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A Web of Connections: The Role of Social Capital and Trust in the Formation of Virtual Organizations

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Oral Presentation O12.3

**A WEB OF CONNECTIONS: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL AND TRUST IN THE
FORMATION OF VIRTUAL ORGANIZATIONS**

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Many community based agencies engage in collaboration in order to solve community problems no one organization can accomplish on its own. One such form of collaboration is the virtual organization. A virtual organization is an organization that relies on multi-party, co-operative agreements between structural, temporal, and sometimes geographic boundaries. Looking narrowly at virtual organizations on the community level is one approach which allows for better understanding of why and how community based collaboration takes place. The objective of this research is to examine the extent to which virtual organizations are utilized by community agencies while simultaneously understanding the role both social capital and trust play in the formation of these organizations. By surveying human service agencies in Bloomington-Normal, IL, both qualitative and quantitative data was collected on virtual organizations that exist in this community. Both social capital and trust appear to be two of the driving forces in the formation of virtual organizations across social service agencies. This research seeks to better understand virtual organizations as well as the associated successes and failures.