discuss how these factors were experienced by the FG participants and describe some of the strategies employed by participants in efforts to overcome the associated barriers. The first sub-section addresses the barriers involved with initiating and sustaining active community engagement. Concerns regarding the longevity of CGs as it relates to leadership turnover are discussed and strategies for increasing local buy-in are shared. The second sub-section focuses on the different styles of leadership employed within the CGs, describing the range of perspectives expressed by FG participants regarding the utility of certain management tactics over others.

**Community engagement and sustained participation**

During each of the five FG discussions the participants shared their experiences as participating members of their own CGs, and often as the site coordinators, conveying their experiences of the social dynamics within their CGs. As #106 shared:

#106: I was just thinking about what makes a successful garden, it is when people keep coming to the garden. I get so excited when I see someone that I haven’t seen for maybe 3 or 4 months because they were busy or had work, and then they come back to the garden and we see them again. That means we haven’t completely scared them away with whatever we had them doing the last time. So that to me is successful.

However, it is not always the case that individuals do return to the garden after a period of absence, if they were even involved to begin with. As mentioned earlier in the discussion of the overall missions of the various CGs, #406 and #407 struggled to find other individuals who were willing to come out and help them in the CG. Despite the
fact that their CG was located in a low-income neighborhood on church property and church pastor was a well-respected advocate for the community’s wellbeing, very few parishioners became engaged in the CG project at all.

#407: They will come and eat, now I’m not going to lie about that. They will come and get it. But they want you to grow it, they want you to cut it for them, cook it and hand it to them…. But if you ask them to come out there and help in your garden, they will not come out there.

The mission of their CG was to bring people together in a setting where they were able to benefit from the social relationships as well as the healthy food being grown. Both participants emphasized their desire to help others in the neighborhood and their passion for watching things grow, however, the lack of bonding capital invested by other community members inhibited achievement of this mission. #406 said that if he were to give advice to someone else looking to begin their own CG project it would be the following:

#406: The main thing about having a garden that’s a community garden is are the people interested in having it? You just can’t say “Oh I want to be involved” and you’re out there one or two days and then all of sudden, “What happened to them people?” They are gone. Well now they’ve got a garden started so you gotta go out there and if you want to see if grow, you have to do it yourself… It is kind of like a child. If you want a child to grow up the right way, you’ve got to give it you know, nourishment.

Several other FG participants also spoke to this need for community buy-in, many stating the importance of ensuring that the community is involved during the development stages of a CG. Some FG participants suggested that taking the time to find people specifically interested in gardening is the most effective way of ensuring the longevity of involvement.

#502: Just like I used to say in real estate, the worst mistake we would make is to be too anxious to rent, and I am going to apply this to gardening. What you need are people that are really, really interested in gardening. You have to really, really find those people which will give you
a good base. If not then you have people that are going to join the bandwagon and they are gone. But you really need to search high and low for those people who are really interested in gardening.

#206: Right now there is probably only two committee members that know what phase the garden is in right now, and that’s these two right here [gesturing to himself and #207]. None of the rest of them… They are on the list as being members, but they are not really, truly active. I think they misunderstood the whole concept of a community garden to start with. I think they thought this whole thing was just going out and throwing some seeds in the ground and maybe throw some water on it and watch it grow. No, no it is a lot more involved than that… It’s work and if you are going to be involved in a community garden, you have to dedicate.

But beyond a passion for gardening, other FG participants acknowledged that individuals have diverse reasons for wanting to become involved in a CG and that these interests should not be ignored. Some individuals become involved based on a desire to help others in their community, others may be seeking social connections, and others may wish to have a space that can serve as a sanctuary away from the chaos of an urban lifestyle. When the diversity of individuals’ interests are recognized and participants are offered space within the garden to use their individual skills/interests as a platform for their contributions, the benefits able to be received through participation increase. This allows relationships of trust and reciprocity to form between CG members, strengthening their connections and increasing mutual investment in the garden over time.

#106: We are finding that different people have different skills and gifts, so it is just trying to figure that out and getting that person to do that. Someone with a marketing background now does our newsletter… someone else that just likes to plant seeds, well they are one of our garden nannies… And then luckily the person who does the coffee grounds, she was not a natural gardener, but she was like “this is something I can do and I would like to take that responsibility off you.”

#203: I’ve been fortunate in that we don’t have the die-hards like I would like, but I do have guys that if they happen to be in the neighborhood around the church they will go ahead and swing in, check things out. If it
looks like things need to be watered they will give me a call, “Pastor, when was the last time things were watered? Do I need to water?” and they will go ahead and they’ll water or they will weed… It is a sense of a group effort in that it is something that everyone can play a part in.

**Communication and outreach** - Participants also discussed how different methods of communication impacted the degree of engagement experienced within their CGs, as well as influenced the internal coordination among the existing members. The use of social media, particularly Facebook, was widely used by FG1 and FG3 participants. Social media help with recruiting volunteers and raising awareness of the project during the initial building stages of their CGs; it also helped to maintain communication between CG members over time. For the CGs which were established as a project launched via another organization, such as a church or a nonprofit, the existing channel of communication utilized by that partner was also used to convey messages about the CG.

During the discussion among FG4 participants, it was largely agreed that more outreach-based methods of communication needed to be employed in order attract more local participation to the MSG. According to #403, “People become interested when they see what is going on. A lot of people probably don’t even know they have this garden here when I tell them.” She suggested that featuring the garden on a televised local news station would allow people to see the garden and realize that it is not just an idea, but rather a reality already thriving. She believed this would strengthen people’s trust in the feasibility of the project and would increase local involvement. Building on this idea of community outreach, #405 also emphasized the need for more communication with the public. She stated that, “I think marketing would include saying that we have someone who would help beginners or troubleshoot for you, or talk to you
about pests or that kind of think.” Other FG4 participants agreed that such marketing strategies would allow prospective participants to see that the CG was a worthwhile investment, one that would reciprocate benefits for them if they decided to invest their time and energy into the project. In essence, effective communication was seen as a tool that could help strengthen social capital within the CG.

Reaching out to people beyond the garden gate and inviting neighborhood residents to partake in garden events without necessarily becoming a garden member was also used as a strategy to increase the degree of local buy-in and respect for the garden. A few members suggested hosting events open to the general public that invite anyone who is interested to come to the CG and share in the extra produce and/or be offered a tour of the grounds. #306 described a harvest festival that is held at his CG at the end of each season where neighborhood residents come to share in the remaining produce as they help to pick it, thereby clearing the garden beds for the next round of planting. In a similar fashion, #104 said that she would like showcase the talents of her garden members – musicians, cooks, yoga instructor – and hold a party, "kind of like an open-house, but an open-garden, to open it for the community." The researcher had the privilege of attending three such events hosted by FG1 participants, each of which was a celebration of Earth Day in 2017. At the first two celebration events there were over one hundred people in attendance, some of whom were first-time visitors to the gardens. Music, food, educational presentations, garden tours, youth activities, and informational booths and vendors were set up around the gardens at these celebrations. By inviting the community at large to participate, these events strengthened the bridging
social capital between numerous stakeholders in their local communities, each of which were in invested in CGs in some way.

The third of the events was a much quieter celebration where members of the garden and a few neighboring residents gathered together to share in a potluck meal and enjoy a relaxing evening in the garden. Considering that this CG had developed more recently the other two CG hosting Earth Day events, and was also much smaller in size, the objective of this Earth Day event was not to foster bridging capital but rather to strengthen the bonds between the CG members themselves. The researcher was invited in to share in the meal experience and conversations, being told by #104, “Of course you are welcome here! You are part of our garden family now!”

**Time demands** - The time and manual efforts involved in the practice of gardening were perceived to be two of the major barriers which prevent people from initially joining and/or sustaining their participation. Some suggestions for how to overcome such barriers were shared amongst FG participants, such as the suggestion #201 made to his fellow CG members: “Find a water buddy before you leave the garden today for when you go on vacation or if you get sick. Make sure you go and get their phone number so you can text them.” However, it was also recognized that as a social construct, a CG is naturally going to experience the ebb and flow of life’s demands.

#503: As in most relationships, things change. You know, the younger families get involved with the kids as they get a little older. So you go through this natural cycle of a community garden where everything is hyper and then suddenly it contracts and then you get new people involved and it sort of expands again. So you know, it’s something that I guess you have to expect.

The succession of membership within CGs was a common experience for many of the FG participants and it was often framed as a barrier for success. This played into
the concerns participants voiced regarding the longevity of their CGs, particularly as it related to members investment in the CG and their willingness to take on more responsibility. As a majority of the FG participants were site coordinators of their CGs, several shared a concern regarding the succession of leadership in the garden.

#101: I don’t know about you, but it does come to mind for myself once in a while because I think about if I said, “Gee, I am taking a year off,” what would happen? What do we need to put in place as founders so we can pick what we want to do eventually instead of doing all of it?

#107: That’s what I worry about too, that we get the point where are becoming too much of one person doing everything. Where it is not everybody.

#505: I mean we are all talking about us being individuals and working in it and if we were hit by bus it would all just fall apart. So it is how do you create a system that says I have a mentor or a successor? But I don’t know, if I was hit by a bus I think somebody in my garden would step into the role.

#402: There hasn’t been division of responsibility for the garden. Like yes everyone is responsible for their own plot, but I mean there a million things that #006 [site coordinator] has to take care of for the garden, a million questions that she has answer. I mean really it is like a full time job… she is not going to be acting in that capacity anymore… I feel like things are going to start to fall off unless the people who have garden plots start dividing up the tasks.

Leadership and management

Effective leadership and sustained participation by CG members can pose challenges to the development of CGs as well as their ability to sustain over time. Even in cases where the majority of the resources needed for a garden are provided by external partners and sponsors, internal disorganization and/or poor management can hinder the successes able to be achieved. While there are creative mechanisms that can be put in place to encourage teamwork and community buy-in (i.e. “water buddy” systems, harvest festivals, and garden celebrations), effective leadership and
management structure also play a significant role. In some gardens, the site coordinators have implemented a unique system of membership fees as a way to compensate for the limited amount of time that some CG members have to devote to the communal maintenance responsibilities in the garden.

#505: People sign an agreement because they pay for their plot and it says you have to do 24 volunteer hours in a year. And you sign the agreement but I couldn't find anybody for anything. So this year we said there are mandatory workdays, we have one each quarter... I had 25 people on Saturday. Our fallback if it doesn't work out is that you are going to pay $100 dollars into the pot and when you come back we will give you your money back.

#107: Our garden, when they signed the rules and regulations at the beginning of the garden season, we give them a fee structure of $35 for the year with 6 hours of volunteer service to the garden. Or $60 with no volunteer service to the garden. And so that way if they don't feel like volunteering they pay $60, if they want to volunteer they pay $35 and give 6 hours. And I don't track it, I am not about tracking it, but most people do honor it.

**Flexibility of structure** - The implementation and enforcement of management strategies were the responsibility of the site coordinators. However, of all emergent themes related to CG success, the discussion around what makes leadership effective and what degree of organized management is optimal seemed to yield the most diverse array of responses. FG participants revealed their opinions regarding how formal or free-flowing they believed the structure of a CG should be, opinions that were directly related to how site coordinators should function as the leaders of the CG. All FG1 participants, as well as a few others, emphasized the need for flexibility within CGs’ structure in order to avoid the project becoming a source of stress or contention among members.

#107: It is a priority thing where if you don't have the volunteer that is willing to step up and do that position, then you say, “What's my priority? My priority is growing vegetables” and you let the Facebook page go. You
have to have that philosophy when you are in the garden or else you will get yourself all worked up because you are not fitting this model and you are not covering all the points of the model… You are dealing with is volunteers, nobody is paid, everybody does what they enjoy doing. If nobody wants to do it then you let that project or that activity go to the wayside.

#102: One thing we haven’t done that I want to start to do is that when new members come on have an on-boarding interview to find out these things [that each participant wants to do], rather than have them sign out something. “Here is your interest, here is your committee,” that turned out to be a real disaster because you are trying to pigeonhole people into something… I think just you talking to people and finding out [their interests] is more motivating than signing an agreement.

#101: You really have to let go of the way you were raised to know what an organization is. You have to really erase that out of your brain because a community garden doesn’t follow very many of those rules at all. And it’s exactly what you just described.

These sentiments again spoke to the all-inclusive nature that some CG coordinators strived for in their gardens. FG1 participants noted that a set of basic guidelines did need to be upheld in order to foster a cohesive environment and to adhere to the land use regulations (i.e. organic practices, pesticide use, permitted water systems, etc.). These rules were framed into bylaws which all CG members were required to agree to prior to joining their respective CG. Many other FG participants besides those of FG1 also discussed the use of bylaws in their own CGs, however the level of importance ascribed to these bylaws and the strictness with which they were enforced varied greatly. As previously indicated, FG1 participants tended to take a more laidback approach to how bylaws are enforced and how CG members are held responsible for contributing to the garden.

#104: We have inexperienced gardeners coming to our garden, but they want to join and that’s great. And the one thing I say is there is no right or wrong way, there are some guidelines you want to follow and there are some guidelines we have specifically for our garden… but individually we have to come up with our own way of gardening. And I love that you are
free to do that. That there is no “right way” to do it. There is your own way to do it. You learn and you grow from it.

#103: We have an infrastructure. We took our [bylaws] from #106's CG which took theirs from The American Community Garden Association. It just has some committees and just has some people who were the first interested people. We just asked them “would you mind being in change of compost,” and they are like, oh okay… We are a program under a 501c3, so they have the board officers, we don’t have all that stuff. We have a planning team that meets once a month and we decide stuff… So, I mean, you know, it’s that kind of free-flowing.

This relaxed perspective has also been applied by FG1 participants in terms of how they manage interpersonal conflicts that can arise between members of their respective CG.

#107: I think when you very first start the garden, there can be, well in our garden there was a conflict of philosophies. One person is very adamant that we not do certain garden things, and other people were like, “yeah we can do it.” So there was kind of some animosity and butting of heads. So you kind of have to work that out. Personality problems, you know… So you kind of have to get on the same page…

#104: We had a conflict yesterday of someone tending someone else’s garden without saying anything… I picked up the phone and said [to the culprit], “Please do not do this with anyone else’s space without at least telling me that you would like to. We will talk about it or go to the person directly, but please honor that.” And great apology. Next day, organically, they are in the garden together… so they worked it out. And I think that letting things happen organically… if you look at what we are doing in the garden, what we are tending, we are doing that too with each other. The more we learn to do it organically, the healthier we’ll be.

#103: I think dealing with it takes a lot of respect for each person and their differences in that way. Doing some ignoring and not feeding it.

#104: And not trying to control. I think keeping elements out of leadership roles in a garden space. We are really directing them to do their own projects. The controlling factors really don’t belong.

FG1 participants spoke positively of the overall successes of their CG projects, commenting that their flexibilities and attitudes of inclusivity as CG coordinators have strengthened the cohesion within the garden and in many cases, fostered close bonds
between CG members. However, not all FG participants held such a laidback perspective regarding the importance of bylaws and plot maintenance. Five of the seven FG3 participants spoke to the importance of having a clear set of bylaws in order to maintain order and ensure that appropriate gardening practices were being used by the CG members. It was noted that the process of developing these bylaws should be a collaborative process amongst all original CG members to increase the likelihood that members will buy into and follow the guidelines.

#307: You don’t want to upset people in your garden but again, it is like dealing with a bunch of children and you have to parent. Everybody just insists on planting those watermelons even though they are not going to grow at this point in the season, or insist on growing whatever they want, like corn which never came to fruition but is just a big weed… so you need [bylaws]. You need them before you open… the biggest mistake we made was that the garden was already open and we had the officer but we had no bylaws for months and months.

#303: I recall saying in our early stages, “We cannot go forward until we get these bylaws established.” I mean they can be changed, but you have to put something in place.

#306: The rules and regulations are extremely important. You must set up some guidelines or you will have some rebels there that might give you some trouble. Sometimes you have to be forceful and sometimes you have to push people out of the garden because they refuse to adhere to your garden rules… You have to follow the bylaws. You also have to make sure that all of [the members] are part of that process. That they all buy into it.

In this way, the underlying sentiment of an inclusive management structure was portrayed by both FG1 and FG3 participants, presenting themselves in different ways.

However, not all FG participants placed emphasis on the need for inclusive management or the benefits of participatory development processes; this was especially the case for CGs which struggled to maintain active community participation. As #502 blatantly stated, “We have all these bylaws and all these guidelines and all of that stuff,
but to a great extent it doesn’t work.” The participants reported that despite having tried to engage community members during multiple stages of the garden development, they were largely unsuccessful. In these cases the style of leadership employed in the garden was very different from that depicted by FG1 and FG3 participants. In these cases there were only one or two individuals within the CG who were responsible for making all of the decisions related to their CGs. They controlled what, when, and how planting was done, what products were used within the garden, and how the produce was distributed upon harvest. In these cases the degree of social capital that was fostered within the garden was minimal compared to the CGs described by FG1 and FG3 participants. Nevertheless, the lack of social capital developed internally in the CG should not cause the project to automatically be labeled as a failure. As has been conveyed throughout this chapter, *success* is defined by the mission statement of each CG rather than a universal definition. While increasing social capital was an underlying theme for the majority of mission statements of the CGs examined, the scope of where social capital develops and the individuals/entities involved are not necessarily limited to the physical boundaries of the CG. In the case of #504’s CG, although only a handful of regular volunteers contributed to the maintenance of the CG, the garden helped to strengthen the social capital of the larger community. By going door-to-door throughout her food desert neighborhood to deliver the garden produce to her neighbors, #504 expanded the social networks available to those residents while fulfilling her personal mission to improve the wellbeing of the community. While others CGs might not have viewed this project to be successful – due to the limited community engagement in the CG - according to #504, “My garden is 100% for the community. I am not trying to raise
money. I am not trying to rent out plots. I am not trying to make a fortune. It is my hobby and my passion.” Although #504 recognized that with increased funding and external support her CG could improve its productivity and efficiency, considering the mission of her CG – to provide a source of fresh food for the resident of her low-income neighborhood - #504 viewed the project as a success.

Keeping the mission statement of each CG in mind when examining the outcomes of this garden was an essential component to data analysis in order for the researcher to represent the perspectives of the FG participants authentically. Based on the researcher’s commitment to remain reflexive throughout data collection and analysis, as well as her decision to define success based on the participants’ portrayals of their CG mission statements, it is clear that social capital has a presence within each of the CGs examined in this study, even if in some cases the bonding capital existed beyond the garden gates. Additional examples of how social capital influenced the development and longevity of other CGs will be depicted in the following four exploratory case studies and their respective analytical summaries.

**Case Study 1: Manatee Square Garden**

The Manatee Square Garden [MSG] is located at the Florida Department of Health in Manatee County [DOH-Manatee]. It is the pilot project for future county sponsored-CGs that may be initiated on other county-owned lands. This garden receives support from UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County, the DOH-Manatee, and several entities within the Manatee County Government, particularly Neighborhood Services. UF/IFAS Extension was a partner during the planning and implementation process, offering grant support and serving as an educational resource. The project
underwent three years of discussion and planning before beginning in late September of 2016, holding the official opening day on October 21st, 2016.

**Initiation of MSG**

The inspiration for the MSG spurred from the personal interest of a DOH-Manatee employee who acted as a community advocate in her professional work and personal life. Based on her own experience of participating in a CG in a nearby county, this employee desired to bring the benefits she associated with CGs to Manatee County. By fostering a partnership between DOH-Manatee employees and representatives from a local nonprofit, a door-to-door needs assessment survey was developed and conducted at randomized households in within Manatee and Sarasota counties. The survey asked residents to share their insights regarding healthy food consumption and accessibility in their neighborhoods (Jordan, Laird & Mills, 2016; Prevention and Wellness Committee of the Manatee Health Care Alliance, 2016). Several respondents listed the lack of nearby supermarkets, lack of transportation, expensive costs for healthy food options, and lack of education regarding nutrition and gardening as significant barriers that prevented locals from eating a healthy diet inclusive of fresh fruit and vegetables (Jordan, Laird & Mills, 2016).

In efforts to overcome the barriers identified in the survey, the following objective was incorporated into the 2015-2020 Community Health Improvement Plan for Manatee County: “By 2020, 60% of Manatee County residents will report to having access to a community garden.” (Prevention and Wellness Committee of the Manatee Health Care Alliance, 2016, p. 17) While the official purpose of the survey was to collect community-based data for public health reports, the results of the survey also supported initiatives related to CG development. Of the participating households across Manatee and
Sarasota counties, a considerable number of residents (32%) were interested in developing CGs as a way of addressing food insecurity and related health issues (Jourdan, Laird, & Mills, 2016). There was also a larger group of respondents who said that although they were not personally interested in participating in a CG, they knew of someone in the community who would be interested. When presented with these findings, county government officials offered to support the development of the MSG, making this the first county-sponsored CG in Manatee County.

**Planning of MSG**

Support from DOH-Manatee administrators and Manatee County government agencies provided infrastructural stability for the project. When the DOH-Manatee employee who first initiated the CG project was transferred out-of-state, the newly hired public health associate, #006, inherited the role of CG manager as part of her employment duties. In the summer of 2015, after the needs-assessment survey results were compiled and reviewed, a cross-county steering committee (also referred to as “the regional council”) was formed to provide stakeholders across Manatee and Sarasota counties with a venue to share information about existing public health initiatives in the area and to collaborate over new ideas. #006 regularly attended these meetings in pursuit of collaborative partners and to increase public interest in the MSG project. With aims to improve community health and increase food accessibility for low-income residents, the MSG received much support and collaboration when brought before the regional council. As #006 reflected in an interview:

> When I came in and had the time to devote to getting the garden implemented, we used some of the assessment data as background to support it. That is what really helped us to get it off the ground with having this regional counsel as well as the support of people in the community having said that they want community gardens.
Although the regional council was not intended to focus solely on CG projects, community advocates working to launch other CGs besides the MSG were also invited to the meetings to take part in the collaborative discussions. Members of the Manatee River Garden Club and the Florida Native Plants Nursery who attended offered personal insights and experiences as practical advice to the coordinators of emerging CGs. Agents from UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County also participated in the regional council and served an invaluable role during the planning stages of the MSG. “Having no idea how to build a garden, I relied heavily on [UF/IFAS Extension agent #005’s] expertise about gardening,” said #006. Information on what supplies would be needed, where to acquire those supplies, and what crops would be seasonally appropriate to plant upon opening day were key to the garden’s early successes. Also, because UF/IFAS Extension agreed to serve as the fiscal agent for the MSG, all supplies needed to build the garden and keep it thriving could be ordered through the office under the advisement of experienced horticultural agents. The county government agreed to fund the purchases of all these supplies because the MSG was considered the pilot project of a larger county-sponsored CG program.

There was no shortage of infrastructural support or resource accessibility for this project. However, the political affiliations of the three primary partners did require more formal procedures to be followed during the planning processes as compared with other grassroots initiated CGs. As noted by the UF/IFAS Extension agent most involved with this project:

#005: There are just so many moving parts and pieces to a project like this. It is difficult to keep it organized and get all the pieces to work effectively together, even when there is so much support and excellent
collaboration. Despite so many people being on board, this project has taken over two years to get off the ground.

Numerous liability questions needed to be addressed prior to implementation because the garden was being constructed on county lands and would be sponsored by government organizations. Thus, county lawyers produced a full set of by-laws that would govern the activities of the future garden members.

Implementation of MSG

The MSG was not grassroots based, but rather a project initiated by external stakeholders who sought to improve the health of the local community. Because the needs-assessment survey was anonymous, there was no way to follow up with individuals who expressed interest in CGs and inform them of the MSG project. Instead of public participation, DOH-Manatee representatives, county government officials, and UF/IFAS Extension agents were responsible for making decisions that would determine the physical layout and management structure of the CG. The county installed an irrigation system, built the raised beds, laid out landscape fabric and put in the soil. UF/IFAS Extension Pinellas County and Orange County provided copies of the manuals they had produced on topics related to CGs. UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County donated all of the plant seedlings to the garden.

Reflecting on the events leading up to the opening day in October 2016, #006 said, “All of our participants had it really easy…basically all they had to do was come in and plant and water the beds to keep them going.” Because the individuals involved in designing, planning, and building the garden were not the same individuals that the garden was intended to serve, community outreach was essential in the later months of 2016 in order to recruit local participants for the garden. Most of the residents involved
are low-income families and individuals who learned about the MSG from local community leaders they were already connected to. According to #005, “These local leaders were identified by myself through the grassroots type of outreach I did. I have been engaging with the community as much as possible, speaking to other stakeholders and organizations, and attending various community meetings to identify who these leaders in the community might be. The local leaders are key to projects like this.”

**Maintenance of MSG**

The garden currently consists of 24 raised garden beds and there is room to expand to 34 beds total if necessary. In late November 2016, just one month after the grand opening, all 24 beds were being used for vegetable gardening; this was still the case by May 2017. About ten of the raised beds are used by low-income families or individuals who live within walking distance of the garden site in an area classified as a food desert. In addition, one raised bed is allocated to a local church, another to a local daycare center, and another to a group of local Master Gardeners. There are also several DOH-Manatee employees who tend beds in the garden, some of whom are residents of the local neighborhood and others who enjoy the convenience of gardening at their workplace.

According to #006, the primary incentive for the county to support the MSG was to improve the health of the local community. If the pilot project is successful, additional county-sponsored CGs will be developed to further increase health improvements. Therefore, much emphasis continues to be put on developing relationships with local collaborators and community members interested in participating and/or supporting CGs. DOH-Manatee representatives - including the garden manager - and county government officials continue to attend regional council meetings where they share
updates of the MSG with the other attendees, increasing public awareness of the project and widening the social network.

At the time this thesis research was conducted, the MSG had been operational for less than one year. Nevertheless, garden members expressed concerns regarding the longevity of the garden, highlighting the high rate of employee turnover within the DOH-Manatee as a particular issue. These concerns were voiced by several of the MSG members who contributed to a FG discussion with the researcher. By design, the responsibilities of the garden manager have been incorporated into the job duties of a public health associate position at the DOH-Manatee, meaning that job transfers and shifting positions can create an unstable leadership structure within the garden. In the spring of 2017 the current garden manager, #006, was given a new employment position that required her involvement in the garden to become completely voluntary. With limited time now to devote to the garden, she agreed to voluntarily serve as the garden manager until a new employee was assigned that duty, however the garden members considered this management structure to be unsustainable. One DOH-Manatee employee who participated in the FG suggested that more responsibilities should be taken on by the gardeners themselves, particularly those who were also DOH-Manatee employees.

I feel like having the employees’ stake in this now could maybe turn [the MSG] into an actual community garden where maybe there is eventually more than one person in charge of making sure that all of these [management] things happen and are provided… But one thing I would say in terms of dividing responsibilities outside of the plots, there hasn’t been division of responsibility for the garden…I feel like things are going to start to fall off unless the people who have garden plots start dividing up the tasks.
#006 held a similar perspective, commenting that because the MSG was just one of the many projects that resulted from the 2015 needs-assessment survey, a more permanent garden coordinator had not been identified. “It would be great if we had a community member who would like to be coordinator, especially because they are more likely to be here for a longer period of time than an employee.” Also, beginning in fall 2017, gardeners will be expected to pay an annual fee to rent their garden beds, a change that is understood and respected by the current garden members, but may pose a barrier to increasing local resident participation. As noted in the FG discussion, several gardeners were enticed to join the garden because it was free of charge and all resources were provided. One member said, “That is why I think free in the beginning was a bonus for people who thought, ‘Well I can’t really grow anything but I will give it a try.’” By charging a fee for participation, local residents who lack experience and/or confidence with gardening may opt not join the garden based on the risk of losing money if their plants do not survive.

The current garden members recognize many personal benefits they have received from participating in the MSG: affordable organic produce, socialization with coworkers and community members, and improved self-efficacy. It is their hope, and the goal of the partners responsible for initiating the MSG, that local residents will soon become more engaged in the garden and reap the public health and social benefits that the CG has to offer.

**Analytical Summary of Case Study 1**

Several of the themes that emerged from the FG analysis can also be identified in the lifecycle of the MSG. Politics and partnerships played an essential role in the planning and resource mobilization involved in this project. The partnership between
the local government, DOH-Manatee, and UF/IFAS Extension Manatee County was a strong example of bridging capital that was fostered early on in the development process of the CG. The motivations for becoming involved differed slightly among the three main partners, however each shared the goal of improving the wellbeing of the surrounding community. The mutual investment of the partners was based on trust and reciprocity. It was agreed that collaborative engagement in this project would enable each partner to fulfill aspects of their agencies’ missions as well as widen their social networks and access to resources. Linking capital between the neighborhood residents who later joined the MSG was also fostered with these more powerful partnering agencies. This linking capital mitigated the barriers to resource mobilization that often hinder the success of grassroots initiated CGs.

With a DOH-Manatee employee serving as the initial garden manager and all the resources provided via external agents, the CG members themselves did not need to show strong investment in the project because the mobilization of resources were not contingent upon their involvement. This lack of personal investment required by CG members was said to spur gardeners’ interest in joining the CG initially, but it was also seen as a potential threat to the longevity of the MSG. Because the management of the CG was the duty of the one specified DOH-Manatee employee, all lines of communication between the garden members and external partners were channeled through that one individual. There was no delegation of responsibilities and only minimal collaboration between the CG members.

Rather than learning socially from others – a practice known to strengthen bonding social capital - the gardeners were dependent upon the educational resources
of UF/IFAS Extension and the internal management of their site coordinator. Bonding
capital did exist among some of the CG members, particularly those who were already
acquainted through employment at DOH-Manatee. However there was limited success
engaging local residents in the garden, thereby limiting the ability for the CG to achieve
the original mission – to improve community health and increase food accessibility for
low-income residents. In fact, during FG4 some of the DOH-Manatee employees who
were members of the garden stated that the convening of the FG was the first time they
met some of the non-employee garden members. Some participants even reported
being previously unaware that the MSG was open to participation from the community
at large, rather than just DOH-Manatee employees. Considering the garden members
were not included in the planning process of the garden, local buy-in from prospective
CG participants was not secured prior to implementation, likely weakening the internal
stability of the CG and its overall longevity. Therefore, discussions of how to transition
towards a more self-sustaining management structure where the gardeners act
cooperatively and share greater decision making power and responsibilities are
currently underway.

Case Study 2: Engelwood Park Community Garden

Engelwood Park Community Garden [EPCG], established in 2014 on city-owned
park property, is located along the Semoran corridor in the southeastern section of
Orlando. This area is home to Gateway Orlando (formerly known as the Semoran
Business Partnership), an organization made up of local individuals and businesses that
work to improve the aesthetics, economics, and overall strength of the area’s
neighborhoods. The Semoran corridor connects Orlando’s two major airports and
provides the main traffic route to popular destination points within the city. Therefore,
the neighborhoods in this area, such as Engelwood Park Neighborhood, are surrounded by one of the most urbanized environments in the city (Main Street Annual Report, 2011). The greenspace offered by Engelwood Park is considered by locals to be “a hidden gem” that offers “a family friendly oasis” where many neighbors come to socialize on the weekends. The incorporation of the CG has been recognized by many residents as an asset to the park and the neighborhood itself.

Initiation of EPCG

The development of the EPCG coincided with the development of the mayor’s Green Works Community Action Plan, however, the two were not directly affiliated. Since the implementation of the action plan in 2013, several programs have launched efforts to achieve the sustainability goals set for year 2040. Increasing all Orlando residents’ access to healthy food was one of the seven main focus areas outlined in the plan; increasing the number of CGs throughout the city was a key objective. As of 2012 there were 159 CG plots existing in Orlando. The community action plan aimed to double that number by 2018 and increase it tenfold by 2040, thereby ensuring all residents had access to affordable, healthy food options within a half mile of their homes (City of Orlando, 2013). Since 2013 several CGs have successfully opened with the help of Green Works Orlando sustainability managers and in many cases, with the financial sponsorship of corporate and nonprofit partners. During data collection for this thesis the researcher was able to converse with several Green Works representatives and CG members to gain further details about the Orlando’s CG program, as well as visit some of the CG sites in the city. Of the CGs visited, the researcher chose to feature Engelwood Park CG within this case study because of its distinctiveness as a grassroots endeavor amidst numerous other city-sponsored CGs.
The idea for building a CG at Engelwood Park came from members of the Engelwood Park Neighborhood Association [EPNA], a local nonprofit comprised of neighborhood residents with a mission to enhance community cohesion and the quality of life in the neighborhood since 1990 (Engelwood Park Neighborhood Association, 2014). The notion of building a CG in the neighborhood was often raised by the EPNA members who believed such a project would improve community cohesion and inspire neighbors to become engaged. It was also suggested that a CG could help bridge the divide between older adults residing in the community and the younger adults and children, a primary goal of the EPNA. In regular attendance at the EPNA monthly meetings was the then-current District 2 commissioner and the police officer who would be elected as her successor at the end of her term. Both were privy to the discussions of a neighborhood CG and showed support that would later aid the development of the project.

Overall there was consensus among the EPNA members regarding the benefits a CG could offer to the neighborhood, however several barriers prevented individuals from volunteering to lead this initiative. There was no existing government protocol for how to carry out such a grassroots CG and there was no indication of the size, cost or effort that would be involved in the planning or implementation processes. Age was also a barrier because the majority of the active EPNA members were older adults who were not interested in taking on such unknown responsibilities. Therefore, while the notion of a CG project was desirable to many, little action was initially taken towards implementation.
Planning of EPCG

When a new commissioner was elected into office in 2008 he set a primary goal of improving his district’s economy. Joining together local business owners, corporate managers, community leaders, and various city employees, the first Business Council in the city was formed, soon to be named the Semoran Business Partnership (City of Orlando, n.d.). As a local business owner himself, one of the more active members of the EPNA, #302, became vice president within the Semoran Business Partnership, enabling the relationship between the ENPA and the former police officer / newly elected commissioner to continue. Therefore, in 2011 when #302 agreed to step up as leader for the EPNA’s CG initiative, the commissioner was already aware of the project and willingly assisted #302 identify a location for the garden to be built. When the pursuit of private property proved to be unsuccessful, the commissioner introduced #302 to the leading officials within the city’s Parks and Recreation Department.

The commissioner was vocal in his support of the CG project, asserting his belief that a CG would improve the aesthetics of the neighborhood and foster cohesion among residents. With the assistance of Parks and Recreation representatives, #302 identified Engelwood Park as the prospective site for the CG. Because the city required information about the garden’s prospective size, structure, and relative location on the park property, #302 also reached out to the executive director of Orlando’s revered botanical garden site, Leu Gardens, for his expert advice on best gardening practices. Once decided, the details of the proposed garden layout were presented to the Parks and Recreation Department representatives. Because the northern end of the park was the clearest of trees and provided optimal sunlight conditions for a garden, this was the area selected for the CG. However, this section of the park is also a block away
from the nearest parking space, causing the city to express concern about garden members driving vehicles across the grass areas where children play. This concern slowed the process of approval, but with the added support of the district commissioner, the city permitted the EPNA to use the space for a CG as long as individuals would refrain from driving across the park.

**Implementation of EPCG**

After several years of conversation and months dedicated to planning the CG, #302 was eager to begin the process of building the garden. The commissioner agreed to purchase a chain link fence for the CG, but the request for a vehicle access gate was denied by the city. This restriction would pose a significant challenge during the building process when materials such as lumber, mulch and soil needed to be transported to the garden site. Recognizing this imposition and desiring to show the city’s support for the garden project, the Parks and Recreation representatives agreed to cover all future costs of water usage for the garden.

By late 2013 the commissioner ordered the fence and #302 began preparing the land for raised garden beds to be built. EPNA members also began recruiting materials and monetary donations from local residents and businesses in order to obtain building materials and essential garden tools that would be shared by all the EPCG members. Progress was being made and building day was soon to occur, but then a message from the municipal planning board brought progress to a halt. #302 was told he could not continue with the implementation of the CG until a public hearing was held to provide other residents with the opportunity to voice concerns or objections to the project. Residents within 300 feet of the garden’s proposed location would need to be mailed courtesy notices to make them aware of the CG plans and inform them of the
public hearing to be held. #302 reflected, “I had no idea we had to have a public hearing. Neither did the commissioner. I wish I had known sooner, I would have started the process earlier and would not have to deal with this delay.”

In February 2014 the public hearing took place and no concerns were voiced by the public. Nevertheless, this miscommunication caused the project to be put on hold for months before the municipal planning board gave their approval to commence with the projects development. Once this matter was settled, in October 2014 the fence was installed and a large, colorful “Engelwood Park Community Garden” sign that was painted by an ENPA was hung, drawing attention and increasing public interest in the CG. Over the following few weeks #302 and a few other members laid the water lines, installed hose spigots, built 15 raised beds and began the process of planting. #302 also compiled a set of by-laws and provided a written copy to all individuals interested in joining the CG. These rules were based on the EPNA’s original interest in building a CG, city regulations regarding the use of certain materials on park property, and rules regarding gardeners’ behaviors that #302 believed would make for a more productive, cooperative CG environment.

**Maintenance of EPCG**

When Engelwood Park CG first opened there were six gardeners signed up for a garden bed, the majority of which were members of the EPNA. Over time interest has increased and several other individuals have joined the garden, many of whom are residents not involved in the EPNA but rather are just park patrons. In fact, there was such an influx of interest that three additional beds were built within the first two years of the garden. In speaking with #302 about the current membership, he conveyed that some members are renters within apartment complexes that do not permit gardening on
their property. The garden has provided these individuals with access to an activity and source of organic fresh produce that would otherwise not have been available to them.

Over the two year life span of the Engelwood Park CG, only one participant has left and it was because she was moving out of town; no one has elected to leave for any other reason and no one has been evicted. In fact, the member who did move away decided to launch another CG in her new city of residence. The positive experience she had at Engelwood Park not only taught her how to garden successfully, but inspired her to spread the benefits she had gained from being involved in a CG to residents of her new neighborhood.

Many members of the CG and the neighborhood association credit #302 with “getting all the hard work done,” but from #302’s point of view it was a community effort that has been very rewarding and provided great benefits to the neighborhood. Excess produce is often donated to local shelters and food banks to aid struggling members of the community. Neighborhood residents, even those not participating in the CG, have become more engaged in community-based activities such as neighborhood clean-ups. With space available to build a few additional beds in the garden, the benefits already experienced by the participants have the potential to continue improving the neighborhood. However, #302 did note that as the members of the neighborhood association get older there is a growing fear that younger residents will not step in to replace them. “Those of us who have been involved since the beginning are getting too old. The neighborhood association is dying out. We need to improve our communication if we the association is going to survive. That is really what we need now, better communication.” As younger families continue visit the park and some
decide to join the garden, #302 hopes to inspire a new leadership that will preserve the efforts of recent years and extend the longevity of the Engelwood Park CG.

**Analytical Summary of Case Study 2**

While many CGs that developed more recently in Orlando have been sponsored by a network of city officials, corporate managers, and nonprofit leaders that supplied funding, materials, and volunteer crews for the CGs’ implementation, the same degree of sponsorship was not available to the EPCG. Certainly the city did provide access to some of the essential resources needed to develop the EPCG - permission to use park lands, free access to a water source, and a fence to surround the garden – but the initiation and planning processes for EPCG were grassroots endeavors taken on by neighborhood residents. It was the mission of the EPNA to further strengthen the social capital of the neighborhood, particularly in regards to cross-generational connectivity, and the members agreed that developing a CG in the neighborhood could help accomplish this goal. Involvement in the EPNA enhanced the bonding social capital between neighbors and also fostered links between the community and local government officials. However, it was not until #302 voluntarily took on a leadership position to develop the CG that the project was able to move into the planning stage. Bonding capital within the EPNA ignited interest in the idea of establishing the EPCG, but it was through #302’s social network and existing relationship with the city commissioner that essential resources could be accessed.

While the EPCG does not rely on partnerships with external organizations – besides that of the EPNA which launched the project – bridging capital with external parties still plays a role in the garden’s success. Other than the land, water, and fencing material that were provided via the city, all other materials needed within the garden
were acquired through donations from local residents and small businesses. Word of mouth, the visibility of the garden sign in the park, an active social media page, and the positive rapport the EPNA had within the larger community continued to draw in enough donations to support the maintenance, and growth, of the EPCG. As #302 reflected, “One day I showed up to the garden and outside the pedestrian gate [of the fence] was a can full of seed packets. Someone just left it there for the gardeners to use. Stuff like that happens a lot here.” The high visibility of the garden from the highway running parallel to the northern border of the park also helped to draw in support for the CG. “People driving by can see the flowers we have planted on that side of the garden… People will even call just to tell me that the garden looks nice and they enjoy seeing it.” According to #302, these displays of grassroots support are what have allowed the garden to thrive.

There is also a sense of bonding capital between the garden members, some of which are not otherwise affiliated with the EPNA. The culture of the garden is one of comradery where members are encouraged to assist each other with the maintenance of their plots, especially when a member’s age or health hinders his/her ability to tend to the garden. For example, an older woman who has been active in the CG since its beginning is no longer able to get on the ground and garden herself. Therefore, her fellow garden members are building an elevated garden bed that is wheelchair accessible so she can still participate in garden activities again. In the meantime, these same fellow gardeners have enabled this woman to stay as engaged as possible in the garden by helping her weed, plant, and even harvest her produce. Gardeners also regularly offer to water each other’s beds, share advice and materials with one another,
and continue to recruit the support of potential donors. #302 also promotes the message, “If you are stealing from a neighbor, I am going to call the cops on you. Now if you ask for it, he’ll give it to you, so you better ask rather than take.” The trust and reciprocity established within the garden is of great value to the garden members and the EPNA at large. It is the hope of many older residents in the neighborhood that this spirit of collaboration and bonding social capital will be upheld through future generations.

Case Study 3: Tampa Heights Community Garden

The Tampa Heights Community Garden [THCG] is located in northern Tampa, adjacent to a major interstate that runs through the Tampa Heights neighborhood. Since the 1920s issues of poverty, low home ownership, crime, and homelessness have weakened the neighborhood. In 1990 approximately 41 percent of residents in the neighborhood were living below the poverty level and the median income was only half of that in the City of Tampa (Tampa Heights Civic Association, 2003). The grassroots efforts of community advocates and local organizations have altered the downward trajectory of Tampa Heights through projects such as the THCG which officially opened in August 2011.

Initiation of THCG

For over 30 years dedicated community leaders have worked together to form and serve two community-based nonprofit organizations with the aim of making resources more accessible to the adults and youth of the neighborhood, thereby improving their overall quality of life. These two organizations are the Tampa Heights Civic Association (THCA) and the Tampa Heights junior Civic Association (THjCA), the latter of which formed 10 years after the original to further involve youth in community
revitalization efforts that could teach valuable life skills. Both groups strived to be as inclusive as possible in order to most accurately represent the opinions and concerns of the collective community. For several years the THCA held annual community visioning meetings where all residents had the opportunity to share their hopes and visions for an improved neighborhood, visions which would then guide the initiatives launched by the THCA leaders. Similarly a door-to-door survey was conducted in 1997 by leaders of the THjCA to gather further information about what programs neighborhood residents wanted to see developed in the neighborhood. Support for this survey was provided by a professor at the University of Tampa and a city council member, both of whom had preexisting relationships with the community activists leading the effort. The survey responses provided by the residents conveyed a clear message about what the neighborhood envisioned as a revitalized neighborhood. Included in this vision was the desire to build a CG.

The advocates recognized that in order for the community’s visions to be realized, they first had to be heard and validated by entities of political influence and decision making power. Therefore, numerous presentations were made to groups that could help persuade the mayor of Tampa to support the development of an official neighborhood plan. In 1998 the mayor signed a contract to have the local planning commission work with the THCA on creating the “Tampa Heights Neighborhood Plan,” the first of its kind to exist in the city of Tampa. The process of developing this plan, also now referred to as “The Tampa Heights Plan: Rebuilding Community,” lasted from 1998 until 2003 when the city council adopted the document as an official resolution (Tampa Heights Civic Association, 2003).
Planning of THCG

Despite the neighborhood plan being formally adopted by the city, successful implementation relied upon the cooperation and collaboration of the diverse group of community advocates and government representatives, despite their differences in power. This proved to be particularly challenging in regard to the CG initiative, especially because other initiatives had taken precedent over the CG project. There was an eight year delay between the adoption of the neighborhood plan by the city and the beginning of the CG planning process. In 2010 when discussions of developing a CG in Tampa Heights did commence, though the community’s interest in the project remained high, political barriers brought the conversation to almost an immediate halt. At that time there were no CG ordinances written within the city of Tampa. Therefore there was no process of assigning public lands, paying fees, or designating maintenance responsibilities that would come with a community garden. As #103, the current coordinator of the THCG, recalled,

Our initial interaction with the city was one in which we were adversaries because the city felt like we were just asking for special permission to have a community garden and that that was just a slick way of not paying the fees that need to be paid for permits.

It quickly became evident that until community advocates succeeded in convincing the city to write and approve a CG ordinance, the THCG initiative would remain at a standstill. Such policy changes would require the collaboration of many local entities, one of which was the Tampa Garden Club.

In 2010 the National Garden Clubs Association challenged local garden club members across the country to offer assistance to local CG projects being developed. This call to action well received by #103, a five-year member of the Tampa Garden Club
who sought to spread the benefits of CGs to the wider community. Initially unaware of
the THCA and THjCA concurrent efforts to launch a CG, #103 reached out to numerous
local organizations that might be interested in collaborating on a CG project. Through
communication with a nonprofit organization serving the homeless populations in the
area, #103 was introduced to #108 and other THjCA members working towards the
THCG, fostering a partnership between the Tampa Garden Club and the THjCA.
Educational and funding sources needed for a successful CG were made available by
Tampa Garden Club. Trust and rapport with local residents and a working relationship
with city government officials were assets provided by the THjCA members. In addition,
personal skills such as #108’s experience working in the policy sector and #103’s ability
to build collaborative relationships among diverse groups of stakeholders proved
invaluable to moving the project forward. All of these resources were essential to
getting the CG ordinance established by the city, especially because some more
affluent homeowners in Tampa opposed the notion of CGs emerging throughout the
city. According to #103,

[The affluent individuals] had it in their minds the concept that a
community garden is a place for people to throw stuff that they call
compost that is really just garbage that stinks… and for people sleeping
under the trees.

In attempts to prevent such situations from occurring in their own neighborhoods, these
residents attended several city council meetings where they voiced their concerns,
gained support of certain city council members, and bolstered the political barrier already
facing the THCG advocates.

To overcome this false depiction of CGs and to gain support from the city, #108
used her own career experience in policy to train CG supporters as local activists who
would converse one-on-one with city council members about developing a CG ordinance in Tampa. According to #103,

We wanted to have the city council understand that this idea of a community garden is not something unknown; it is very known in other cities and very well regarded. There is research that tells us that it is beneficial to the community for so many reasons.

In addition, some members of the Tampa Garden Club attended city council meetings to promote positive messages about community gardens in a more public venue; others did the same within their respective Homeowners Associations meetings. At the same time the THjCA was working with the Department of Transportation to negotiate the expansion of an existing lease to secure property for the community garden.

#108: There are so many soldiers that get things done, when you get them all working together with everybody that brings their value to the table, it makes it all complete. I had the inter-governmental working understanding, #103 brought all the resources from the Garden Club locally, statewide, nationally and even internationally. Then we had the passion and commitment of many of the people who had already started working in this area. And we had the University with their academic credentials that were able to stand up and we had professionals in the area that wanted to be a part of community gardens. And we had just regular residents who just loved the thought of community gardening. It took all of us joining all of our resources together to actually move things forward.

As intended by Tampa Heights Neighborhood Plan, the THCG was an inherently collaborative initiative that relied on effective channels of communication and strong partnerships to achieve success. Based on these efforts, the city agreed to launch a three-phase planning process that not only bolstered the working relationship between the Tampa Heights advocates and the city, but ultimately resulted in the passage of a CG ordinance in June 2011.
Implementation of THCG

Several THCG advocates used their personal social networks to raise awareness and funds for the CG project. $1,000 was initially raised for the project through outreach to various garden clubs and women’s groups; this was later supplemented by a $2,500 grant from a corporate sponsor in early August 2011. These funds were used to purchase the lumber, irrigation materials, soil, and additional supplies needed to the construct first phase of the garden. Volunteer opportunities to help with building the garden were also spread through social networks, resulting in 75 incoming freshmen from the University of Tampa constructing the original 20 raised garden beds in one afternoon. The irrigation system was also installed by local volunteers and was subsequently connected to the main city water system.

With the physical structure of the garden in place and the grand opening approaching, organizing how reoccurring expenses would be covered for the garden and compiling the set of rules which would govern the gardeners’ activities were essential tasks. The infrastructure of the CG was decided by the core THCG advocates and the first group of individuals to sign up as participants in the CG; these individuals made up an informal group that was referred to as the CG’s planning team. Guidelines outlined by the American Community Garden Association were used as a framework for their management structure, but according to #103, the “infrastructure is kind of free-flowing.” The planning team continues to meet monthly and makes decisions as needed, but with the THjCA serving as the parent organization for the THCG, a board of directors and set of officers for the garden itself were unnecessary. The guidelines agreed upon by the planning team were provided to all garden participants, outlining the annual fees associated with renting individual raised beds and the fees for participating
in communal plots. The communal plots offer groups of individuals and/or members of a particular organization opportunity to collectively tend to a larger garden bed, dividing the labor required and the produce harvested.

Because water use was not provided freely from the city, the annual rental fees paid by gardeners would be used to cover the quarterly water bills from the city. These rental payments would also contribute to covering the annual fees for liability insurance that were required for the THCG to become operational. While the cost of liability insurance for some CGs located on unincorporated county property reached up to $1000 annually, the THCG leaders made a connection with a nonprofit organization that could provide access to liability insurance for a reduced rate under the organization’s umbrella policy.

At the THCG grand opening event in August 2011, the THCG leaders invited the City of Tampa Mayor, all city council members, and the director of the Parks and Recreation Department to participate in a tree planting ceremony to acknowledge the supportive role that the city had played in getting the CG established. Other officials were invited to give speeches. Having several different departments within the city government represented at the ceremony was essential because it ensured support and stable access to a diversified the pool of resources that would enable the garden sustain over time.

**Maintenance of THCG**

Since the grand opening in August 2011, the number of individuals involved in the THCG have increased, as have the programs being offered to gardeners and the community at large. As of July 2017, the 86 raised garden beds are all occupied, three of which are communal plots, and the waiting list of prospective gardeners remains
active. Numerous volunteer opportunities are continuously presented to the community, inviting residents who may not be otherwise affiliated with the garden to become involved. Through volunteer efforts significant improvements have been made to the garden, such as adding 66 raised beds to the 20 originally built, constructing a greenhouse on site, installing and maintaining an aquaponics system, and contributing to work day activities that prepare the garden for fall and spring planting. Several educational programs are also offered to the children and adults where gardening lessons are combined with training in entrepreneurship, cooking, sustainability and leadership skills. These educational classes increase involvement in the garden and empowers individuals to help overcome issues of poverty, unemployment, and crime that have long faced Tampa Heights. THCG has become a site of safety and cohesion for the neighborhood, as reflected by one garden member’s statement, “This garden is very inclusive and welcoming of everyone in the community… There is a huge degree of diversity here.”

The successes of the THCG were well recognized throughout the community, yet #103 and #108 were still befuddled as to why some cities seemed to be booming with successful CGs, yet despite years of tireless effort by community advocates, there remained only a handful of successful CGs in Tampa. Insights to this question were sought through a partnership with the University of South Florida which enabled the THCG to conduct research that examined the relationships between various CGs around the nation and their local government’s Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). With data showing that MPOs in other regions do provide significant support to CGs, these findings were communicated by THCG members to the Hillsborough County
MPO in efforts to influence policy that would benefit not only the THCG, but other CG initiatives in the county as well. As MPO representatives began acknowledging the benefits offered via CGs and recognized the growing interest for such projects in the Tampa area, the planning commission was tasked with integrating CG development into the City of Tampa’s comprehensive plan, a document required of all MPOs under Florida State Law.

#108: If the MPO is recognizing the benefits of community gardens and the comprehensive plan that guides the direction and decisions of each jurisdiction are now starting to come together, we are building inside of these policies this focus on community gardens that then works to guide not only our area, but also other parts of the state as we become leaders in showing that.

Stimulating systemic change that will benefit CGs beyond just the THCG has become a primary focus of the THCG leaders over the past 2 years. Since 2013 about two-thirds of the gardens that were operational in Tampa have ceased to exist, leaving only about 6 or 7 gardens functioning in 2015. Recognizing the socio-economic inequities across Hillsborough County and Florida at large, it was agreed by the THCG members that more CGs needed to be made available throughout the state. By recruiting the leaders of the existing CGs in the area, the Coalition of Community Gardens in Hillsborough County was established. The mission of supporting the success of the existing CGs and helping to establish new CGs is now a goal shared by the nine CGs involved in the coalition, a mission now supported by the MPO and $10,000 of seed grant funding. It is successes like this that have enabled community participation and support for the THCG to thrive since opening in 2011. However, as the THCG has helped to revitalize the Tampa Heights neighborhood, threats of gentrification are beginning to take effect.
#108: Tampa Heights has become this hot commodity and our properties are being snatched up everywhere. Real estate advertisement go all the way up north to investors who are now trying to find places to put their money because the banks interest rates remain so low. So they have had money sitting on the side and we have become one of those entities that they publish nationally...as one of the areas for investors to invest in. And in addition to that, when they start advertising what makes Tampa Heights attractive to come to, our garden is listed prominently among the attractions.

As the leaders of the THCG and the Community Garden Coalition in Hillsborough County, both #103 and #108 continue to invest in new relationships and strengthen those already existing in order to ensure that the benefits offered by CGs are reaped by the local people for whom the CG was intended.

**Analytical Summary of Case Study 3**

The numerous barriers the Tampa Heights community advocates faced throughout the planning and implementation phases of the THCG lifecycle were arduous and persistent. Success was dependent upon the strength of the social capital within the neighborhood. Despite the impoverished state of the community and the prevalence of serious issues such as crime, unemployment, and homelessness, maintaining strong bonds between community members was of considerable importance throughout the neighborhood. By involving the local residents in the process developing the framework for the “Tampa Heights Plan,” asking them to share their visions of a revitalized neighborhood, trust and reciprocity formed the foundation of neighborhood relationships. Although there was a significant time gap between when the idea for the THCG originated and when the planning stage began, the bonding capital was maintained and proved essential in making any progress towards implementation. The strength of the bonds between community members and their degree of mutual investment in the THCG initiative were illustrated through individuals’
willingness to increase support and local buy-in for the project. Residents attended local government meetings, spoke one-on-one with city commissioners, and reached out to external organizations to aid the development of the THCG based on their shared mission to improve the wellbeing of their neighborhood.

In addition to the internal bonds between neighborhood residents, maintaining positive relationships with a diverse range of partners was another key element to ensuring the longevity of the THCG. As stated by #108,

One of the things that we are really, really, REALLY good at is identifying and incorporating partnerships. I think that is one of the bases of our ability to do all of the things that we do... Communication and partnerships are really important.

The bridge made between the THCG advocates and the Tampa Garden Club provided a mutually beneficial relationship for both parties; educational resources needed to successfully develop the THCG were mobilized which in turn enabled the Tampa Garden Club to fulfill the national association's call-to-action. Other bridges were also made between the THCG and local universities, other nonprofit organizations, and groups of student volunteers. There were also several neighborhood residents who were not personally interested in tending to a garden plot, yet provided resources such as power tools, volunteer labor, and monetary donations to support the development of the garden.

Education was an essential component to the success of the THCG, both in terms of the gardening knowledgebase provided via the connection with the Tampa Garden Club, but also the political know-how afforded by #108’s previous experience in policy-related work. There were numerous political barriers that hindered the progress of the THCG: the lack of CG ordinance in the city, opposition by more wealthy
constituents who held greater political clout, an initial adversarial relationship with city council members, and the need to have land use permits approved and water made accessible. The internal expertise that #108 provided to other THCG advocates was an invaluable resource that led to eventual implementation of the garden. Through strategic leadership practices, #108 encouraged neighborhood residents to engage in the political process, training them to effectively communicate with local government officials. Linking capital was strengthened between the Tampa Heights community and the City of Tampa and neighborhood resiliency was enhanced via residents' increased empowerment.

Linking capital was also strengthened during the grand opening of the THCG when various government officials were asked to partake in a tree planting ceremony and were recognized for the support they offered to the garden. This recognition has helped the THCG to maintain positive rapport with the local government, mitigating political barriers and actually enabling a partnership with the county MPO that has potential to increase the successes of the THCG. With local buy-in secured early on, community involvement continuously encouraged, partnerships maintained via strong channels of communication, and being flexible to the needs and visions of the community, there is no doubt that social capital has played an integral role in the successes the THCG has achieved.

**Case Study 4: Cone Park Community Garden**

This final case study features Cone Park CG [CPCG], a recently implemented garden located in one of the oldest, yet most marginalized neighborhoods in Gainesville, Florida. Development of the CPCG was indirect outcome of a much larger Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative [NRI] launched in 2013. As one of the many
partners collaborating on this NRI, the researcher (myself) has been involved with the development, implementation, and maintenance of the CPCG since its beginning stages in April 2016. In addition, I continue to serve as the site coordinator of the CPCG since its opening in June 2017. Recognizing the potential for my own personal experiences to bias the narrative history of this garden, I aim to remain purely descriptive within this case study. I will offer my interpretations and reflections in the analytical summary at the end of this case study and will expand upon this discussion in chapter 5. However, despite the potential for biases, I believe the opportunity to observe and engage in this CG project for a duration of 18 months prior to completing this thesis research study has served as an asset to my understanding and analysis of CG development and longevity in Florida.

Initiation of CPCG

Amidst the rural landscape of Alachua County, the University of Florida is located in the city of Gainesville and serves as the primary driver of growth within the region. Based on data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics that reviewed the 2010 fiscal year, about 80 percent of employment and earnings in the county were linked to expenditures from the university (Dewey, Denslow, & Schaub, 2013). However, the benefits of this development are not equally distributed throughout Gainesville and have largely contributed to the major issues of segregation and inequity throughout. Such has been the reality for the East Gainesville Neighborhood where the CPCG has

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1 Based on personal notes taken by the researcher while attending a panel discussion of representatives from the Gainesville for All initiative. This was a public meeting held on October 25, 2016 at Pugh Hall on the campus of the University of Florida.
recently developed. The residents of this neighborhood have struggled with issues such as racial disparity, low levels of education, unemployment, food desert conditions, low homeownership, and high rates of crime for decades (Dillard, 2016).

As public attention on the disparities facing the East Gainesville Neighborhood increased, a greater number of government officials, local organizations, and university personnel have become invested in community development projects in the area. One of the major efforts was an NRI launched in 2013 by Alachua Habitat for Humanity in collaboration with other local partners. The mission of this initiative was to form a partnership of local stakeholders that would work directly with community members in order to provide services, products, and social connections that aligned with the needs and aspirations of the residents. Over the next three years several meetings were held where stakeholders and residents discussed the main issues facing the neighborhood and worked to devise new programs (or provide access to existing programs) that could address these problems. Some of the priority areas of focus included adult education, tutoring, home-ownership, employability training, beautification, personal empowerment, and creating an overall strategic plan to organize these efforts. In addition, a core group of residents worked to form an official neighborhood association to provide greater strength and stability within the neighborhood itself. This group took the lead on driving many of the NRI initiatives and eventually was granted status as a nonprofit organization in the fall of 2016.

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2 To maintain confidentiality of the neighborhood residents involved in the NRI and CPCG, the researcher will use “East Gainesville Neighborhood” as the alias for this area.

3 Based on Meeting Minutes recorded by an attendee of the NRI collaborators’ meeting held on April 24, 2013.
In April 2016 I became involved in the strategic planning process of the NRI through my connections at the University of Florida. Several desired programs had already been identified by NRI partners and local residents when I joined the discussion, one of which centered on the development of a CG in the neighborhood. Subcommittees had been created to more efficiently work towards the various programs and based on my passion for the environment, I offered to assist the group of residents interested in building a CG. One of the reasons residents said they wanted a CG was to improve the attitude of the neighborhood by beautifying the area; these residents suggested that flowers and a butterfly garden be included in the project. Other residents recalled fond childhood memories of growing food alongside their family members and wanted their grandchildren to have similar experiences. Increasing neighborhood families’ access to fresh, healthy foods was another commonly referenced benefit.

Over the course of the following weeks residents continued to express their interest in the CG project, both during strategic planning meetings and via a needs-assessment survey that was designed and conducted by resident community leaders. Though none of the CG subcommittee members had previously participated in a CG and knew little of the process of launching such a project, with the support of the NRI collaborators, including members of the city government, the planning process soon was underway.

**Planning of CPCG: Phase 1**

Recognizing my own lack of knowledge on the topic of CGs and my unfamiliarity with the City of Gainesville policies, I invested much time over the next several months gathering information from local gardeners, UF/IFAS Extension personnel and city
officials whom had experience participating and/or assisting with CG projects. I also contacted local businesses to request donations and applied for small-scale grants using Alachua Habitat for Humanity as an umbrella nonprofit. As I gathered more information, I brought the new insights back to the strategic planning meetings in order to collaborate with the other subcommittee members; it was my goal to help provide the information needed to develop a CG. I considered myself to be a partner on the project, aiming to offer resources to the residents interested in participating in a CG. I also believed that decisions regarding the physical structure and management of the garden needed to be made by residents themselves and that a resident should fill the role of garden site coordinator rather than having an external partner take this position. While this sentiment was understood and even agreed upon by other CG subcommittee members, the unknowns involved with establishing a CG and the amount of responsibility involved in leading such a project deterred others from volunteering for the site coordinator role. After only one month of being involved in the NRI project, I was asked to take the lead on the CG initiative; I agreed.

In addition to applying for funding and gathering insights on effective ways to develop and maintain a CG, I also worked with the two CG subcommittee members to identify potential locations in the neighborhood that would be suitable for a CG. We learned from the assistant city manager that vacant lands owned by the city could potentially be used for a CG, provided certain zoning requirements were met and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed. The policy outlining this arrangement was adopted in 1998 by the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs after the first CG had established in Gainesville. With this information we identified and visited
three potential locations for the CG, one of which was a vacant corner lot on a residential street where loitering and drug-related activities often took place.

After a few weeks of deliberation, the neighborhood association leaders requested that this vacant lot be selected for the development of a CG. It was their belief that by improving the aesthetics of the neighborhood and offering a positive social activity for the surrounding households, delinquent behaviors would decrease and overall safety and morale would improve. In fact, this vision was so great that during the summer of 2016 one of the key resident leaders facilitated the drafting and submission of an application to national challenge grant that would fund not only a CG project on the vacant lot, but also enable an interactive, multi-generational park to be constructed. The effort was well supported by other NRI partners, but due to the complexity of this grant application process and the time constraint of the deadline, the number of people invited to participate in the drafting of this proposal was kept small, limiting resident involvement.

After the application was submitted, the display boards depicting the project visions were shared with other community members. Several residents were excited by the idea of transforming the vacant lot into a park and CG, however, some of the households directly surrounding the site voiced concerns and opposition to the project. There was fear that a park might increase loitering and criminal behaviors in the neighborhood; others believed that the neighbors were too old to maintain a garden and it would end up being a waste of time. Even after the grant proposal was denied and project was scaled back to the original notion of a CG, nearby households were still hesitant to support the construction of a CG. It was clear that the planning process
needed to include greater resident participation to foster buy-in and sustained community support for the garden. This was a lengthy process and one that required the leadership of an internal community member rather than an external NRI partners. Therefore, in December 2016, #016 who was an avid gardener and most active resident on the CG subcommittee, volunteered to take on a leadership role for this project. However, she did request that I would be continue to offer her guidance and support throughout the development process. I agreed without hesitation.

**Planning of CPCG: Phase 2**

By December 2016 I had gained a great deal of knowledge about the process of CG development through my previous work with the NRI team and by compiling the literature presented in chapter 2 of this paper. I had also been inspired by the number of East Gainesville residents who had voiced their interest in developing a CG over the past several months. Recognizing that a limited number of individuals would be able to participate in the East Gainesville Neighborhood CG once established, I decided to investigate whether residents living on the opposite side of the neighborhood were also interested in having access to a CG. If there was enough interest, I planned to develop a second CG project for the southern portion of the neighborhood. #016 was in support of this proposal because if I were to begin another CG project, she could observe the steps I took to develop and implement this second CG and could then apply these steps to the East Gainesville Neighborhood CG.

In January 2017 I reached out to other neighborhood entities such as staff from the affordable housing complexes and the manager of the Cone Park Public Library, as well as external partners such as UF/IFAS Extension and the UF Family Nutrition Program. I had previously been introduced to many of these individuals during my time
as an NRI partner. For example, the library manager had provided the venue for several NRI meetings and through our mutual participation as NRI collaborators, she was already aware of the CG initiative and was eager to offer her support. Program coordinators from the affordable housing sites were also very supportive of the project, believing that the residents living in their apartment complexes would benefit greatly by participating in a CG. Through UF/IFAS Extension I was put in touch with a local Master Gardener who provided a wealth of knowledge on gardening as well as architectural designs for planning the garden structure. And when I met with representatives from the UF Family Nutrition Program another vital partnership was formed. I agreed to host UF Family Nutrition Program staff at future CPCG meetings so they could offer nutrition education to the garden members; in exchange the program would fund all costs associated with constructing the garden and would continue to offer supplemental support over time. I invited #016 to attend these early planning meetings because I wanted to help her learn about the potential partnerships and resources that could be accessed during future establishment of the East Gainesville Neighborhood CG.

With support pouring in for the CPCG and community outreach efforts soon to follow, it was now time to have the conversation with city officials regarding land use. Located less than a block away from the affordable housing complexes was Fred Cone Park, city-owned park property that offered green space, recreational activities, and was home to the Cone Park Public Library. I had learned from past conversations with city officials that public parks could be used for CG development as long certain criteria were met. I was also aware that the city would install an irrigation system and a garden
fence for free when CGs were established on their park properties. The cost of water use would also be covered by the city under the stipulation that only hand-watering by hose was allowed. Thus I reached out to the manager of the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs Department to inquire if any portion of Fred Cone Park was available for the establishment of a CG. We were granted tentative approval by the end of January and our team immediately began reaching out to community members to assess the degree of resident interest. Official permission for use of the park land would be secured once the site plan and MOU was approved by city.

In February we began our outreach within the community to raise awareness of the potential development of a CG at Fred Cone Park. Through the coordinated efforts of several team members, we identified two events already scheduled within the community that would provide us access to a targeted audience. One event was a mobile farmers market that traveled to the affordable housing sites on a weekly basis. The other was a fresh produce giveaway that occurred biweekly at the Cone Park Public Library, sponsored by a local food bank. Considering that the residents attending both events were already showing up to receive fresh produce, we gained permission from the events’ coordinators to share information with their patrons about the CPCG project. This effort proved greatly successful. At the library I gave a presentation on the benefits of CGs to the large group of residents who were waiting for the food donations to be distributed. Our Master Gardener also offered some insights on the types of vegetables we could grow and a cooking demonstration was offered by the UF Family Nutrition Program to exemplify the types of services that would be offered to CG
participants. By the end of the meeting over 50 individuals had signed up with as “interested in participating,” nine of whom have become active members of the garden.

**Implementation of CPCG**

While the physical site construction did not begin for a few months, we began developing and implementing the social infrastructure for the CPCG immediately. After making our presentation at the library I reached out via phone call to all individuals who had expressed interest in the garden project. Each person was invited to attend a follow up meeting at the end of the March, a meeting which would provide a better assessment of participants’ interest and their willingness to invest time and effort into the CG. We did not want to build the garden under the assumption that individuals’ initial expression of interest would guarantee their engagement. Rather wanted to establish relationships of trust with prospective garden members before the CG was built to ensure local buy-in and increase the likelihood of sustained participation. The turnout was inspiring; six residents attended and immediately began contributing to the planning discussion. I asked individuals to share why they were interested in joining the garden, what experiences they had with gardening in the past, and to tell the group what their favorite vegetable was. I explained that my intention behind this activity was to build a sense of comradery within the group because I believed that positive socialization can be a major benefit of CGs. I also stressed to the group members that although I would serve as the voluntary site coordinator and offer guidance through the development and maintenance processes, it was not my intention to make any of the decisions alone. In fact, I advocated that through teamwork and delegation of responsibilities the garden would become more sustainable and residents would have more autonomy over how the project was maintained.
Over the course of the following three months our CPCG group continued to meet monthly and finalize the plans for our garden. The majority of members attended these meetings and our group size continued to grow as more individuals became aware of our project and requested to join. Having learned from my experiences with the NRI I believed that communication was key to sustained participation, therefore I sent reminder messages to all the CPCG members the day prior to each meeting. I also invited the CPCG group to accompany me on a tour of three other local CGs in efforts to show them that there was no “right” or “wrong” way of developing a garden. I wanted them to see the creative designs and practices used in other local CGs to help inspire the CPCG members to create a structure for their own CG that would meet the interests and needs of the group. After the tour, based on the inputs of the members, the Master Gardener working on our team sketched potential designs for the garden layout. Once we all were in agreement, the site plan was submitted to the city, along with the set of bylaws we had collaboratively written and the MOU required by the city. As the site coordinator I signed this MOU contract, along with two other CPCG members who had volunteered to be co-coordinators. These two individuals agreed that they would share some of the responsibilities for organizing and managing the garden and in the event that I was no longer available to serve as site coordinator, they would take over that role. This arrangement increased the garden members trust in the project’s stability; initial concerns that this project may fail and therefore would be a waste of time and energy were quickly alleviated through constant communication and collaborative decision making.
Once the plans were approved just weeks later, the irrigation was installed, lumber and compost were ordered, and by mid-June we were building the garden beds. The partnerships and community-based connections we had aided us greatly during the building process. Over the span of one month garden members and volunteers offered their time, labor, and tools to help construct the garden. We even had one older garden member who was not able to help build the garden beds still come out during the build-day to show her support and appreciation for the work being done. Then in July, despite the difficulty of gardening in the Florida summer heat, the CPCG members selected their raised beds and eagerly began planting the seeds that had been donated.

Maintenance of CPCG

Since the CPCG launched only a few months prior to the completion of this thesis study, much of the maintenance phase has yet to be realized. However, partnerships and resident interest have continued to grow and with a waiting list of already in place, a second phase of building will soon begin. Currently there are 13 individual raised beds being tended by gardeners and three smaller herb beds which are communal. To provide older residents with physical limitations the ability to participate, we will also build elevated raised beds that are designed to be wheelchair accessible. This was part of the original site plan designed by the CPCG group earlier in the year and as additional funds have become available through our partnerships, we are able to achieve this goal. A children’s learning garden has also recently been incorporated in the CPCG to facilitate cross-generational learning between the CG members and the children, as well as provide a hands on learning experience for local youth. Currently the garden is thriving, both in terms of the plants and the social relationships between the members. As one member said to me, “I love being a part of
this [garden] because I belong to something. I come every day and am like, “Wow!” when I see my plants grow… I have something fun now to do and it’s with friends… We are family.” Personally, I could not agree more.

**Analytical Summary of Case Study 4**

My personal involvement in the CPCG allowed me not only to observe the social capital building within the community, but also to personally benefit from gaining new friendships and expanding my social network. Although initially my relationships with the neighborhood residents were based on bridging social capital – I entered as an external partner aiming to increase resource accessibility for the community – after months of spending time together as we worked towards a common goal, these relationships have become much more intimate. I have gained friendships within the community through participation in the garden that I would have otherwise not had access to. And now these social bonds transcend the boundaries of our garden; garden members have reported spending time together outside of the garden and some have invited me to partake in social events such attending a local fair or sharing a meal together. Our garden is based on inclusivity, where residents of ten years and 80 years are invited to share together in the experience of nurturing plants and watching them grow. As participants in FG1 stated about their own experiences with their CGs, my involvement in the CPCG has helped me to ‘find my people,’ regardless of any socio-demographic characteristics that may differ between us. As one of the garden members conveyed while pulling weeds with me in the garden,

This is a garden of friends and family. You know, we help each other out... We are all need to take care of the garden and that means we all help each other. You know, like paying it forward. This is our garden so we need to make it grow.
The CPCG has not only enhanced internal neighborhood cohesion - particularly among the most active CG participants – but has fostered new bridges between the residents and external agents with greater abilities to mobilize resources. Partnerships have been formed with the UF Family Nutrition Program, various nonprofit organizations, several local businesses, UF/IFAS Extension, and the city officials from the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs Department. By making initial contact with these external organizations in order to mobilize support and resources of the CPCG, my own social network within the area has expanded immensely. However, in order to strengthen local buy-in and improve the longevity of the garden, it was not enough for me alone to build connections with these external partners. To build the internal resilience of the garden – which hopefully over time would resonate throughout the community at large – I invited representatives from supportive external organizations and local government officials to attend our monthly garden meetings with the residents. The bridges and links were enhanced through collaborative discussions that occurred during these meetings, allowing residents to express their needs and visions for the garden while partners were able to describe the resources they had available to offer. These bridges continue to mobilize resources such as education, seeds, and gardening tools, while the links with the city provide access to free water, land use, mulch, and a venue to hold our monthly meetings. It is through this diversity of social relationships that the CPCG has achieved successful development and continues to thrive.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided a rich description of the perceptions, experiences, and insights of CG members and site coordinators representing 22 different CGs within the state of Florida. The researcher began this chapter with a discussion of the main
themes which emerged from the five FGs conducted during this study. Thirty-four participants contributed to these FG discussions and their responses were organized into categories that the researcher viewed as illustrative of the role that social capital plays throughout the lifecycle of CGs. The participants’ perceptions of the meaning of community, their motivations for participating in a CG, and their views regarding the mission of their respective CGs helped to depict the social nature inherent in CGs, as well as display the importance placed on the notion of togetherness. This was followed by an overview of the factors that influence support for a CG and the factors that influence the organization of a CG. The factors which FG participants portrayed as being most influential on the overall successes achieved by CGs were discussed and several examples were provided. Following this first section of the chapter, four exploratory case studies are provided to illustrate four examples of how these identified themes can influence the outcomes of a CG. By organizing each case study to follow the chronological progression of the CGs’ stages of initiation, planning, development, and maintenance, the reader was able to contextualize the factors which influenced the development and longevity of these four featured CGs. In the following chapter, the researcher will expand upon the interpretive discussions initiated in this chapter and will also provide suggestions for future research and recommendations for CG stakeholders to improve the successes achieved by CGs in Florida.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the role that social capital plays in the development and longevity of CGs across Florida. Relying on the rich dataset presented in the previous chapter and utilizing the frameworks of social capital theory (Firth et al., 2011; Putnam, 2000; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004), the researcher’s interpretive analysis of the key findings introduced in Chapter 4 will be expanded upon in the first section of this final chapter. First the researcher will explain how bonding, bridging, and linking social capital have played a role in the CGs examined in this study. The researcher will then describe the new insights regarding social capital theory that can contribute to the existing body of literature. Following this interpretive analysis section, the limitations of the study will be discussed, suggestions for future research will be offered, and recommendations for CG professionals and CG members will be described.

Interpretive Analysis of Key Findings

Prior to diving further into a discussion regarding the researcher’s perspectives on the role that social capital plays in the successful development and longevity of CGs in Florida, the researcher would like to acknowledge that the following perspectives are her own. Informed by the data collected via the rigorous methods employed in this study, the insights gained through an extensive literature review on social capital theory, and by using source triangulation, member checks and peer debriefs to ensure the credibility of her findings, the researcher is confident in offering her perspectives. However, as with all qualitative research that focuses on human subjects, the researcher again emphasizes that these findings should not be generalized to
encompass all CGs. The insights offered via this study evidence the complexities of CGs in terms of the mission statements, motivations of participants, and variables which influence the development and/or longevity of a given CG. The researcher aims to provide her own perspective on these topics in hopes of providing CG members, leaders, and professionals such as UF/IFAS Extension agents with a more comprehensive understanding of the barriers CGs face and how such barriers can be more successfully overcome.

**Bonding Social Capital**

Putnam (2000) and Szreter and Woolcock (2004) describe bonding social capital as the relationships which form between individuals who view themselves as sharing a common social identity, recognizing similarities between one another. These relationships bring people together via bonds of trust and reciprocity where both parties are invested in the relationship; as the time spent together increases, so does their degree of investment (Alaimo et al., 2010; Glover, 2004; Lin, 2001). In describing what the word *community* means to them, the theme of togetherness permeated the FG participants’ responses. Common interests and/or desires to help others in the community were often listed as motivations associated with this togetherness. These sentiments were continuously repeated throughout the FG discussions, particularly in relation to the beneficial outcomes that participants associated with CG involvement. Similar to the findings of previous researchers, participants mentioned that being involved in their CG had allowed them to meet neighbors they would not have met otherwise and to feel a greater sense of belonging within their neighborhood (Alaimo et al., 2010; Anguelovski, 2013b; Glover 2004; Ohmer et al., 2009). In CGs where there was a high level of community engagement, the connections and sense of comradery
experienced by the CG members was referenced as one of the greatest benefits of the garden and a main reason why participants remained engaged.

The act of gardening was perceived to be a hobby that all participants could share in together, whether they had previous experience with gardening or not. As #307 said, “The community gardens kind of bring us all together as a whole,” a sentiment reflected in #502’s statement, “My garden really to me goes beyond just growing food… I am looking at the community as a whole, where this is a place where people can come and kind of just enjoy themselves and associate.” People are drawn into CGs for different reasons, as depicted in the range of responses FG participants gave for getting involved (i.e. learning to garden, finding a social group, growing healthy food, reducing food costs, helping others). However, as conveyed by the responses given to third FG question posed (see page 85), even when initial motivations to join a CG included reasons other than social connectivity, the greatest benefits of being involved in CGs were related to the participants’ enhanced of social relationships.

These social bonds can offer benefits to the individual CG participants as well as the community at large by increasing cohesion and internal resiliency within a neighborhood. Social bonds can also benefit the development and longevity of the CGs themselves, particularly when bonding social capital is fostered during the developmental stage of the garden. As seen in the third case study presented in Chapter 4, the mutual interest in building a CG for their neighborhood led participants to combine their social networks into a unified web of local support for the THCG. Neighborhood residents were engaged in the project from the initial stages of planning and development, fostering bonds of trust between the residents and other community
leaders. Considering the many barriers which hindered the development process of the THCG, the bonding social capital established amongst community members was essential in terms of getting the CG established and ensuring its longevity.

Other FG participants who were involved in CGs that were established via a pre-existing organizations in the community (i.e. churches, nonprofits, homeowners associations) also recognized the importance of having strong social networks during the process of development. In these cases, CG initiators were able to use the social networks and channels of communication of the more established organization to facilitate greater community involvement during the developmental stages of the garden. Such was the case of a CG that was launched under a dual partnership of a local church and their neighborhood association. Because social networks were already in place within the community, when an announcement was sent that invited all neighborhood residents to become involved in the process of planning and developing the CG, several people came to participate, even those who were not ready to commit to tending to their own garden plot.

#303: We just came together as a group of people, working with each other’s strengths…Those that were interested, and even those that were interested at the time but don’t [currently] have a plot, they were a part of establishing the mission statement.

Effective channels of communication enabled strong outreach within the community, attracting greater interest in the CG and encouraging current members to remain actively involved. In CGs that struggled to engage much community participation, participants recognized a lack of communication between the garden members and between the CG and the community at large as a significant barrier to success. FG4 participants proposed different strategies for how effective communication could be
improved, as did participants from FG2. It was also recognized that by reaching out to current members who neglect to participate in the CG over time and reminding them of the collective mission of the CG and the need for community engagement, site coordinators can help maintain bonds of trust and reciprocity within the CG.

In cases where bonding social capital was not present within a CG, either due to limited opportunities for community participation during the development of the CG, ineffective channels of communication to recruit participants, or a general sense of disconnection within the neighborhood at large, FG participants often portrayed the lack of community engagement as the greatest barrier facing the garden. Considering the mission of many CGs was focused on improving the wellbeing of local communities and fostering a sense of togetherness, when there was minimal community participation within a CG, the success of the garden was hindered. As #407 stated when describing his frustration with the lack of community engagement in his CG, “When they said a “community” garden that was the whole key. The whole key was community.” But the togetherness and mutual investment associated with community was not realized in the garden. Instead, as the only two active participants in their CG, #406 and #407 relied on their strong bonds of trust and reciprocity to keep the garden alive: “I can depend on him… he is going to be there because he knows I’m gonna be there.” It was the closeness of their bonds that motivated them to stay involved in their CG.

#407: You want to know the truth [about the best part of being involved]… it is this knucklehead [#406]. When you are working with someone that keeps you going, it makes everything easier and it makes it better. And we argue [joke around] all day long; all day long we argue. But that is what makes everything so much better, when you got somebody that you can work with. I mean the food is good too, but you just have to be out there to see us cutting up, you’ll know what we are talking about.
Although this example of bonding capital did not extend beyond these two individuals, the strength of their bond still offers significant insights regarding the role of social capital plays in CGs. Although success was not achieved in engaging the wider community in the CG, the close bond fostered between these two participants did improve their personal wellbeing. This achievement, though not at the scale of other CGs were community participation was strong, should nevertheless be recognized as a success for these individual.

**Bridging Social Capital**

While bonding social capital characterizes the close relationships between individuals who share a common social identity, bridging social capital speaks to the relationships between individuals of different socio-demographic characteristics. Bridging capital connects people who hold similar positions of power within their society and therefore have similar abilities to access resources, yet these people tend to affiliate with different social groups and may have different interests (Lin, 2001; Putnam, 2000; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). As bonding capital between CG members helped to achieve the mission of togetherness in many of the gardens examined in this study, bridging social capital enabled CG members' to connect with parties external to the garden. It is through these external partnerships that resources became more accessible to CGs and more easily mobilized, particularly during the development stage. The purpose of these relationships was not to foster the same intimacy as seen among the CG members themselves, but rather to facilitate a wider network of support that would offer mutual benefits to the parties involved. In the case where a CG was established as an affiliate project of another organization – often referred to as an “umbrella” organization – this partnership not only provided access to valuable
resources for the CG, but offered the external organization a means of connecting with community residents. For many CGs it was through these external bridges that the land on which the garden would be built was made available to the CG initiators. Such was the case for a garden which was established under the dual partnership of their neighborhood association and a local church which provided the land. As in bonding social capital, trust and reciprocity are key components of bridging social capital and thus effective communication and transparency are of great importance to maintaining bridging partnerships.

In every FG discussion the participants talked extensively about the essential role that local partners had played in the development of their respective CGs. The CGs differed in the number of partners that were involved in their respective CGs, as well as the types and quantities of the resources that these partners offered. In some cases the resources offered were monetary and/or material donations that contributed to the initial building of the CG’s infrastructure. Other times the partners volunteered their skillsets and time to assist with the physical building of the CG and/or maintenance work over time. These partnerships included local tradesmen, businesses, nonprofit groups, university students, and even neighbors who were not members of the CG yet valued the benefits it brought to the neighborhood and therefore desired to assist. The FG participants expressed gratitude for the services and resources offered by their partners, portraying them as invaluable assets to the CGs. For example, a partnership with a local nonprofit enabled a CG to survive the current political, land tenure issue it was facing. Faced with the possibility of the city reclaiming the land on which the CG was built, the site coordinator partnered with a local nonprofit that was also strived to
improve the wellbeing of the local community. This enabled the CG to remain operational and also allowed the nonprofit to incorporate garden activities into the programming and services they offered. As the director of this community based nonprofit conveyed, he saw the partnership between his organization and the CG as an opportunity for long-term mutual benefits.

  #501: I lead a community based organization and so much of what we do is through collaboration. So generally we work with anything that works towards individual or community wellbeing. Anything that makes the community better. So for us that connection with #502… it has created a reciprocal experience where [my organization] is able to give [to the CG] and it is able to pour back into our kids.

Educational resources were also mobilized via external partnerships that were reflective of bridging social capital. In cases where UF/IFAS Extension agents were heavily engaged in a CG, they provided expert knowledge on gardening practices and encouragement to the CG members. In the case of FG4 participants, many of the CG members said that without the knowledge offered via their UF/IFAS Extension agent, their plants would have died and they would likely have stopped trying. As #402 stated, “Without that support [from the UF/IFAS Extension agent] everything would be over. I don’t know what would happen.” In some cases, the CG members were even inspired to become Master Gardeners themselves. Becoming a Master Gardener was portrayed by these participants as a way to utilize the knowledge they gained via their partnership with the UF/IFAS Extension office to benefit their CG as well as help their UF/IFAS Extension office meet its goals. Again, this signifies the reciprocal relationships and mutual benefits reaped from the bridges formed between CG members and local partners.
There was also a significant amount of social learning that connected different CGs within the same locale, fostering bridging social capital via inter-garden collaborations. This was particularly evident in the coalition of CGs that was established amongst FG1 participants, as well as the sharing of resources between FG3 participants. The benefits of bridging capital were also displayed during the FG discussions themselves via displays of active social learning. As participants shared information about resources available locally (i.e. plant distributors, compost suppliers, potential volunteer groups, local sponsors etc.), others were able to gain access to resources that they were previously disconnected from. This observation of bridging capital developing between the participants was also evident at the conclusion of FG2 and FG5; participants who were previously unacquainted continued conversing with one another, sharing contact information and addresses of their respective CGs in efforts to facilitate further collaboration.

**Linking Social Capital**

Through the collective social networks of the CG members, partnerships were formed which provided greater access to resources than would have been otherwise available to members individually. The creation of this larger web of social networks present within CG was depicted as a system of interconnected circles that were able to ripple into each other and throughout the community.

#103: The circles just go out from each one of us to the next [set of circles] that are somewhere. So there are a couple of people that are right in my circle and then they have circles. And then there are a couple of people that are right next to #108’s circle and then they have circles. So it is a synergy of purpose and activity that is propagated.

However, in order for those resources to be utilized by a developing CG project, most often there are specific permissions which need to be granted by the local government
in order to launch the project. For the EPCG discussed in the second case study, the progress being made to implement the garden was halted when the city required that a public hearing be scheduled to allow any residents’ objections to the CG project to be voiced. In the case of the THCG, until a CG ordinance was written and approved by the city, no progress could be made in the planning or implementation of the CG. As these connections between neighborhood residents and local government officials often cross the boundaries of formal power differentials within society, these relationships would be representative of linking social capital.

As stated in the literature review of this paper, it is this power differential existing between the two parties involved in the interaction that separates linking social capital from bonding and bridging. Aligned with previous researchers’ findings (Draper & Freedman, 2014; Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014; Putnam, 1995), several participants in this study referenced the influence that more powerful entities had on the development and longevity of their CGs. Such entities included local government officials, corporate sponsors, large nonprofit organizations and even national grantors. In some cases the links between the CG and the more powerful partners were well established and facilitated resource mobilization and a network of support for the CG during development and maintenance stages. One example of this positive display of linking capital was described by a FG participant who represented a CG built within the historic district of her city. Because a positive relationship was already established between the city councilmen and nonprofit representing the historic district, the process of mobilizing resources from the city government to support the development of this CG was a seamless process. However, other FG participants reported that establishing links
between their CG and more powerful partners was a challenging endeavor that was at times unsuccessful. In the case of one participant living in a marginalized neighborhood struggling with food insecurity, she stated that despite the many phone calls and letters sent to her local government officials over the years, she had yet to receive any support from the city for her CG.

In examining why some CGs are able to reap greater benefits of linking social capital than are other CGs, it is important to remember that the expectation of reciprocity still holds in linking capital relationships. When more powerful parties agree to invest in relationships with less powerful entities, there is an expectation that this investment will be of mutual benefit (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). The CG featured in the first case study offers a strong example of this reciprocity. In this case the county government and DOH-Manatee administrators were supportive of the MSG being developed because it offered opportunity for the county’s goals aimed at improving community health to be achieved. Providing the resources and the infrastructural support for MSG, the county government viewed MSG as a pilot project that could later be expanded throughout the county if the outcomes of the MSG were helpful in meeting the government’s goals. Similarly, a participant of FG3 described how his CG was initiated by city officials in efforts to improve the sustainability of the city overall. By reaching out to residents of marginalized neighborhood who were known to be leaders within the community, the city officials hoped to gain access into the community and recruit locals to help establish and maintain a CG. Considering the benefits offered by CGs, it was believed that this linking partnership would benefit the neighborhood by enabling residents to reap the benefits of a CG, while also helping the city to achieve its
sustainability goals. The city officials utilized their existing partnerships with local agencies (i.e. health department, police department, community-health foundations) to expand the network of support available to the CG and mobilize resources that would not have been otherwise available to the neighborhood. The majority of FG3 participants whom all resided in the same this same city concurred that their local government was very supportive of their CGs and that the links with city officials had facilitated not only resource mobilization, but led to bridging partnerships with other local entities that have supported continued maintenance of the gardens.

While examples of linking capital can be identified within each FG discussion, such relationships were not always easily or amiably formed, such as in the case of THCG, the garden featured in the third case study. While the bridging capital between THCG initiators and their local partners were essential to the CG’s successful development, it was not until links were finally made with the city government that vital resources such as land tenure and access to water were mobilized. As reported in the case study, #103 said, “Our initial interaction with the city was one in which we were adversaries,” describing the multiple barriers faced when attempting to gain permissions for the CG. Considering the necessity of land and water to any garden, without the linking relationships that were eventually fostered out of the community leaders’ diligent efforts to build rapport with the city officials, THCG would have faced even greater barriers in getting their project launched. According to #108, community leaders “need to understand the layers of government.” Her previous work in policy enabled her to strategically build relationships with officials across an array of departments within the city government, thereby building a wide base of support for the CG which would offer
greater mobilization of a variety of resources. From #108’s perspective, “Understanding your government and your policy makers is very important,” particularly in situations where stark power differentials exist and essential resource mobilization is dependent on governmental support.

#108’s experience and knowledge of local governing systems enabled the THCG to overcome the political barriers impeding development and generate links between the community advocates launching the THCG and the local government officials. The THCG has even helped foster links between other local CGs and the county government by initiating and maintaining a partnership between the county MPO and the local coalition of CGs (see page 148). But not all CGs have access to someone with #108’s political experience, and therefore some FG participants had ongoing challenges in their CGs due to a lack of linking social capital. In some cases the permitting process required for CG site development delayed the implementation of a CG, resulting in some prospective gardeners becoming discouraged and choosing not to invest their time and energy into the development of the CG. As one participant conveyed, when he proposed the notion of building a CG at his church, despite being the pastor and owning the land himself, the political processes involved in developing the CG was far more complicated than he anticipated.

#203: I was wrestling with city codes and so on and so forth. I was like ‘this isn’t rocket science’ …but the city had all of these questions… It took us roughly 8 months because it had to go through the commission as well as some committee that had to vote on it, and the guy from the city had to come out and look at it and actually visualize what we had said we were going to do. Then they finally approved it.

The costs of water bills, liability insurance, and permitting fees were also more burdensome on CGs that lacked linking capital.
It is evident from these findings that the ability for a CG to establish linking social capital with entities of greater power to access resources varies across different city and county jurisdictions in Florida. In the CGs represented by FG3 participants, the local government took a more progressive stance regarding the benefits of supporting the development of a CG program in the city and offered significant support for many projects. In some cases, as seen with #306, the government officials themselves were responsible for proposing the initial idea of a CG to the neighborhood and then ensuring that the residents themselves were involved in all stages of the process. In other CGs, establishing linking relationships was much more difficult and required persistent efforts by the community members to influence the political elites to offer their support. It is also worthy of mention that while this study examined CGs in Florida that are currently operational, the researcher was also told of many CG projects which had failed and no longer existed. Speaking with the members of the MSG featured in the first case study, several participants referenced other CG projects which had previously drawn their interest in other parts of the county, however due to a lack of support and inability to access resources, these CGs had either failed during the development stage or were unable to sustain once launched. Thus, the MSG members recognized the value of the links fostered between the county government and DOH-Manatee because this political clout enabled their garden to succeed while so many other local CGs had not. Considering the MSG is a pilot project for the county government, the successes achieved by the MSG may have strong influence over the nature of the linking social capital that is fostered going forward between these powerful partners and small neighborhood groups seeking CGs.
Contributions to Social Capital Literature

The discourse around social capital theory has grown significantly in recent decades and has become prevalent across a range of academic disciplines. While still there remains no universal definition of social capital which is accepted and applicable to all fields of study, the findings of this research study confirm some of the principles of social capital that are fundamental to the theory. As Glover et al. (2005) stated:

[Social capital] grows by bringing together resources from disparate sources. As a result, networks and network structures represent dimensions of social capital that influence the range of resources that may be accessed. These structures constitute a valuable resource as channels or conduits for resource mobilization. (p. 453)

While this notion that resources become more accessible when individuals expand their social networks lies at the basis of social capital theory, several researchers have criticized the statements like this due to their portrayal of social capital as a relatively simple concept. Considering that social relationships and networks existing between humans are dynamic, simply expanding the number of social connections one has will not ensure adequate resource accessibility or beneficial outcomes for the parties involved. Lin (2011) notes that the temporary nature of some relationships can restrict the quantity of resources mobilized and/or duration of the supply. As portrayed by one FG participant, the relationship between his CG and the city government was based on a short-term land use agreement that provided the land on which the CG was built, yet threatened the longevity of the garden when the city decided to reclaim the property. Other researchers have also recognized that not all social connections provide access to resources that are of sufficient quality or value to produce beneficial outcomes for the parties involved (Portes, 1996). A participant from FG2 described this issue in terms of the minimal benefits that her CG had gained through the process of applying for grants
with UF/IFAS Extension. Although bridging capital did exist between this participant and the UF/IFAS Extension office, the amount of energy and resources that needed to be invested into the process of applying for a grant and then reporting on the deliverables negated the value of the grant funding itself.

Social capital should not be viewed as a static characteristic that defines relationships between individuals, but rather should be viewed as a flexible process that has the ability to ebb and flow. Findings from this research study show that purposeful action can shift the degree of social capital between parties at the bonding, bridging and linking levels. Effective communication internal and external to the garden plays a key role in establishing strong bonds between participants and maintaining bridges and links with external partners. When the planning phase of a CG is held as an inclusive process open to participants and supporting partners, trust and reciprocity can be enhanced because individuals have the space to communicate their visions for the project and describe the resource they have to offer. If the perceived benefits of investing one’s time and resources into the project are deemed desirable and sufficient, it is more likely that the parties will sustain mutual investment in the relationship, thereby keeping the channels for resource mobilization accessible.

However, stimulating initial engagement for such a collaborative process can be complicated, particularly when significant power differentials exist between the community initiating a CG and the entities with the capacity to mobilize essential resources. In cases where initial inclusivity is not fostered, ensuring local buy-in, community participation, supportive partnerships, and political clout pose challenges during the development and maintenance phases of a CG, threatening the successes
achieved and the longevity of the project. Therefore, in efforts to better understand how to improve social capital building within communities, greater focus is being placed on developing tools that can measure the strength of social capital between individuals and within a community (Glover et al., 2005; Lin, 2001; Portes, 1996; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004).

To contribute to this growing body of literature, based on the findings of this research study, the researcher suggests that when devising tools to measure social capital, accounting for the overall mission of a project and/or the intended outcomes of social networking are essential. As depicted in the diversity of CGs examined in this study, the social relationships that contribute to the development of a CG and those that are fostered through participation in the garden are dynamic and variable. The ways in which social capital were depicted in these gardens differed, as did the successes that were able to be achieved. However, without considering the mission statement of a CG when measuring the strength of social capital, small yet significant successes of some of the struggling CGs would likely be overlooked and the steps taken to achieve these successes could be discounted. Because it is well recognized that successful CGs can improve the wellbeing of a community and increase the resilience of marginalized neighborhoods, recognizing the steps taken to achieve small successes in social capital can provide the first steps towards achieving larger scale change.

**Limitations**

The researcher recognizes the limitations of this study. The first limitation is one held in common by all qualitative research studies: the fact that these findings cannot serve as generalizations that are representative of all CGs throughout Florida. The data collected and analyses offered are transferable, but not generalizable. Readers using
this data to gain understanding of the nature of CGs and the processes which impact
the development and longevity of CGs should not assume the outcomes will be
perfectly replicated within the contexts for other CGs. Instead, the findings should serve
as a guide to examining how social capital may exist within other CGs in order to gain
insights on the development and longevity of those projects.

Another limitation was instigated by the lack of data available on existing CGs
throughout the state. Preliminary observations and interviews indicated that significant
variations can be found between CGs across county and/or city lines, particularly
regarding the role local governments play in these projects. In addition, there were
great disparities between the degrees of documentation available on CGs within
different locales, preventing the researcher from knowing the total number of CGs
existing throughout the state or having statistics on the people whom the gardens are
serving. Although each county within the state of Florida does have a partnership with
UF/IFAS Extension and agents are employed in each county, the relationships that local
UF/IFAS Extension agents have with their county’s CG projects vary. This is because
some counties display greater collaboration between UF/IFAS Extension and local CGs.
Therefore, the population examined in this research was not randomly selected, but
rather relied on the snowball method of sampling. In addition, the methods employed in
the data collection phase of this study limited the number of participants able to
contribute their experiences and insights on CGs. The information provided by the
participants reflects their personal experiences and perceptions of CGs, however the
individuals’ reflections may not accurately depict the sentiments of other members of
their respective CGs.
A third limitation was the researcher’s lack of experience conducting FGs. While the PI for this study was able to accompany the researcher during the first FG held in order to observe her performance as the facilitator and provide constructive feedback, the researcher facilitated the subsequent FGs on her own. Recording devices were used to capture the experiences of the participants in their own words, however without a note taker present the researcher also found herself balancing the need to make notes on the body language and environmental factors noticed during the FG discussions while also striving to remain attentive and respectful of the FG participants speaking. The researcher did experience some difficulty with directing the FG participants to stay on topic in their discussions, however in hindsight this ‘limitation’ may also be perceived as a strength. While not all FG questions were able to be asked during the time frame of each FG discussion, other topics were explored which offered valuable insights to the participants lived experiences in their respective CGs. Such insights would have not been gained had a rigid question been adhered to during the FG discussions. It was more important to the researcher to hear the perspectives of the participants and allow them to guide the conversation, however, the researcher also recognizes that this approach caused some time to be lost during the FGs when dialogues became irrelevant. The researcher worked to quickly get the group back on task, but her novice experience hindered her efficiency.

One other potential limitation was the researcher’s personal bias. She is an active member of a CG in Gainesville, FL where she tends a plot of her own and participates in CG workdays. In addition, as noted in the fourth case study of Chapter 4, the researcher also is the current site coordinator for a newly developed CG that serves
a marginalized neighborhood in Gainesville. Personal perceptions of the barriers and benefits experienced by the researcher could bias the findings, however, strategies such as peer debriefing, triangulation, and reflexive note taking have been employed to mitigate this issue. It should also be noted that the researchers’ involvement in local CGs over the past eighteen months, her continued correspondence with a few of the FG participants, and her own passion for the CPCG she now coordinates has helped her to build rapport with her research participants, thereby increasing the authenticity of individuals’ responses and the richness of her findings.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study and the new questions which emerged throughout data collection and analysis, the researcher has identified potential areas for future research which can contribute to the existing literature regarding CGs in Florida.

Environmental Justice Issues

The mission statements of the various CGs, as reported by the respective FG participants, were used to define success for each of the CGs examined in this study. As these mission statements were examined by the researcher and considered in context with the barriers that participants stated as impeding their achieved successes, the researcher noted possible indicators of environmental justice issues within some of the CGs examined in this study. However, due to the constraint of time and the researcher’s focus on the role of social capital within CGs in Florida, these possible indications of environmental justice issues were not further explored or analyzed within the scope of this research study. It is suggested that future researchers take the opportunity to explore this line of inquiry – particularly in regards to food justice issues and gentrification - in order to better understand the prevalence and impacts of such
issues within CGs in Florida. These findings could help researchers and practitioners identify common factors which lead to and/or result from environmental justice issues within CGs as well as identify strategies to mitigate such issues.

**Food Justice** - Approximately half of the CGs examined in this study were located in a food desert neighborhoods, both in rural and in urban areas. One of the main goals of these CGs was to improve residents’ access to fresh, healthy produce for an affordable cost (or free of charge) to improve the health of the neighborhood. While it has been discussed in previous sections that there are examples where local government agencies and affiliated partners have stepped in to offer support and resources for the development and maintenance of the CG, this was certainly not the experience of all FG members tending to CGs in food desert neighborhoods. The dialogue between FG5 participants suggested that the system of resource allocation among neighborhoods in their urban area was inequitable, favoring neighborhoods considered to be historic districts over marginalized neighborhoods. #504 points details this disparity when describing the struggle she faces in her CG versus the support offered to #505’s neighborhood.

I am in a food desert, you know, I really am. And we have very low-income people in my area. The average income over there by me is like $18,000 a year or $20,000. The average income in her area is about $90,000 to $100,000 a year… I have a harder challenge than everybody else at the table because we get absolutely no funding.

The CG represented by #406 and #407 was also located in a food desert but had received no financial or political support for the project. While the site coordinator of this CG was unable to attend the FG and thus asked #406 and #407 to attend on his behalf, the researcher was able to schedule an interview with the coordinator to gain clarity on some of the information presented by these two CG members. During the interview the
site coordinator, the pastor of a neighborhood church, reported that his CG began out of his desire to help offer fresh food to the community, including residents outside the church itself. Initial funding had been provided by a private university located in the county, but without any support offered by the local government, funding had run out and the gardeners themselves were now enduring the costs associated with maintaining the CG. While the site coordinator has proposed projects which could expand upon the CG and help to revitalize the marginalized neighborhood, the lack of support makes the survival of the existing CG questionable.

**Gentrification** – In the case of the THCG, many barriers were faced during the initiation and planning stages of the garden in light of the “adversarial relationship” between the community leaders and the city. It took years for a CG ordinance to be passed and for the community leaders to gain the approvals necessary to begin developing the THCG. However, despite these political constraints, the bonding and bridging social capital fostered via the local investment in the CG has caused THCG to become a source of resilience within the neighborhood.

#108: We have found that our garden has become this Mecca for developing community relationships and bringing people together. That we did not plan that for. That was part of the neighborhood plan overall, but when we started talking about gardens that was not one of the things that we put as a main issue. That has been a surprisingly and delightful part of our garden. You will hear people proudly announce, “Oh I am a part of the garden” and the garden is not restricted to THCG, so we are getting this relationship building all throughout the county and that is awesome.

The social capital fostered in this garden has helped to transform the community, offering numerous programs of residents of all ages, including an entrepreneurial training program for neighborhood teens. However, after years of diligent efforts being invested into the THCG, #103 and #108 are concerned that neighborhood residents
may face displacement due to gentrification. Previous researchers have identified situations where the green space built on behalf of a marginalized neighborhood has resulted in rising property values to the point where local residents are no longer able to afford the cost of living in their homes. These residents were displaced to other low-income neighborhoods where revitalization efforts had not taken place, thereby preventing them from reaping benefit from the green space originally intended for their community (Aptekar, 2015; Wolch et al., 2014). Despite the strong sense of place that many residents have ascribed to THCG, #103 said the neighborhood properties are being viewed more and more as “commodities that are being snatched up everywhere.”

The city – previously resistant to the notion of building a CG – now advertises THCG as one of the local attractions, hoping to entice more visitors to the city.

#108: The irony is that in completing our neighborhood plan [inclusive of the THCG] residents recognized this possibility of displacement and actually included that we did not want gentrification in the plan. But it is happening as we speak today, and aggressively so. Our plan called for a community development corporation that was to help balance the results of growth. Unfortunately, the leaders of the CDC got caught up in all kinds of personal benefits and ended up working against the community’s interest.

After decades of dedication to the community and working tirelessly to improve wellbeing of the neighborhood via numerous projects, the threat of gentrification looms heavily over the THCG coordinators. As #103 and #108 invest their own time and efforts into researching other CGs which have faced issues of gentrification, exploring possible strategies to avoid such issues in THCG and other CGs in Florida, it is the researcher’s hope that similar research will be conducted at the university level to aid the efforts of these dedicated community leaders. As previously mentioned, the researcher believes that future studies should continue to examine the prevalence of
environmental justice issues within CGs in the Florida and their impacts on the development and longevity of the CGs. There is a wide body of literature available on the personal and community benefits which CGs can stimulate, yet limited research exists on the implications of environmental injustices on the outcomes of CGs in Florida. Future researchers could engage participants from failed CG projects, inquiring about the participants’ experiences as members of the CG while it was operational as well as their perspective as to why the garden failed. Using the constant comparative method of grounded theory to analyze these new findings and compare them with the data of this current study, perhaps strategies employed by the more successful CGs examined in this study could provide applicable strategies to help struggling CGs overcome issues of environmental injustice in the future.

**Survey**

Beyond the scope of environmental justice issues, it would also be of great benefit to design a survey that could be distributed to CG members statewide. This instrument would enable data to be collected from a much large sample population, spanning a much broader scope of the state, perhaps providing a more comprehensive perspective of individuals experiences in CG across Florida. Using the findings from this current qualitative study to design the survey questions, researchers can evaluate whether the themes found from the limited sample set of the qualitative study are salient themes which characterize CG members’ experiences statewide. These findings could inform researchers about commonly experienced barriers across CGs in Florida, but would also offer the opportunity for comparative analyses amongst subgroups of the larger population. This data may yield insights regarding where CGs are most successful and what variables are shared in common amongst those successful CGs.
that may be lacking from other less successful CGs. The researcher would suggest that if a survey is to be conducted, careful consideration should be given to how the survey is distributed because differences in age, location, income status, and literacy may impact individuals’ ability to respond, potentially excluding a group of CG members from being included in the analysis and swaying the overall findings. The researcher would also recommend using the similar language within the survey instrument as that which was reported by participants of this current study. The researcher found that her own terminology differed from that of the participants at times and thus, in order to maintain clarity within the discussions, the researcher adapted to the jargon of the participants.

**Comparative Studies**

Another area of future research focus could re-engaged UF/IFAS Extension agents in a subsequent round of interviews or invite small groups of agents to participate in an FG discussion with agents from other counties. Designing a protocol that is framed around the themes which emerged from this current study, the researcher can compare the perspectives of UF/IFAS Extension with those of the garden members themselves in regards to the variables which influence successful development and longevity of a CG. Understanding where perceptions differ between the agents and the gardeners may offer insights about how to better match the needs of the local CGs with the services offered via UF/IFAS Extension.

**Recommendations**

One of the most essential lessons to be gained from this research study is that in order to develop and maintain a successful CG, the social relationships need to be cared for and nourished as much as the plants themselves. UF/IFAS Extension agents and other education-based partners would do well to highlight the importance of building
a strong sense of community, both internally and external to the CG. By providing CG members and/or prospective CG initiators with skills that can be used to foster bonding social capital within their CGs and bridging social capital with external partners, CGs will be better equipped to overcome future barriers via their strengthen social networks. This focus on community building will also benefit UF/IFAS Extension by showcasing the public value that UF/IFAS Extension agents bring to the community, improving productivity of the garden as well as the social connectivity and resilience fostered. UF/IFAS Extension agents specializing in horticulture who do not feel equipped to discuss social dynamics and/or help CG members establish strong teambuilding skills may opt to partner with a community development specialist who can provide such training for CG members.

The findings of this study revealed that CG members strongly value opportunities for social learning, often asking for contact information or networking lists of other CGs in their area to facilitate social learning and collaboration. Often participants stated that a lack of awareness or limited social networks prevented CGs from acquiring beneficial resources for their CGs. UF/IFAS Extension agents should strive to keep an updated list of the CGs existing in their county, inclusive of contact information for the site coordinator. Using this contact list, information should be disseminated regularly regarding workshops, community events, and new resources that could benefit CG members. This will help increase public awareness of the services that UF/IFAS Extension offers to each county and increase resource accessibility for CGs. Also, if permission is granted by the site coordinators of these CGs in their respective counties, UF/IFAS Extension agents can increase inter-garden collaboration by sharing a contact
list among the CG, helping to bridge previously disconnected CGs with one another. Considering the busy schedules of UF/IFAS Extension agents, the ability to utilize well established social networks between CGs as a way to disseminate educational information to multiple CGs will benefit both the gardeners as well as UF/IFAS Extension. Although hands-on learning was recognized by many participants in this study as being the optimal form of education within CGs, time constraints do not permit UF/IFAS Extension agents to provide this hands-on service to all CGs. By encouraging CGs to connect with one another and engage in social learning, the information provided to one CG can more readily be shared with other CGs in the area. Just as the UF/IFAS Extension agent might travel to one garden to offer hands-on advice and practical knowledge, more experienced gardeners who have previously benefited from trainings by UF/IFAS Extension could volunteer as ‘mentors’ to visit other gardens and help share their wealth of knowledge. This system may take place informally in counties where there is already strong inter-garden collaboration, but in some cases a more structured framework – such as the coalition developed THCG in Case Study 1 - may strengthen the collaboration and beneficial outcomes. UF/IFAS Extension agents should promote the idea of group tours and site visits to the various CGs in the county. This would provide an opportunity to establish mutually beneficial partnerships between CGs, increasing the bridging social capital that serves as a network of support for all CGs in the area.

It is also important that the initiators of a CG project, whether it be city officials, community leaders, nonprofit managers or anyone else, ensure that the prospective members of the CG are engaged in the decision making process from the early stage of
planning of a CG. Local buy-in was found to play an essential role in the longevity of
the CGs, both in this study and by previous researchers (Alaimo et al., 2010; Glover,
2004; Mix, 2011; Ohmer et al., 2009). Without community buy-in, participation is likely
to wane and the garden will become neglected. Including all levels of stakeholders in
the development process early on, especially in cases where the CG is not grassroots
initiated, local residents feel more invested in the project and in the relationships
forming the support system for the CG. Stronger partnerships between local
governments and UF/IFAS Extension will enhance the social network and resources
available to CGs. This may also help to increase the CG participants’ ability to establish
positive working relationship with local government officials by providing participants
with opportunities to learn from more experience community leaders. However, in some
cases where a larger power differential separates CG members from entities with
greater power to mobilize resources, UF/IFAS Extension agents may need to offer
trainings focused on capacity building and effective communication for community
members that will help to increase their political clout.

Chapter Summary

Glover’s (2004) statement that “community gardens are less about gardening
than they are about community” (p. 143) characterized much of the findings of this
current study. However, it is not enough to simply view CGs as a singular, isolated
entity where people are connected with one another, but rather as a web of social
networks that rely on partnerships and links in order to achieve successful outcomes.
The theme of togetherness has pervaded throughout this study, describing the mission
of many CGs, the social inclusion and sense of belonging that can result from CGs, and
how social dynamics can influence the successes achieved within a CG. While barriers
such as financial sponsorships and access to tangible resources were discussed as common hindrances to CG success, the underlying causes of these barriers were described as issues of social dynamics. Depending on the status of a neighborhood’s social capital when a CG is being developed, local buy-in from prospective participants as well as external partners may be more or less easily fostered. Socio-political variables which define the context of a given neighborhood can greatly influence the social networks available to a CG, thereby influencing the resources able to be mobilized. In cases where access to resources is limited via the internal social networks of a community, bridging and linking social capital must be developed between the neighborhood residents and external partners.

Recognizing the benefits that CGs can produce for a community is futile without understanding the factors that enable CGs to successfully develop and sustain over time. The factors identified through this research study were organized under the following themes and discussed accordingly: partnerships, politics and funding; education and expertise; community and engagement and sustained participation; and leadership and governance. As CG projects continue to develop across Florida and the world at large, in order for goals such as increasing food security, improving neighborhood morale, reducing urban blight and improving public health, CG stakeholders must understand the importance of building strong social networks internally and externally of the garden gates. While different styles, management structures, and mission statements make each CG a unique entity, all CGs are underscored by social dynamics which need tending to.

#104: I just think that growing things and human beings living together is such a mirror. Growing things struggle with the weeds, they struggle to
come up, sometimes they grow and they are ripe, full and produce. Other
times they are not strong and they may die before they should. And aren't
we like that do? And if you look at what we are doing in the garden, what
we are tending, we are doing that too with each other and the more we
learn to do it organically, the healthier we'll be.
1. What is the best thing about this garden?

2. What aspect of the garden has presented the greatest struggle?

3. How would you characterize the participation in this garden?

4. How is this garden managed / structured?

5. How does this garden contribute to the overall state of the community?
Dear [participant’s name],

My name is Karissa Raymond. As a graduate student at the University of Florida, I am conducting a research study on community gardens throughout the state of Florida. I am very interested in hearing from community garden members and leaders, such as yourselves, regarding your experiences of community gardens. The goal of my research is to examine the benefits, barriers, successes and social connections experienced within community gardens. I have already interviewed several stakeholders and Extension agents across the state regarding their insights; speaking with [Extension agent / CG professional] of ________ County / City, I was informed of your active involvement in ______________ community garden.

I would like to invite you to the focus group taking place on ___[date]___ in __________ County. This will be a forum for you and a few other local community gardeners to share your insights about community gardening with me. There will be 6 such focus groups held in different Florida counties over the next several weeks. Based on the information gleaned from these focus groups, my research team will develop a “best management practices” guide for community gardens. Our goal is to help facilitate effective community garden development and sustainment throughout the state of Florida so others are able to reap the many rewards that these projects have to offer.

Please join us for an open, honest, and respectful discussion about community gardens and pass this message along to other members of your garden who may also be interested in participating.

Location:

Date:

I will facilitate this focus group (small group conversation) by using a series of questions to guide the discussion. Your participation is completely voluntary and you will never be asked to answer any questions against your wishes. The focus group will last between 90 minutes and 2 hours, and will be recorded on an audio player so participants’ responses can be accurately documented. All information shared during the focus group will remain anonymous. All identifying information will be removed and the recordings will be destroyed at the end of the study.

By participating in this research study, you will be offered a space to voice your opinions, concerns, and attitudes regarding a topic that will impact your community. With your passion for community gardening and your desire to help your community, I hope to see you for this focus group.
Please let me know if you are able to attend and if you have any additional questions.

Be well and I look forward to working with you,

Karissa Raymond
Hello everyone, thank you for coming out today to participate in this focus group. My name is Karissa Raymond, I am a graduate student from the University of Florida and this is Dr. Paul Monaghan, a UF professor and researcher, and my mentor. We are both thrilled to be here today. I am focusing my thesis research on examining community gardens in the state of Florida and have gathered a lot of information from previous researchers’ reports and the one-on-one interviews I conducted with many UF/IFAS Extension Agents. By having a conversation with garden members (like this group today) I am able to learn from your lived experiences and gain invaluable insights about the inner workings of community gardens.

I am very grateful for the time that you have taken out of your busy lives to spend with me tonight and because of that, I will do my best to keep our conversation flowing and get you out of here on time. If I redirect the conversation to get back on topic, or if I cut you off from speaking so that we can be sure to hear from all members of the group, please just know this is for the sake of timekeeping and fairness. I will ask that we each take turns speaking and not talk over one another. This conversation will be audio recorded so that after this focus group I can go back and listen to your comments, writing down word for word what you have said so I am sure to accurately capture your thoughts and opinions. Also, I will ask you to speak clearly so that the recorders can pick up your voice. Also, if you are able to, saying your name before you speak will be of great help to me later when I am transcribing so I don’t need to rely as much on voice recognition to remember who says what.

Also, even though this discussion is recorded and I have your names, I never have your names associated with any of the responses in a report. All names and identifying information will be kept anonymous in my reports so to respect your privacy; I hope that each of you will also respect the confidentiality of your fellow group members by not mentioning their names or comments outside of this focus group. It is our hope that with this assurance of anonymity, you will feel comfortable to speak openly and honestly with us tonight, sharing your true experiences, knowing that it is a safe space to do so. And if you do not feel comfortable with a question, remember that your
participation is voluntary and you are never going to be required to speak about something you don’t wish to share. You may also withdraw from this group now, or at any later time if you wish to without any sort of penalty.

One last thing before we get started, I want you all to know how valuable your insights are. When this study is complete and tools / guides are developed out of the findings, you will have each contributed to research that can improve numerous aspects of community gardens / gardening across Florida, including aspects of your own projects.

To get started, I would like to go around the room for this first question and have everyone answer in order. You will state your first name clearly and then answer the questions I am about to pose. This is the only time we will go in order to answer questions like this; all other questions will be a free flowing discussion. So, starting with ________________, please introduce yourself by first name and answer the first question…
APPENDIX D
FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

1. In your own words, please describe what the word “community” makes you think of?

2. Think back to when you first got involved in your community garden. Can you tell us about that process?

3. What is the best part about being involved in this community garden?

4. What do you see as the overall mission of your garden?

5. Were you involved in any other community-based organizations before joining the garden?

6. Have you become more involved in the community since joining the garden?

7. Do you think that your garden is successful?
   Probe: Why do you say that?
   Probe: Can you describe what you mean?

8. How is the garden managed in terms of responsibilities, deciding rules, and organization?
   Probe: How does this work?
   Probe: What might you change?

9. What impact has this community garden had on the larger neighborhood, beyond the boundaries of the garden site?

10. Who do you feel is missing from the garden that you’d like to see involved?
    Probe: How do bring those people in?

11. In what way is the garden supported by local government, partner organizations, other gardens, or experts in the field?
    Probe: Is there any support that you’d like to see that is missing?

12. What kind of struggles do you have in the garden?
    Probe: What are some ideas of how to overcome these struggles?

13. Is there any advice you would offer someone who trying to start a community garden in Florida?
APPENDIX E
FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this focus group. To better inform my research, please take a moment to answer the following questions.

*Note: All names and personal information will be kept anonymous within this study. This information will never be reported in any written document or shown anyone other than the researcher directly involved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of the Community Garden(s) you are involved with:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role (Master Gardener, leader, coordinator, member, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: (City / neighborhood)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # of years of gardening experience?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your garden charge membership or plot-use fees?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A statewide survey will be distributed to community gardeners throughout Florida during the summer 2017.

Would you be willing to take this survey? YES NO

Will you assist with gathering contact information from other members of your community garden? YES NO
REFERENCES


Pastor, M. & Morello-Frosch, R. (2014). Integrating public health and community development to tackle neighborhood distress and promote well-being. *Health Affairs.* 33(11), 1890-1896. doi: 10.1377/hlthaff.2014.0640


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Karissa Raymond was born on December 22nd, 1990 to her parents Ernest and Christine in New Milford, Connecticut. It was through her childhood experiences exploring the woods of Connecticut, climbing trees, walking her dogs, swimming in creeks, and catching frogs that Karissa developed an intrinsic passion for environmental conservation. As a third grader Karissa’s was inspired by the work of Dian Fossey, a primatologist who studied silverback mountain gorillas in the Virunga Mountains, and over the years her admiration for the work of environmental conservationists only deepened. Becoming involved in a local chapter of the Jane Goodall Institute’s Roots & Shoots program, Karissa hoped to share her passion for environmental conservation with others in her community. She graduated from the University of Connecticut Summa Cum Laude with a bachelor’s degree in Environmental Studies in 2014, eager to pursue a career that would further fuel her passion as an environmentalist, yet was uncertain what that career choice should be.

It is through her time at the University of Florida that Karissa has acquired the skills and understandings necessary to serve as a practitioner within the field of sustainable development. Integrating the knowledge she gained via her minor in anthropology and her personal experiences connecting with a diverse group of people, Karissa believes that in order to achieve a healthy, sustainable world for all, we need to respect and equitably balance the human rights need, cultural relativism, natural resource conservation, and practices of sustainable development. Karissa plans to carry this perspective and passion into her future work, regardless of the title of her position.
In her free time Karissa thoroughly enjoys being outside, especially in forests, walking through the density of the trees and soaking in the sounds, smells, and beauty of the lush green all around her. She also enjoys spending time in her community garden, connecting with the fellow gardeners, getting her hands dirty, and harvesting the vegetables she has grown. Karissa finds a sense of peace when she is able to quiet her mind from the chaos of everyday life and is able to sense and experience the natural world around her. She hopes to help others find a similar sense of peace through her future works.