

**THIS ONE'S FOR THE CHILDREN:
COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP IN A RURAL APPALACHIAN
COMMUNITY**

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by

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ABSTRACT

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The current research is an ethnographic case study of one collaborative community group that worked toward solving complex problems related to early care and education in their community. The methods used consisted of conducting in-depth interviews and observations, recording and transcribing group meetings, and collecting documents that furthered understanding of the group. The research questions addressed were related to the nature of the relationships among the members, leadership enactment in the group, and how they created positive outcomes and overcame obstacles they faced. Several themes emerged related to each question, confirming and extending current understanding of collaboration and collaborative leadership. Special attention was paid to the role of the coordinator of the group. This study has many implications for future research on collaboration, leadership, cultural studies, gender, motivation, decision-making and problem solving, and many other issues related to group dynamics.

DEDICATION

To Mom and Dad,
for always encouraging me
to do my best
and letting my best be
good enough.

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This thesis would not have been possible without God and His Son, Jesus Christ. His faithfulness and wisdom made the impossible possible. Thank you for Your boundless grace and Your infinite wisdom. May this work bring You glory.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction and Literature Review

Introduction

Spearheaded by the work of psychologist Kurt Lewin and his colleagues in the late 1930s, group dynamics has been the interest of scholars in many fields. This interest did wane for a time, primarily in the late 1950s and early 1960s, giving way to a focus on the individual, yet resurging in the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Interest has continued to grow since then. Because of the multidisciplinary contributions to this field, Johnson and Johnson (1997) say that, “the field of group dynamics . . . is the common property of all the social sciences” (p. 37). Certainly, communication scholars are no exception. They have contributed a great deal to our current understanding of group dynamics and continue to do so.

Especially relevant to research in this area is Lewin’s term “action research.” “The research needed for social practice . . . is a type of action-research, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social actions, and research leading to social action” (Lewin, 1948, p. 203). The current research is an effort to respond to Lewin’s urging for researchers to seek understanding and develop theories that can be applied to important social problems. In this chapter, I will discuss the importance of communication scholarship in understanding community collaboration. Following this, I will discuss leadership in groups and how it pertains to community collaboration. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of how the current research is an effort to advance knowledge of communication and leadership in community collaboration in the spirit of Kurt Lewin’s research philosophy.

A Communication Approach to Collaboration

Characteristics of a Collaborative Group

According to Hackman and Johnson's (2000) survey of small group communication texts, four of the primary characteristics that define groups are: a common purpose or goal, interdependence, mutual influence, and face-to-face communication. Certainly, these characteristics pertain to collaborative groups as well. In the case of community collaboration, the group has formed to solve a particular social problem and recognize that they need to work together to solve the problem. Based on Kurt Lewin's work developing social interdependence theory, interdependence is the essence of the group. It is created by common goals (Lewin, 1935). The success of each member of the group depends upon everyone doing his or her part.

Morton Deutsch's work with social interdependence theory contributes greatly to our understanding of this phenomenon. The central idea of this theory is that different types of interdependence determine how individuals interact with one another (see Deutsch, 1949, 1962; Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Thus, in order to study community collaboration, it is important to understand what type of interdependence might exist in such groups. Four types of interdependence include: pure cooperation, pure competition, independence, and mixed motive. Perhaps most like the climate of a community collaborative effort is the mixed motive type. Pure cooperation implies that each member achieving his or her goals improves the chances of the other members achieving their goals as well. According to Chrislip and Larson (1994), the stakeholders coming together in a community collaborative effort often come to the table with relationships characterized by mistrust and skepticism, perhaps even with the perception that they are

in competition. Thus, while pure cooperation may be the goal and even the result of collaboration, it seems it would rarely be the case for such groups to start with this type of interdependence. Pure competition is a situation in which one member's success usually means another's failure. This competition may be part of the mistrust with which collaborative members come to the table. However, if they believed the situation would be purely competitive, they would have no reason to engage in collaboration at all. Further, if the goal structure were independent, members would have no reason to engage either because their outcomes are not related to the others' behaviors. Mixed-motive, on the other hand, is a type of goal structure in which some of the outcomes encourage competition while others encourage cooperation (see Deutsch, 1949, 1962; Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Given that members of these groups often belong to organizations with a reputation of competition, the competitive nature of this type of interdependence makes sense. Given that they perceive common goals that can be met through collaboration, the cooperative nature of mixed-motive interdependence makes sense as well.

Mutual influence, the third characteristic of groups according to Hackman and Johnson (2000), simply means that each member is affected by the behavior of every other member. They influence one another through face-to-face communication. Their interdependence is shaped by their communication. Their goal structures are shaped by communication. It stands to reason, then, that studying their communication can reveal a great deal about the nature of the group itself.

Community Collaboration

In light of a growing trend toward community collaboration, it is important that real collaborative efforts be studied in order to add to the growing body of knowledge of

this phenomenon. Community collaboration encompasses so many facets of society that a multidisciplinary approach is needed. Communication scholars have much to add to this process. Group process, including collaboration, leadership and the key issues involved such as developing trust, decision-making and problem-solving are all areas in which communication scholars have great interest. As discussed above, collaboration is a communicative process and its success or failure is in large part due to the nature of the communication that takes place in such groups. That this communication can actually be a vehicle for building social capital which increases the capacity of a community to identify and solve the problems they uniquely encounter in a day and age when current methods are not working makes a strong case for the significance of studying that communication (see Falk & Kilpatrick, 1999; Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001).

Lawrence, et al. (1999), who studied the fabric of collaborative relationships in the Pacific Northwest whale-watching industry, explored the discursive foundations of collaborative relationships. More specifically, they wanted to discover the antecedents to, the dynamics of, and the outcomes of collaboration and believed that a common social process underlies each, namely a communicative process. They argue that a discursive understanding of collaboration can be beneficial to understanding the dynamics of collaboration as well as the relation of collaboration to its broader institutional context and the management and facilitation of collaborative activity as a communicative process. Collaboration is a communicative process, and emphasizing this aspect allowed them to understand collaboration as being socially constructed through communication.

This view of collaboration reflects a social constructionist view of communication and interaction (Littlejohn, 1999).

If collaboration is socially constructed in interaction among members of a collaborative group, an implication exists that the communication that occurs between members serves to shape the nature of the collaboration. Changing the discourse that underlies the conception of an appropriate collaborative relationship may affect how it is accomplished. After all, the very definition of collaboration is socially constructed. If members, for example, understand collaboration to require trust, respect, and a focus on group vision, then the collaboration among them is likely to reflect that. Through interaction, members work to manage understanding of the issues involved. Collaboration would not even be occurring if they did not share the understanding that the issue they are dealing with is problematic. This understanding provides a foundation for collaboration, the process of socially constructing specific aspects of the issue and possible solutions. Studying collaboration from a communication perspective implies that communication plays an active role in constructing social reality (Lawrence et al., 1999). This clear connection to communication research makes this an appropriate area of study for scholars in the field.

Leadership in Groups

Leadership of community collaboratives is often not leadership in any traditional sense. Traditional leadership is more hierarchical and position centered (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Rubin, 1998; Felkins, 1995). Collaborative leadership is people-oriented and democratic in nature. Leadership within such groups is shared when and as appropriate (Taylor-Powell et al., 1998). It demonstrates a move from the top-down

power distribution to empowerment through cooperation, teamwork and collaboration (Felkins, 1995). In the following pages, I will discuss leadership various typologies of leadership followed by current understanding of collaborative leadership.

Current Leadership Typologies

Leadership literature reveals many typologies of leadership, several of which are worth considering in order to more clearly understand the nature of collaborative leadership. First is transactional leadership. Transactional leadership is much like management. The central focus is on basic needs (Burns, 1978) and maintaining the status quo (Bass, 1985). Managers of department stores and food service are likely to be transactional leaders.

Transformational leaders, on the other hand, share some of the properties of collaborative leaders. They aim to “engage the total person” and build trust and respect among members. Empowerment is one of the key characteristics of transformational leadership (Hackman & Johnson, 2000; see also Burns, 1978) and collaborative leadership (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). Leaders and followers in a transforming leadership relationship serve to raise each others’ levels of motivation and morality (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). The same often occurs in collaboration. In both, followers often become leaders themselves.

A third type of leadership is that of the servant leader based on the work of Robert Greenleaf (1977). These leaders seek to meet the needs of others and the broader needs of society. Like collaborative leaders, they must envision new ways of moving forward that will meet the needs of all the stakeholders and must accept them as peers. The purpose of

the collaborative leader is to be a servant, to help stakeholders do their work (Chrislip & Larson, 1994).

Some dispute exists in the literature as to whether leadership is a position or a process. Traditionally, leadership has been considered a position occupied by a person. A less traditional, more complex view of leadership is that leadership is a process. This view is a complex one, especially in comparison to the simpler, more traditional positional view. Leadership occurs as a result of communication within the group emerges in that interaction. In this sense, it is a group phenomenon and is subject to the interdependence among the parties involved (Drecksel, 1991).

In keeping with the nontraditional, process view of leadership is the notion of “emergent leadership” adopted by researchers at the University of Minnesota and spearheaded by Ernest Bormann. In this view of group leadership, leader status emerges through communication. The method of residues, or process of elimination, is how the group selects its leader (Bormann & Bormann, 1976; see also Sharf, 1978). According to Hackman and Johnson (2000), the primary weakness of this approach is that only one person emerges as a leader.

Collaborative leadership involves shared leadership and so differs from emergent leadership. However, the two are similar in that both adopt a process view of leadership. In collaborative leadership, direction is not established by a positional leader, but through the collaborative interaction of the stakeholders. They are motivated and inspired not by a positional leader, but by their belief in the process and their relationships to one another. Further, leadership does not reside in one person, but rather is shared among several

people who facilitate the constructive interaction of the network (Chrislip & Larson, 1994).

Collaborative leadership is “the skillful and mission-oriented management of relevant interinstitutional relationships” (Rubin, 1998, p. xvii). The collaborative leader helps build and maintain both interpersonal and interinstitutional relationships among stakeholders. They reside in the business or professional community they are trying to build. Experts who come in from the outside to help with the process, such as the trainers from the National Civic League who came to help create a climate of dialogue in the community Zoller (2000) studied, are called facilitators and Rubin (1998) describes the various members of the collaborative who do not perform in the leadership capacity as partners. Effective collaborative leaders work to keep the collaborative moving forward and find ways to engage each partner by connecting his or her work within the collaboration to that partner’s individual self interests (Rubin, 1998). The primary role of the collaborative leader seems to be one of relationship building and relationship maintenance.

Leadership styles can partially be categorized by a social-orientation and a task-orientation. Bales Interaction Process Analysis is based on this notion (Bales, 1951). Collaborative and other, more traditional types of leaders share the role of visionary and perform tasks that serve to carry out vision within the group, but they differ in their social- versus task-orientation. More traditional leaders base their leadership upon a vision or solution for a specific issue. For example, if the problem were homelessness in the downtown area of a city, this leader’s primary focus would be on carrying out the vision of the group for dealing with this problem. The collaborative leader, on the other

hand, is visionary about how people can work together constructively. His or her primary role is to promote and safeguard the process. In the example above, this leader would concentrate on setting the stage for the group to constructively develop their vision for dealing with homelessness. The underlying premise is that “the only consensus that really matters is that of the people who live there” (Chrislip & Larson, 1994, p. 146). In short, the traditional leader’s performance is more task-oriented while the collaborative leader’s performance is more social- or relationship-oriented (Bales, 1951). Chrislip and Larson summarize the nature of collaborative leadership as follows:

Collaborative leaders challenge the way things are being done by bringing new approaches to complex public issues when nothing else is working. They convince others that something can be done by working together. They empower people by engaging them on issues of shared concern and helping them achieve results by working together constructively. Their credibility comes from the congruence of their beliefs with their actions . . . They recognize that their ability to get things done must come from respect, since they have no formal authority. They keep people at the table through difficult and frustrating times by achieving results with other approaches. They “encourage the heart” by helping to create and celebrate successes along the way to sustain hope and participation. (1994, p. 145)

Collaborative Leadership

Current research on community collaboration has revealed several characteristics of collaborative leadership. As a result their research, Chrislip and Larson (1994) have formulated a premise of collaborative leadership: “If you can bring the appropriate people

together in constructive ways with good information, they will come up with good responses and get results” (p. 160). Similar to this notion is Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh and Vidal’s (2001) implicit theory of community capacity building, that “effective communities are distinguished by strong leaders, strong institutions, and strong networks among them that can, working individually or together, get things done” (p. 5). In both, there is a sense of the need for strong relationships within the community. Following will be a discussion of some of the themes that have emerged in the literature regarding collaborative leadership, including the role of vision, trust, stakeholders, and the focus on process.

Vision. Most theories of leadership would agree that vision plays a central role. According to Rodd (1998), “The vision provides direction for and sustains action in the team, can boost morale and self-esteem and act as a buffer against stress during periods of change” (p. 24). Every successful collaborative that Chrislip and Larson (1994) studied demonstrated a shift to broader concerns, to their shared vision. They moved beyond their own personal interests and worked toward group ends.

Trust. Trust has emerged as a central theme in the literature related to collaborative leadership. Taylor-Powell et al. (1998) call it an essential ingredient of moving beyond an individual to a group vision. The collaborative environment should be a respectful, task-oriented, supportive environment in which trust is a necessary but not sufficient characteristic of the climate. According to Chrislip and Larson (1994), an open and trusting climate is essential and must be developed. It takes time, but it must be built into the process because stakeholders often enter the collaborative mistrustful of one another, especially in broad-based initiatives.

“Trust is both a product of and a necessary condition for effective constructive communication” (Murphy, 1995, p. 81). The very process of collaboration is effective in building trust among stakeholders. Chrislip and Larson (1994) recommend that members engage in “informal exploring” in order to build trust. Many times, especially since community collaboration is often called upon to deal with complex social problems, “turfism” abounds and developing trust requires getting to know one another and finding common ground. Members must learn to see individuals as people, then they can engage in dialogue. Eberly (2000) cites Francis Fukuyama’s (1995) conclusion that “societies with strong bonds of social trust and collaboration will gain important advantages over those characterized by individual isolation and social fragmentation” (p. 18). Such bonds serve as a “lubricant of transactions,” and “glue that secures the bonds of human interaction.” These ongoing relationships can help to temper the negative effects members bring in to the group that might otherwise hinder cooperation (Lawrence et al., 1999).

Stakeholders. Another important aspect of collaboration is the inclusion of stakeholders. Chaskin et al. (1995) argue that diverse stakeholders with distinct interests and roles are required in order to build community capacity. Interest is important in considering who the stakeholders truly are. When others perceive a potential stakeholder to have a true interest at stake, then that person should be considered a stakeholder and included in the process (Lawrence et al., 1999). This requires the definition of stakeholders to be opened up beyond concerns of money, power, and position (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). With an expanded definition, stakeholders become many and varied, bringing diversity to the group. Chrislip & Larson (1994) see this as a benefit in that

“differing perspectives enhance the wisdom brought to problem-solving efforts and the possibilities for real change. Expanding the pool of stakeholders can help overcome some of the obstacles that make leadership difficult by creating a broader power base” (p. 66).

Citizen involvement is important in community collaboration. Citizens have felt increasingly disconnected from the political process in the late 1970's, 1980's and into the 1990's. Yet, as they have been excluded from the process, the problems facing the United States today increasingly call for their involvement (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). This is one reason it is important to bring representatives of the target group into the process (Taylor-Powell et al., 1998).

Focus on Process. A defining characteristic of collaborative leadership is its emphasis on process. In fact, according to Chrislip and Larson (1994), the primary role of the collaborative leaders is to promote and safeguard the collaborative process. Prudence Brown, a researcher at Chapin Hall, captures the essence of it by saying, “It’s not what is done, but what we learn about what is done that’s important” (Chapin Hall, 2001). The problems communities face require collaborators to “live into the answer.” They learn by experimenting. A major goal of evaluation efforts centers around producing a detailed portrait of the unique struggles and tensions born of communities (Chapin Hall, 2001). It is not enough to emphasize the outcomes of these efforts, as funders and public decision-makers have for so many years, because the outcomes are dependent upon the process itself. Unless you understand the process by which those outcomes were achieved, you do not really understand the collaboration (Taylor-Powell et al., 1998, p. 82).

Collaboratives are dynamic and flexible. They change as they develop. Understanding this process is the key to understanding the collaboration (Taylor-Powell

et al., 1998). In Chapin Hall's evaluation of the Neighborhood and Family Initiative (NFI), process was strongly emphasized. They were looking at how the wide range of stakeholders collaborate. More specifically, they were seeking to understand how each site handled the autonomy and freedom that are essential components of the initiative and the steps neighborhoods were taking to provide long-lasting outcomes of their efforts (Chapin Hall, 2001).

While collaboration is generally viewed as a worthwhile process, it is a long one. However, the communication that occurs within this process is not only a means to an end, but it is an end in itself. The very process of collaborating serves to build trust and increase the capacity of a community to handle the problems they encounter, although, not all members of any community will likely see it from this perspective. Zoller (2000) reports from her study of one collaborative initiative that efforts to encourage dialogue were met with strong resistance. Some participants viewed it as delaying action and an impediment to change.

This strong focus on process that has emerged in the research on collaborative groups provides a strong case for the use of qualitative methods in the current research. The focus of qualitative methodology is not in outcomes, but process. It is not in generalizations, but in uncovering the complexities of individual situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). In their research, Chaskin et al. (2001) looked at nuances of approach, process and context. It is in understanding such details of actual collaborative initiatives that one begins to understand the nature of collaboration.

Value of the Current Research

Kurt Lewin was keenly aware of the need for close cooperation between theory and practice. He believed this cooperation could be accomplished “if the theorist does not look toward applied problems with highbrow aversion or with a fear of social problems, and if the applied psychologist realizes that there is nothing so practical as a good theory” (Lewin, 1951, p. 169). He believed that the interests of the theorist and the practitioner could not be separated and that each should work with the other to solve social problems and that “research that produces nothing but books will not suffice” (Lewin, 1951, p. 203). Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss the potential value of the current research to solve social problems by discussing the move toward individualism in American society as well as the problems that move has caused in the current civic climate. Next, I will discuss the role collaboration plays in solving those problems followed by the current move toward community collaboration.

Problem of Individualism

Alexis de Toqueville can be considered the “theoretical godfather of civil society” (Eberly, 2000, p. 6). According to the French political theorist, the United States was dotted with civic associations of all kinds: religious, moral, charity, etc. Such associations formed the foundation of the American democratic system. In them, individuals were woven into the fabric of larger society and were bound together by common purposes that extended well beyond their own personal interests. What de Tocqueville most admired was those associations that were founded voluntarily out of a desire to work together toward a common purpose. The by-product of this process was the development of collaboration skills and trust (Eberly, 2000).

Until recently, de Tocqueville's observations of American civil society were not realized as they had been in his day. The "rugged individualism" that Americans value has taken its toll on our society (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). Because of it, there is a lack of meaningful dialogue in our communities (Zoller, 2000). Among the current deficiencies it has caused are "loss of community, declining social trust, a preoccupation with rights and entitlements, and an increased assertion of individual will without regard for the common good" (Eberly, 2000, p. 11). According to Stanley Eitzen, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, Colorado State University, American society is becoming increasingly fragmented. Among the indicators for this fragmentation are excessive individualism and heightened personal isolation (2000). The community spirit observed and admired by de Tocqueville is no longer characteristic of the American civic climate.

Americans have in many ways become less interested in the common good and more so in self-interest. Chrislip and Larson (1994) claim that this is one of the most pervasive and influential threads that runs through U.S. culture:

Glorified by Benjamin Franklin, romanticized by Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, criticized by Alexis de Toqueville, the successful, self-reliant individual became an indelible part of the American character. The institutions and laws of the United States codified it. The geography and opportunity supported it. And for a time, though some were left behind, the United States thrived. When there were jobs to be had, space to move to, and few challenges from minority interests, there was little need for a larger view of U.S. culture. (p. 25)

The problems our nation faces today require a larger view of U.S. culture. Problems such as violence, poverty, health care, and education are entirely too complex to be solved with this current focus on individualism. They require us to face each other and to develop a sense of caring and responsibility. They require a focus on community and the common good such as that observed and admired by de Tocqueville. They require collaboration.

According to Harry Rubin, founder and president of the Institute for Collaborative Leadership, the current system is not working and it is time to try something different (1998). Rubin argues that citizens and leaders must look beyond personal gain and seek the common good. We must engage rather than separate, face one another rather than turn our backs, collaborate rather than compete. We must see that we are all in this together and put forth the energy to deal with the complex problems that plague our nation.

Role of Collaboration in Solving Complex Problems

The problems facing our nation today are complex. Chrislip and Larson (1994) borrow a typology of problems from Ronald Heifetz and Riley Sinder (1988). Type I problems are the simplest problems. They are easy to define and easy to fix. Simply calling upon an expert is usually enough. They describe a broken leg as a Type I problem. It is easy to diagnose and easy to treat by an expert. Type II problems are also clearly defined, however, simply calling in an expert is not enough. Some action on the part of those affected is necessary. For example, if a patient has heart problems, they are not difficult to define, however, the solution does not rest fully on the doctor. He or she can certainly treat the problem in certain ways, but the patient must also cooperate with certain lifestyle changes in order for the fullness of the solution to be realized. Type III

problems are the most complex. The key difference between Type II and Type III problems is in the definition of the problem. While Type II problems are easy to define, Type III problems are not. For example, in our society, most agree that violence in inner-city schools is a problem, but there is little agreement as to what exactly that problem is. John Devine (1996) spent ten years in the halls of inner-city schools trying to understand it. Until complex problems are defined, effective solutions cannot be found or implemented.

Many of the problems facing America today are Type II and Type III problems. These are problems that are too complex for unilateral action and independent actors (Rubin, 1998). Defining them requires the cooperation of many constituents or stakeholders. Creating and implementing solutions based on those definitions requires the same (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). These are interrelated issues requiring expertise in various fields. They are interconnected and interdependent. They are singular in focus (Pew, 2001).

Collaboration is important in all sectors of society, from business to health care to child and family services. Of particular interest to the current research is the importance of collaborative leadership to the field of education. Rubin (1998) argues that building relationships between schools and the institutions that surround them is essential for the success and viability of both the schools and the community. With relationships at the very core of the notion of collaborative leadership, such an approach is clearly appropriate in this field.

Chrislip and Larson (1994) discuss problems with current educational reform efforts that could best be solved through collaborative efforts. They claim that more

public desire for change and less institutional will to change exist in this issue than any other issue. Part of the reason for this is the complexity of the issues involved. Problems are great and the need for change runs deep. Additionally, reformers often focus on their own ideas rather than collaboratively defined ideas only to find their ideas blocked from implementation by other reformers or stakeholders. Those reform efforts that do pass the legislative barrier are faced with resistance in the school systems and little attention is given to their implementation. In order for real changes to occur, parents, teachers, students, principals, higher education institutions, and community members must join together.

Leadership in early education tends to be a collaborative effort as is. Jillian Rodd (1999), an educational and developmental psychologist and lecturer in the Rolle School of Education at the University of Plymouth says that “leadership in the early childhood field appears to be more a result of groups of people who work together to influence and inspire each other rather than the efforts of one single person who focuses on getting the job done” (p. 4). Rodd claims that a group consisting of people from multiple professions who are joined in a common purpose can speak with more weight and command more respect from decision-makers than any one organization could do alone. This is especially important for the early childhood field since early childhood services are constantly under threat of closure, restriction and withdrawal of funding. The group depends on its members participating in public leadership, or advocacy, in order to combat these problems. Formal and informal networks among stakeholders strengthen such efforts.

Age of Collaboration

Individuals in many U.S. communities are beginning to realize the need for collaboration. This realization is emerging as a result of the problems caused by the individualistic and fragmented state of American society today. Collaboration is a growing trend in American communities. According to Ellen Taylor-Powell, Evaluation Specialist at the University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension, “Collaboration is widely heralded as a mechanism for leveraging resources, dealing with scarcities, eliminating duplication, capitalizing on individual strengths, and building capacities” (Taylor Powell, 1999, p. 6). In fact, Harry Rubin (1998) says we are entering an “age of collaboration”.

This era demands of its practitioners interinstitutional organizing (dependent upon the interpersonal skills needed to build and sustain effective relationships) and principled institutional leadership (wherein the principles of sound management are firmly in place before one organization reaches out to partner with another). (Rubin, 1998, p. 10)

Indeed, in this day and age, collaboration is on the rise. Simply type “collaborative leadership” on any Internet search engine and countless sites will appear. The Pew Partnership, an organization funded by The Pew Charitable Trust and administered by the University of Richmond, is one such site. It is a civic research organization that “explores how innovative partnerships, citizen participation, and accessible technology catalyze civic solutions” (Pew, 2001). The organization houses three initiatives: Wanted: Solutions for America, the Pew Civic Entrepreneur Initiative, and the Civic Change Project. Following are a few examples of the collaborative efforts with which they are associated:

1. Growing into Life – A Healthy Community Collaborative – Aiken, SC
2. Step by Step, Inc. – Helping Children Achieve their Dreams – Big Ugly Creek (Harts), WV
3. Boston Main Streets – Boston, MA
4. My Turn, Inc. – Brockton, MA
5. Neighborhood Transportation Service – Cedar Rapids, IA
6. Cincinnati Youth Collaborative – Cincinnati, OH
7. Kentucky River Foothills Development Council, Inc. – Women in Highway Construction – Richmond, KY

A similar organization is the Chapin Hall Center for Children, part of the University of Chicago. One of the central premises of the Chapin Center is that it is the responsibility of society to attend to the needs of children and that doing so serves the interest of the larger society. They focus their research in two major areas: 1) what is currently being done? and 2) what other approaches might help to fulfill society's responsibility to children? Chapin Hall has evaluated numerous collaborative initiatives. An example is one launched by the Ford Foundation entitled the Neighborhood and Family Initiative (NFI). This is an ongoing project with sites in Detroit, Memphis, Hartford, and Milwaukee. NFI takes a holistic approach to community problems, recognizing the complexities each situation holds. Each community focuses on using their unique capabilities to reshape the whole environment, which requires the collaboration of many and varied stakeholders (Chapin Hall, 2001).

David Chrislip and Carl Larson's research (1994) is one of the seminal works in this new wave of research. Their purpose was to discover the keys to successful

collaboration and the principles of leadership that sustain it. In order to do so, they studied a number of cases that were generally deemed successful. Six received in-depth analyses and forty-six others were studied less in-depth, totaling fifty-two cases. The six primary cases included the Phoenix Futures Forum, the Baltimore Commonwealth, the Newark Collaboration Group, Citizens for Denver's Future, Roanoke Vision, and the American Leadership Forum. The forty-six additional cases were primarily based in urban areas and included the Greater Cleveland Roundtable Racial Unity Program in Cleveland, Ohio, the Boise Clean Air Program in Boise, Idaho, the Culture of Poverty Think Tank in Shelby County, Tennessee, the Gaithersburg Homeless Program in Gaithersburg, Maryland, and Bellevue Against Drugs in Macon, Georgia.

Many other examples of efforts to foster collaboration in communities exist. The Antioch New England Graduate School has the Collaborative Leadership Program in place. The entire program is devoted to training people in collaborative leadership and is designed to help stakeholders in Waldorf schools, teachers, parents, administrative personnel, and board members, achieve a social and organizational ideal, fostering relationships among them (Waldorph, 2001). Rubin (1998) cites several examples of collaborative efforts as well. He names two programs as bringing school-community collaboration to national awareness: *Communities in Schools* and Colin Powell's *America First*. The Anne E. Casey Foundation has provided leadership on a national scale as well. It does so by funding research and programs that foster the involvement of many facets of the community, including local parks, libraries, and social services, in collaborative planning, budgeting, and service provision with schools. Emphasis is placed on the spirit of the old African maxim, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." On a

smaller scale, Project LEARN in Los Angeles, California has broadened the base of support for principals and teachers by building a sustainable community coalition. It seems America may be entering an “Age of Collaboration” which could paint a more hopeful picture of the American civic climate than that painted by Dr. Stanley Eitzen.

Currently, a new wave of research is being conducted of collaborative groups as they begin to emerge in American society. The facilitative group techniques of community collaboration are helping to maximize organizational resources to meet the challenges of change within the complex systems of our society (Lawrence, Phillips & Hardy, 1999). “The true value of collaboration lies in the development of relationship capacities, new ways of working, and the sharing of resources” (Taylor-Powell, Rossing & Geran, 1998, p. 81). The purpose of the current research is to add to the growing body of knowledge about community collaboration in the spirit of Kurt Lewin in order to produce research that leads to social action (Lewin, 1948, p. 203) To do so, the following questions that emerge from the review of the literature will be considered:

RQ1: What is the nature of the relationships among the members?

RQ2: How is leadership enacted in this group?

RQ3: How do they create positive outcomes and overcome obstacles they face?

CHAPTER 2

Methods

The workings of collaborative groups are complex, with webs of interrelated formal and informal networks. Making sense of the problems, relationships, communication, and the general functioning of a collaborative group requires an in-depth and inductive form of inquiry. Three questions have been listed for the current research:

- 1) What is the nature of the relationships among the members of the collaborative group?
- 2) How do they create positive outcomes and overcome the obstacles they face?
- 3) How is leadership enacted in the group?

Answering these questions requires a close and detailed study of the group. Thick description and attention to detail are required in order to uncover the complexities involved in answering these questions. Qualitative methods, like collaboration, are process-oriented, yielding an opportunity to focus on the process of collaboration and identifying factors related to it rather than choosing prenegotiated concepts and measuring for them. Hence, qualitative methods were most appropriate for the current research.

Further, collaborative processes are deeply embedded in their context and qualitative methods are useful in dealing with context (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Communication occurs within particular contexts, so understanding collaboration as a communicative process requires careful attention to the role of context (Lawrence et al., 1999). The questions that must be asked in order to understand community collaboration require these methods to be answered and, although it is very contextual in nature, the insights derived from the experiences of this group may further our understanding of what can happen as people attempt to collaboratively address problems in their

communities, both the positive and the negative (Zoller, 2000). Further, while the context of collaboration is unique to the community and the group in which it occurs, the skills and social processes that underlie collaboration are constant (Lawrence et al., 1999; Rubin, 1998).

Qualitative methods are also the most commonly employed in research on collaboration. Examples include the American Leadership Forum's Collaborative Leadership in Action Initiative, the Chapin Hall Center for Children, and the Pew Partnership. Most other evaluative endeavors of this sort have primarily utilized qualitative methods as well, such as studies conducted by Chrislip and Larson (1994), Lawrence, et al. (1999) and Zoller (2000).

Internal and external validity are common concerns related to this type of research. Concerns related to internal validity were considered in the current research. One concern is related to the congruency of the findings with reality. In other words, I addressed the concern as to whether the observations, analysis, and conclusions accurately represented those of the participants in the study. Following Merriam's (1995) suggestions, I used two strategies for addressing this. First, throughout the findings of this study, data-samples are provided, allowing the reader to determine whether he or she would draw similar conclusions. A second strategy proposed by Merriam (1995) is triangulation. Triangulation improves the internal validity of this study through collecting and analyzing different types of data. Interviews providing the participants' perspectives, observations providing my perspective as a third party investigator, and documents providing an arguably objective perspective were all considered throughout data collection and analysis. Each provided a check of the others, increasing the

trustworthiness of the findings. Further, a trusting and open rapport was developed with the participants in the study, which gave me the opportunity to see some things that occurred “behind the scenes” rather than always being faced with a front.

Another concern related to internal validity is that of researcher bias and subjectivity. The methods employed provide a check for this as well. Following Bogdan and Biklen (1998), I utilized several strategies for addressing this concern in the current research. First, time spent in the field serves to make the findings more internally valid. I spent approximately six months in the field, so it is not based merely on first impressions. Second, Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggest that a descriptive rather than evaluative goal increases the internal validity of the study. My goal for this study was to add to knowledge, not to pass judgment on the issues involved. Having this goal helps to keep any bias in check. Finally, I followed Bogdan and Biklen’s (1998) suggestion to guard against them by recording them and having a peer review those notes. Also, various reflective comments were recorded throughout the data collection process in order to provide a check for this concern.

Concerns related to external validity were considered in the current research. I do not claim that others cases are like this one. However, three conceptualizations of external validity identified by Merriam (1995) address these concerns. First is the concept of concrete universals, which states that universals are discovered in the particular so understanding this particular case may lead to universal claims. Second, the findings of this study can be considered working hypotheses, which future studies will serve to confirm or disconfirm. The third conceptualization is that of user generalizability, that it is up to the consumer of the research to determine whether it is externally valid. I refer to

this as the “light bulb concept.” If a consumer is reading through the findings of this study and the proverbial “light bulb” goes on in her head because the findings resonate with her experience, then external validity is established. Further, Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggest that these concerns can be further addressed by considering the results of previous research to show the representativeness of the findings. A number of studies have been discussed in this study that have resulted in similar findings.

Participants

The participants in the current research are members of a collaborative group funded by a state in rural Appalachia whose purpose was to increase the quality and availability of early care and education in their community as well as increase linkages between families to other community resources. Seven members made up the original group who later hired a coordinator for the group. A more detailed explanation of the group and their purpose as well as a description of the broader context is provided in chapter three.

Data Collection

The form this research takes is that of an ethnographic case study (see Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000; Patton, 1980; Stake, 1998 and others). Data collection methods used included ethnographic interviews, observations and document collection. In addition, transcripts of two meetings of the collaborative work group were analyzed while two other meetings were analyzed in audio form. An additional meeting was observed and the data used are in the form of field notes. This makes a total of five meetings that were analyzed for the current research, each meeting between an hour and a half to two hours long, totaling approximately eight hours of transcripts. This includes 5

out of 6 formally called meetings of the group in a six-month time span. The data analyzed includes nine semi-structured individual interviews, one with each of the seven members and two with the coordinator. These interviews average about 45 minutes to one hour and fifteen minutes each. Other observations and conversations include approximately ten hours of visits to grant funded sites and other relevant places and events as well as informal conversations. Documents collected include meeting minutes, budget reports, and the formal proposal the group composed.

In their analysis of successful collaborative efforts, Chrislip and Larson (1994) conducted approximately 15 to 20 interviews for each case relying primarily on this data for their analysis. The same issues addressed by Chrislip and Larson were also addressed in the interviews conducted for the collaborative group in this study. The current research expands these methods to include different kinds of data, providing triangulation and increasing the trustworthiness of the findings. In the interviews, the members talk about collaboration. The meetings transcripts and tapes are a record of them actually collaborating, providing deeper insight into the group process. Other researchers have employed the methods of observation and document collection as I used in the current research (Falk & Kilpatrick, 1999; Zoller, 2000; Lawrence, et al, 1999). Some of these have also attended, recorded and transcribed meetings of the collaborative members as I have as well (Falk & Kilpatrick, 1999; Zoller, 2000).

Data Analysis

Standard analysis methods were employed both in the field and after data collection. Analysis in the field primarily took the form of memos and reflective observer comments. After leaving the field, I reviewed all of the interview, observation, transcript,

and document data, including the formal proposal the group submitted for funding outlining their work plans in detail. After reading through the information one time and noting some preliminary themes, I read through the data once to identify the documents containing information pertinent to each research question and identified themes related to each question. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggest that data coding and analysis are often influenced by the research questions. Three primary categories, defined by the research questions, were used as a basis for determining the coding scheme. These include: Relationships, Leadership, and Overcoming Obstacles and Positive Outcomes. All other coding categories are subordinate to these three major categories. After organizing the data according to research themes, I read through it several more times in order to identify the coding scheme. Upon finalizing the coding scheme, I applied it to the data for each research question. The coding scheme for the data was determined through analytic induction in that codes were defined as themes emerged in the data and were subject to change as new themes emerge and/or the current ones were shaped by new information (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

CHAPTER 3

Setting up the Case

This is a case study approach to research, described by Bogdan and Biklen (1998) as a detailed examination of one setting, subject, event, etc. It is a widely used approach in qualitative research. Philipsen's (1975) study of a community he labeled "Teamsterville" is a seminal case study in the field of communication. Other examples of researchers utilizing a case study approach include Zoller's (2000) study of collaboration in one community and Lawrence, Phillips, and Hardy's (1999) study of the Pacific Northwest whale-watching industry. In this section, I will define for the reader the bounds of the current case. Given the contextual nature of qualitative research, the following discussion will provide the context within which the collaborative existed. To begin, I will describe the place, demographically, geographically, and culturally and how these issues may impact the nature of the relationships, the leadership, the obstacles they face, and how the group creates positive outcomes. Then I will describe each of the members of the collaborative group and outline their history of collaboration with each other. Finally, I will discuss the goals of this group for improving early care and education in their community.

The Place

The collaborative group I have been studying is part of a network of early care professionals in a rural and remote Appalachian community. There is one fast-food restaurant, 2 major highways, and no major interstate systems or plans for one in the future in the entire county. The population is approximately 10,000 with a density of about 20 per square mile. The poverty level in this county is among the highest in the

region, with nearly 80 percent of children in public school on free and reduced lunch and an average income of less than \$16,000. Almost half of all school age children live in poverty.

Much of the land in the county remains untouched by human hands and industry. The main industries that support the area draw on natural resources such as agriculture, mining, and lumber operations. The drive from the interstate is long, about forty-five minutes total, sixteen miles of which take place on a narrow, winding two-lane road. This trek of nearly an hour will take one only to the outermost community within county lines. Following is a description I recorded after my first trip into this territory that is almost off the beaten path:

I left at 6:30 this morning and I arrived at the [name of agency] in [name of community] at 8:50am, 1.5 hours early. What a fun drive! This place is out in the distance quite a bit, it seems. The last leg of the trip, [name of highway] was very curvy and narrow, running alongside a stream and through a narrow ravine. The mountains on either side were very rocky and almost threatened to invade the road at points. The air here is so fresh, I opened my window so I could breathe it in. I am so used to industrialized areas and chemical air. Right after the part of the road where a new route offshoots [name of highway] and [name of highway] veers right, there is a huge, still mountain lake that looks like an enormous mirror.

The lake became a favorite spot for me, providing moments of refuge and reflection in the midst of intense data collection. My stop at this lake, less than five minutes from the one of the towns I visited regularly, became a time when I would clear my mind and prepare myself for, or recover from, an intellectually stimulating day. Travel to a place

like this when one is surrounded daily by the hustle and bustle of urban living provides a welcome change of pace and almost demands an appreciation for this serene place.

Driving through the county can be a challenge with the steep two-lane roads, hairpin turns, and logging trucks that abound. In the winter, it is next to impossible to go anywhere with the heavy snowfall and dangerous roads. I missed a scheduled trip for this very reason.

Certainly, the culture of this area is affected by the remoteness of its location. According to Betty Crickard, who wrote about the cultural values that influence educational programming in West Virginia, “a healthy respect and appreciation of Appalachian cultural values” is important in effectively working with people in these regions. This is a respect that I have maintained throughout my time in the field. An official website describes the area as “a place where you can find a quiet get-away, rugged mountain beauty, pure mountain streams, festivals that celebrate family, heritage and life, old time music, recreational adventures and crafters of exceptional talent” (Crickard, 1974).

The communities seem to be very close knit. I got experienced this firsthand on my first visit:

We then all got up to leave the café and, as I was walking out the door, I realized I didn't have my keys. I searched for them when we got outside and I said good-bye to Linda and Rebecca, as they were standing outside with Betsy and me . . .

We headed up to our cars and I looked inside and, alas, there were my keys, hanging from the ignition inside my locked car. What is funny about this is that I have NEVER locked my keys in my car before, EVER! So, why did it have to

happen to me when I was three hours from home and in a pretty remote area of the state?

Betsy said something like, “Well, let’s just go to [name of daycare] in my car and we can call somebody from there.” We got in her car and started toward the daycare center, only about a ¼ mi from the café. As we drove there, she said something about calling someone in town. I said something about AAA. She didn’t really respond to my comment about AAA and kept insisting that we would call someone nearby . . .

We arrived at the daycare, told Linda what happened, and she gave me the phone to call AAA. I think she called someone and, even before she called, I think she said it would probably be something like \$60. I was thinking, “come on! I don’t have \$60 to throw around, certainly not when I am paying for AAA!” So, I said, “How about I call AAA and see if they have service here and how far they would have to travel.” Linda was thinking they would have to travel from a city that was about an hour away. I decided to call just to try it . . .

It had been about 20 or 30 minutes or more since I had called AAA and I was wondering if it would be a lot longer or would be soon. Linda asked me if I wanted her to call somebody. I told her to go ahead and do that and we would see how much it would be and then call AAA and see how long it would be and then decide. She called a guy named Rodney . . . We walked over to the phone where Linda was as she hung up and she said, “Rodney said he would do it for me.”

When we arrived at my car, he was standing with the tool he uses to unlock cars and was working before I even got to answer that it was my car. He had my car door open before I was even out of the truck.

So, here I was, locked out of my car in small-town, rural Appalachia and got to experience the benefits of small-town connections, with free tips for future reference:

He told me to come look at the back of my car. He pointed to it and told me to look at my license plate and the screw in it. He said that I should get a copy made and make sure there is a hole drilled in it big enough for the screw to fit through and put it behind the plate and re-screw it. He said, "I could steal 15 different cars around here." He knew about that many "ladies" that he had given that tip to.

Besides being close knit, the culture of the community is one that is very traditional and conservative, especially one of the communities being targeted in this grant. Collaborative members describe the people as being "terrified" of change and believe that their fear is due to a lack of understanding. One member says it this way:

You know, you hate to use all those Appalachian values but we're very slow to change. Um, and while we're very supportive of each other, you know, we're also still questionable about what's coming in, what's new, and folks tend to stop and, I'm probably like that too. You have to kind of stop and say, 'Okay, alright, who's doing this and why are they doing this?'

When discussing the cultural climate in the region with this member, I asked how one might go about getting the message out to a group like this and he replied,

When you think about it, it's trial and error. Um...yeah, some things work, some things don't, ah...you know, frankly, I think, again, people trust their neighbors,

they don't necessarily trust the system, you know? And once, you... I think it's important to be able to pick out kinda key people that are trusted in the community, people who can share information, not necessarily, it's not going to be a bureaucrat, it's not even going to necessarily going to be, it may not even be a community leader, it may be, um... Mrs. Jones next door who's well-liked and received in that little community, who in turn, can kinda endorse and support, you know, ah... basic concepts and say, "Gee, this is what's available".. you know I feel in small communities, to sometimes be affected, that's just the way it has to be.

Another cultural aspect of this area is the high value placed on families. An excerpt from fieldnotes illustrates this idea:

People always want to know where you are originally from. That is just how you relate to people. Carrie said, "You are who your past is." She said that no matter who you are or what you do, you are deeply identified with who your relatives are in the county. When outsiders come in, of which Carrie is one, they always ask you, "Well, who are you related to?" and then they will say, "Oh, Okay." Beth and Kendra jumped in right about then and told me that people even connect based on who their siblings are, like who your sister went to high school with.

But, they are also very accepting. Carrie told me that once you are accepted, you are accepted completely. You only have to find common ground with them. One of her strategies is to find common ground based on her Christian faith, since it is a large part of the culture. She says, "There's a hook." Once you have established common ground, you

have more opportunity to relate to them and to accomplish what you are trying to accomplish.

These various aspects of this area may have a significant impact upon how this group collaborates. First of all, given the poor economic status, material resources are exceptionally limited. It seems reasonable to suggest that this lack of resources could create tension through a struggle for what resources are available or could create cohesion as the group recognizes a need to work together to utilize what resources they do have. It is entirely possible that these limited resources could impact the group in both ways simultaneously. The remoteness of the community may further stifle the area's potential for being connected to greater resources.

The culture of this area may have a significant impact on how the group collaborates as well. The culture is somewhat collectivist in nature, close knit as I described above. Such connection may provide a foundation of group cohesion before formal collaboration even begins. The remoteness of the area and low population may further add to the connectedness of the people in the area.

The Members of the Childcare Collaborative

This collaborative group is made up of seven individuals representing seven different agencies. Of these, six are female and one is male. After receiving the Childcare grant, they were required by the Governor's Cabinet to hire a coordinator. The coordinator this group hired is a female. During the proposal writing process, a number of other early care professionals and parents in the community were involved in writing the grant. Not all of these were listed in the proposal as members of the collaborative group.

The participants in this study consist primarily of the active members of the collaborative group, those listed in the proposal as “serving on the Childcare consortium.”

Three of the persons listed on the proposal as members of the collaborative group have not been active members at any time during data collection. Two of these three were parents, so no parents are currently active on the collaborative. Some active members are parents, but their primary connection to the grant is not as a parent of a child in early care and education. When I asked the coordinator about these other members, I was told that one of the parents had a child who is no longer young enough to be involved in these programs, so she is no longer involved. Another, a representative of an agency, is a member of another collaborative involving many of the same people, an early education collaborative that is not part of the grant. I am unaware of the third member, the other parent, and why this person is no longer an active participant. Given that I am concerned with the functioning of the primary, active group, I did not pursue these other members. During my first trip and orientation to the field, the coordinator listed for me the different programs involved in the grant and who represented those programs. These are the same people who attend the meetings, vote, and who otherwise carry out the grant. These are also the same people all of the informants listed in open-ended interviews as members of the collaborative group. It is this group that I have classified as active participants in the collaborative group and on whom I have focused data collection efforts.

The members of this group have a long history of collaboration with each other. Most of them serve on the other early education collaborative that acts as a transition team for moving preschool children into kindergarten. It was this previously existing collaborative group that worked together to write the Childcare grant proposal. Also, each

of the members has a history of working together in various capacities. The following paragraphs will provide a brief introduction to each member of the collaborative followed by their history of involvement with other members of the group. The members are as follows: Kendra (the group coordinator), John (representative from the Department of Health and Human Resources), Carrie (Head Start Director), Sandy (director of a local, state funded education program), Beth (owner and director of local child care facility), Mary (fiscal agent and representative of a resource network for families), Laura (representative from the Board of Education), and Rachel (representative of a program for special needs children).

Kendra is the hired coordinator of the group, who was not involved in the initial collaborative effort to develop the proposal. She is middle-aged woman and mother of two teenage boys who is very vocal about her religious beliefs. She has a degree in behavioral science and experience working with several members of the group. She worked with Rachel and Carrie at [name of agency] before Carrie moved to Head Start. She also worked with Beth, serving as the director of her daycare for a year. Her relationship with John of the Department of Health and Human Resources has been mostly on a personal level, since their kids were involved in extracurricular activities together.

Sandy represents a state funded educational program. She is also a middle-aged woman, older than Kendra, and is a mother. She says she “just likes going to school” and when asked jokingly if she was a professional student, she replied, “If I could afford it, yes.” Her dream of being a nurse ended with illness and so she went back to school to become a social worker. After she completed that program, she spent a year and a half

studying business management. She also did a child developmental apprenticeship.

Before working for her current agency, Sandy worked with Head Start. She has been in her current position for six years.

Laura represents the Board of Education. She married a native to the county and relocated there with him thirty-three years ago. She has worked with the Board for many of those years. She is presently serving as superintendent of schools since the former superintendent transferred to a different county. In every interview, Laura has been given the most credit for writing the grant, having spent many late evenings and weekends composing it.

Beth is a native to the area and represents the only childcare center in the county. She is a middle-aged wife and mother of adolescent children. She and Kendra are close in age, both younger than Laura and Sandy. Like Kendra, she is very vocal about her religious beliefs. Beth has a four-year degree in accounting and a degree in business administration. She is currently working on her education in early childhood. She says that her current work is more fulfilling to her than her previous work:

I finally know what I want to be when I grow up . . . I thought, when I went to college, well I'll go into business, what else do you do. And I hated sitting behind a desk, I hated filing, I hated all that, and uh, but I did it because I didn't know what else to do. Now I know what I want to do, and that's just it, when it all came about was working with all these people and getting to open a daycare.

Carrie is a middle-aged woman who served as the director of Head Start in the county. She has a degree in nursing and one in pharmacology. She went on to be certified in trauma and "ICU" followed by an Associate's in Criminology and a Bachelor's in

Behavioral Science. To summarize, Carrie said, “I have three degrees and a lot of in-between things.” Midway through data collection, this key stakeholder in the grant left her position with Head Start, and was therefore no longer part of the collaborative group. In an informal conversation, I asked only if her leaving was related to the grant and was told it was not. Carrie did play a major part in the grant work. She helped write the grant and played a very active role in carrying out the grant with the other collaborative members. Before taking the position with Head Start, she worked with Rachel and Kendra at a childcare facility.

Rachel represents an agency that serves special needs children. When asked about her education, she says she has a “Bachelor’s in early childhood development with a . . . pre-k through eight teaching degree.” She is a young woman with an early childhood age daughter who attends Beth’s childcare center. She has worked with this agency for her entire professional career, which is about six and a half years. As noted before, she worked with Carrie and Kendra at this agency and has had interaction with Beth since her daughter attends her daycare. She also worked with Sandy at her center to do programs, and so had a prior working relationship with her.

John represents the Department of Health and Human Resources. He is a middle-aged man, married with children, with a Bachelor’s degree in Social Work. He has worked for the State Health Department for twenty-two years, and in his current position for three and a half years at the time of the interview. His experience working with different members of the collaborative group includes working with Head Start since they serve many of the same families and working with an agency that acts as a resource

network for families in the area. He says they also do joint programs with the Board of Education.

Finally, Mary represents the aforementioned resource network. This agency acts as the fiscal agent for the grant. Mary is a young woman, married with a very young daughter, who has experience in advertising and does a lot of the publicity items for the grant as well as providing them with resources regarding services, money, programs, etc. as she becomes aware of them. The members of this collaborative group have come together for a specific purpose. In the following section, I will identify that purpose.

The Purpose of the Collaborative Group

Four elementary schools serve the county's many children and one consolidated high school serves the teenagers. The collaborative community group that is the focus of this study represents early care and education in the county, serving children from birth to age five and transitioning them into kindergarten programs. In each of the three communities directly affected by the grant, the Board of Education has a public preschool. Head Start serves three- and four-year-old children with one center-based program. Thirty-four in-home providers serve the birth to five age group in these three communities. There is only one childcare center in the entire county. Special needs children are served by a government funded agency. The initial goal of this group was to increase school readiness by providing increased accessibility to childcare and education, quality of services, and linkages to other community resources. They expanded existing facilities and started new ones from the ground up. Money was used to provide training for staff and even to pay a salary to staff at one new facility. Much needed transportation was provided to families so they could take advantage of early childhood services. One

site blended several programs in order to provide services to a community with a demonstrated need, making for a difficult juggling of policies, procedures, and dollars as well as stress among collaborative members.

CHAPTER 4

Nature of the Relationships

Understanding the nature of the relationships among the members is essential to understanding this group. Several relationship themes have emerged in the data. In the following pages, I will discuss these themes and provide examples from the data to support them. These themes include that the relationships are established, personal, professional, cohesive, informal, and positive.

Established

For the most part, the members of this group had previously established relationships with one another, personally and professionally and even through collaboration. These prior relationships laid the groundwork for this group to collaborate at a higher level through this grant. The following interview excerpts support this point:

Interviewee: I think that it has helped that we've all had that common ground with.

Interviewee: It's nice when you already know someone because you already have that rapport and that basis to work from, so, it's easier to work with someone you already know.

Interviewee: When they came up with the idea of the grant and started working on the grant, it gave them a common goal . . .

Personal

It makes sense that in such a rural and remote setting, the members of the group would have established personal relationships with one another. This can also be explained by the location of the group in Appalachia, given that such interconnectedness

is part of the Appalachian culture. The following excerpts illustrate the personal connections between some of the members:

Interviewee: [Name of member] used to watch my children, [name of member] and I grew up together.

Interviewee: Our kids all played Little League and all that kind of stuff together . .

Professional

Perhaps more significant than their established personal relationships are their established professional relationships. Several of the members had worked with each other within organizations before. They have also been connected to one another through interorganizational collaboration before this grant, though usually only in the form of partnerships between two or three agencies. The group even holds an annual conference for their early childhood community. These relationships are mentioned briefly in chapter three. The following excerpts provide examples of their history of professional relationships, both intra- and interorganizational:

Interviewee: We have a very positive relationship with [name of agency] and we've worked hard for that

Interviewee: Some of them I had worked with on different things, not collaboration as far as this many people . . .

Interviewee: The [name of existing collaborative group] is who wrote the grant and we have already had our collaborative together and had had for some time . . . we felt like we . . . due to our past history as a collaborative, that we probably stood a pretty good chance, and we did!

Interviewee: I believe this county has a very strong collaborative, especially in early childhood.

Interviewee: They had started the [name of existing collaborative group] and [name of member] was able to pull several of those people together to work, but, and that, without a doubt gave them a starting point to work from to get all the groups together. . . . It was still, all these people still were not included, you know, in that [name of existing collaborative group], they didn't attend regular,

so, when they came up with the idea of the grant, and started working on the grant, it gave them a common goal.

Interviewee: The [name of grant] initiative has made me aware of all the different things that are happening but nothing is tied together. It has tied resources together, even though we were already doing it, it's helped the effort.

Cohesive

Another characteristic of the relationships between the members that has emerged is that they seem to be cohesive. One group member said that it was a "very strong" collaborative. Part of this strength and cohesion can be attributed their prior history of relationships with one another, especially in collaboration. Certainly, their experiences working together on this grant have greatly contributed to the strength of their relationships. The group's cohesion can be seen in their ability to stay together and continue to work toward their collective goals amidst the obstacles they face:

Interviewee: It causes a little grief, but it's very short-term, and then we pick up and go on . . . I don't think anyone comes to the table with, 'Well, last month, you stated,' or, 'You did.' No one comes to the table like that. When we leave, we leave and we intermingle throughout the month and even different meetings that we have, there's no hard feelings when we leave.

Interviewee: We bump heads occasionally. We don't agree on everything that we do, but, we're still able to stay focused on the goals.

Interviewee: There've been some hurt feelings and then, there's been some people who, sometimes you hit those roadblocks, you can have some negative feelings . . . But I have the courage that we're working through those.

Interviewee: It's not always fun and games, and we're not, you know, sometimes we are at odds and I think collaboration in that regard to resolve issues and pursue goals is just as important as the warm fuzzy stuff that we do out there to support each other.

Informal

A third characteristic of this group is the level of informality. When describing the group to me, members have used the term “laid back.” The following excerpts support the informal nature of the group relationships:

Interviewee: It’s a very informal kind of group.

Interviewee: There’s no typical meeting with those, especially when it’s the women. You never know what’s going to bounce off those walls.

In one set of notes, I recorded the attire of the group in a meeting and found that some were wearing very casual clothing such as jeans and t-shirts while others were more dressed up in dresses and suits. This diversity in dress may be linked to the position each member holds. After the dedication ceremony, where all of the members were dressed up, one member changed into jeans before the meeting. This variation in attire, especially the more casual dress, further shows the informality in the group.

Humor is another indication of the informality of the group. Sprinkled throughout every meeting I attended were comments followed by laughter. An example of the humor that is characteristic of this group is from the beginning of one tape the group provided for me of a meeting I was unable to attend. At the beginning of the tape is someone singing “Yankee Doodle” and then someone saying “Da da. Yeah!” Another member then said, “Turn that thing off!” followed by an eruption of laughter in the group and a break in the tape. I have found this type of humor to be functional in helping the group to overcome obstacles and create positive outcomes. A further discussion of humor in the group is provided in chapter six.

Positive

A very strong theme that has emerged through analysis is the positive nature of the relationships among the members. Members seem to like one another and are very supportive of one another. They have become very close throughout the course of working together in this capacity. Their positive relationships can be seen in the following excerpts:

She picked up a medium-sized white plastic shopping bag and handed it to [name of member] . . . she opened it and smiled. She said something to the effect of ‘Aw, that’s nice.’ [Name of member] said it was an appropriate gift for her with the theme, since it matches the theme of her center. (Fieldnotes)

Interviewee: We like each other.

Interviewee: A lot of them took me under their wing and helped me and I feel that I’ve gained from it.

Interviewee: There’s no one I could not call up and say, ‘I need help,’ or ‘I need your help.’ They would call me. We make a lot of give and take. Every organization works with each other. As far as I’m concerned, we’ve got the best crew. I’m prejudiced. [laughter]

Interviewee: I think everyone gets along fine. Each of the agencies seem to collaborate very well. I don’t know, I just think it works.

Interviewee: I love the people that I work with. I just dearly, dearly love them.

Interviewee: As far as personalities, we really all get along really well.

Interviewee: I think that we’ve all had that common ground to begin with and, if a problem arises, it usually doesn’t become anything major that I’ve noticed. I mean, we may have a few bumps here and there, but as far as I’m concerned, it’s been fairly smooth.

Interviewee: Probably the result of this collaborative is, I think we have grown very intimate, lots more so than I think anybody ever thought that we could . . . I think it has to do with the individual personalities . . . I think they’re very intimate right now, whereas if somebody was to for some reason, you know, drop out or not be a part or anything, I think we would rally around that one or something, you know, do what we can in order to keep everything going and, because it’s become more than just a working relationship.

Their closeness to one another also can be seen in the above excerpts as well as in their verbal and nonverbal behaviors toward one another. The members' supportiveness of one another can be seen in their response to one of the major obstacles they faced in carrying out the grant. The member most affected by the problem commented on how supportive another member was and how the other members of the group told her she should never have to face those kinds of things alone, that they were all in those things together. As another example, when I was observing a meeting, I noticed how one member placed her hand on the arm of another when she was talking. My reaction to this is as follows:

This communicated to me a certain closeness or comfort level between the two, that during a business meetings, she would be affectionate like that . . . Neither of them seemed to compensate for this in their facial expressions, body placement, or any other nonverbal cues that might indicate a level of discomfort with this.

Above I have discussed the primary themes that have emerged regarding the nature of the relationships among the collaborative group members. These include that the relationships are established, personal, professional, cohesive, informal, and positive. In the following chapter, I will discuss how leadership is enacted in the group.

CHAPTER 5

Leadership Enactment in the Group

The primary emphasis of this section will be on the role of the coordinator in this grant. The collaborative group hired Betsy shortly after they had finished the proposal process and were awarded the grant. Hiring a coordinator was one of the stipulations of receiving the grant. In this section, I will begin by briefly discussing how members report leadership occurring in the early stages of the grant. Then, I will describe the process of hiring Betsy as the collaborative members and Betsy herself reported it. Finally, I will discuss the primary emphasis of this section, Betsy's leadership in the group.

Leadership in the Early Stages

One member says she starting rallying for this grant in its very early stages at the state level, "when it first was just more or less talk." She went to the delegate for the county and told him she believed it would be an excellent project for the county and asked him to be supportive. She told of the times she went to the state capital to act as a "major campaigner" for it, and how it was not hard to convince the early care and education community in the county because they were already going in that direction and saw the grant as a means of getting there. She called herself the "information-gatherer" at this point.

When the request for proposal finally came into the county, the representative from the Board of Education spearheaded the proposal writing effort. Many members of the group have made very similar comments about her work on this part of the grant.

Consider the following comments:

Interviewee: I have to give [name of representative] a lot of credit for taking the lead at this point. I think we all do, because she did a wonderful job . . . She made it as easy for us as possible. She broke it down in steps and we took all our assignments and reported back to her.

Interviewee: [Name of Board representative], I would have to admit, has done the enormous, uh, part of putting it in the computer, wording it right, fitting the format. She did the hardest part, I think. We had the easy part 'cause we just sat down and said, 'This is what we need, this is what we need to look at . . .

Interviewee: I had actually attended a meeting with, uh [name of Board representative] was actually instigating the process and facilitating the meeting.

Interviewee: The way we approached it was that, that I had the lead in terms of writing the grant . . . I put together components and that's what we had a meeting, to map out what we were going to do, what our needs were . . . we pulled those together. So, we met, and we'd read over what I did, make comments, and then, we'd look at the next section, talked about it, and based on the needs assessment, where do we need to go and so on, go back, I'd write it, take it back, and then we'd modify and so on

From this data, it is clear that this member of the group did have the most leadership at this point in the process. From the interviews, it is clear that her leadership was task-oriented and participative in that the focus was on completing the proposal and different members of the group were delegated different "homework assignments." They discussed during the meetings, which were led by her, what they had found and what they wanted to accomplish, and Laura did the work of writing it all up.

After the group received the grant, they moved on to their next task of hiring a coordinator. When Kendra filled the position, leadership in the group did shift. However, Laura was still a very influential member of the group. Consider this quote by the coordinator:

Laura would be the person that I most rely on probably the most because she wrote the grant. And, so, she knows all the knowledge and the intricate things that she wanted to put in this grant that she expects me to be able to do, so this grant and, all of them are not written down on paper, and the only way you can get all those is to spend time with her and listen to the things that she's telling you.

Being the one who spearheaded the effort, Laura obviously has a great deal of power due to her expertise and her intimate knowledge of the grant.

The Coordinator

In their proposal, the group included information such as qualifications and a job description of the role of the coordinator. In the proposal, the collaborative describes the position of the coordinator as the “Childcare Manager.” In my first days in the field, I noticed the term “manager” and the term “coordinator” being used interchangeably. Upon asking the person filling this position about this difference in terminology, she simply made a comment about how she could be called either. In the proposal, they further describe the role of this person as a “non-voting member of the consortium” who “will serve as secretary to the consortium.” Further, the job purpose is listed as “Responsibility for the overall leadership and management of the collaboration to meet the Childcare goals, objectives, and activities.” This purpose statement as well as the list of duties that followed suggests the position is more than secretarial or clerical. In the following pages, I will attempt to describe the key elements of the position as the current coordinator enacts it.

From the job description and based on the data collected for this study, this is not a traditional leadership position. The first indication of this is that the members of the collaborative hired her. Another is that she is a non-voting member, so though she may be influential in the group, she does not have a final say in the decision-making process. In my analysis of the data, I have uncovered several key elements to Kendra’s leadership of this group. In the following pages, each of these will be discussed and supported by the data collected for this study. These elements include that group members view her in a

positive light, she has a strong people-orientation, she recognizes the psychosocial needs of the group, she is servant-minded, she is a hard worker who is concerned with quality, she is humble, she is not a stakeholder in the grant, she performs clerical and leadership tasks, and she is a facilitator.

Group Members View her in a Positive Light

Most members of this group knew the coordinator from past experiences, both working and personal. As noted above, she served as the director of one member's daycare center. This same member recruited her to apply for the position. As the coordinator reports:

Beth approached me and asked me if I would put in my resume and apply for the position and briefly went over it with me . . . I promptly . . . just declined . . . Beth brought my name up and the consortium said, 'Oh, do you think she would apply?' 'How do we get her to apply?' . . . Beth called me and asked me again if I would consider applying for the job . . . Then I went ahead and applied.

She worked with two others in a former place of work. Their comments suggest how they view her personally as well as professionally:

Interviewee: Oh, everybody loves Kendra. Kendra has, had worked in [name of agency] with me at one point and then had worked in, um, adolescent program, you know, within this agency, and then had worked at [name of daycare], and was substituting for the Board, so everybody knew her and everyone, you know, was very pleased with her work and her work history, so, yeah, she was, she was perfect.

Interviewee: There's also some prejudice here because I knew her prior to this . . . I just seems like everything she strives, she achieves.

The group also expresses great confidence in her work. The following comments illustrate this point:

Interviewer: So how would you describe her in that role throughout, since she came on board?

Interviewee: Excellent . . . She often finds things that we may have overlooked that need to be attended to. She has the ability to be everywhere at once. I don't know how she does what she does. She's just on the ball with everything. I don't have complaint one. I just think she fits this role very well.

Interviewee: I don't have any complaints with anything that she's done.

Interviewee: She is just very well organized, lots of energy, um, definitely has a background with the children . . . and can guide people that way.

It is important to note that some members have indicated some reservation about her work in this position. During one interview, when I asked what the participant thought of her filling the position, the reply came with some hesitancy:

Interviewee: Uh, Kendra, uh, yeah . . . you know . . . I think Kendra's done a good job, and, again, I, it's, it's kind of feeling your role out, kinda seeing what you should be doing, um . . . Kendra has no problems with her verbal skills. It's, she's expressed she doesn't feel real comfortable with the fiscal aspects and things of that nature. Um . . . don't, I don't know, I hesitate to even say a whole lot because again, I haven't worked that closely with Kendra.

During the interview, I wanted to probe the informant for a further response, but I chose not to based on the discomfort she seemed to have answering the question. A deeper understanding of this informant's differing perspective could be quite telling of the role this coordinator plays and should be taken into account when evaluating these results.

She has a strong people-orientation.

One of the first things I noticed about the coordinator was that she is a caring person. She is a warm communicator in that she is very complimentary, encouraging, concerned, and seems to have a genuine affection for the group members. My initial impression of Kendra was that it was very easy to talk with her. I felt a bit uneasy during my first trip to collect data, but Kendra was very welcoming and hospitable, which helped me to adjust to the environment. When I first met her, I recorded this in my notes,

“She cordially introduced herself to me . . . She smiled and seemed very enthusiastic meeting me” (Fieldnotes). I even began to compare others to her. For example, when I met one member, I noted that she didn’t seem to be as friendly as Kendra.

When I was leaving that day, I recorded that there was a “very hospitable sense about her” and that she told me that she almost wanted me to call her when I got home to let her know I made it home safely. During a meeting I was observing, I recorded this reflective comment, “She seems to me like someone anyone could be comfortable with. I have always been comfortable with her.” Other members of the collaborative seem to feel the same way about her:

Interviewee: We’re very fortunate in terms of having Kendra on board . . . I mean, she’s excellent. She is. She has a pleasant personality and she can work with those individuals [speaking of a conflict situation].

Interviewee: She gets along with everyone . . .

Interviewee: Everybody loves Kendra . . . She’s definitely a people-person.

Kendra really seems to care for the people with whom she works. When I probed her about why she loved her job so much, she replied, “I like the people that I work with. It’s the people that make this job good.” Later she said, “I love the people that I work with. I just dearly, dearly love them.” Kendra is complimentary toward others as well, “The Governor’s Cabinet has been absolutely wonderful to work with.”

She is just awesome. She is just an awesome, wonderful lady. I’m so grateful for this opportunity to know her and work with her. And [names of teacher and aide] balance each other out just extremely well. They just are extremely talented in every area. I’m just so grateful. So grateful. They just make it all work. They make it all work.

She recognizes the psychosocial needs of the group.

Perhaps one of the most notable characteristics of Kendra's leadership is that she is a self-proclaimed "peacemaker." Following are a few comments she made that led me to this conclusion:

Interviewee: Of course, there's problems! There's always problems! Everything has a problem to it. And, uh, so it's your ability to be able to solve it and work through it, and hopefully not make any, burn any bridges or do any damage that can't be repaired. Uh, you know, there's humbling experiences in our lives where we've had to go to people and apologize . . . I hope I don't have to do that, but if I do have to that, I'm not above doing that, you know, if that's what it would take to do everything. I told you, I'm a peacemaker! I am. I know my role! [laughing] I am the peacemaker.

Interviewee: I guess, if you went through all the psychological things, you would say, you know, middle kid syndrome. Whatever it takes to make everybody happy is what that middle child does. That's the peacemaker. That's my personality trait, I'm the peacemaker, I like for things to end happily ever after.

A great deal of the data support this idea. For example, Kendra said that she felt tension with one of the members of the group:

We bump heads occasionally. We don't agree on everything that we do, but, we're still able to stay focused on the goals, get the program off the ground, and uh, I just have to remember to be real flexible there and remember that her job is as important to her as what I am trying to do here.

Once when several members of the group were together, she said that she could feel the tension between them. By joking with one member, Kendra said that she felt that she and everyone else "loosened up." One group member said this of her, "She has been able to solve conflicts, you know, that have, have come up and do it very diplomatically that everyone, you know, could win." Regarding another situation in which Kendra acted as a peacemaker, a group member said the following:

There've been some hurt feelings and then, there's been some people who, um, sometimes you hit those roadblocks, you can have some negative feelings . . . But Kendra, I mean Kendra, we're very fortunate in terms of having Kendra on board,

and she, I mean, she's excellent. She is. She has a pleasant personality and she can work with those individuals.

Not only does Kendra work to meet the interpersonal conflict needs of the group, she also recognizes the psychological needs of the group to see results in their work and to have a break from their work. The following excerpt from the data illustrates this point:

It looked like there wasn't any forward progress and that's when I thought, you know, you all have worked so hard, you need to see some fruit for your work, you need, you've got to see something tangible, and, uh, within just a couple weeks we were able to open over here.

Further, Kendra planned a "Make and Take Day" when the women involved met for an hour and talked about business for only an hour. After that, they spent the rest of the afternoon making Christmas crafts and during that time, they could not talk about anything related to the grant.

She is servant minded.

Through my observations and interviews, I have found that Kendra often leads by serving the group members. She has "gotten her hands dirty," so to speak, doing things in order to help the group accomplish their objectives. The following excerpt from my field notes illustrates this point:

She joked about how she bets she is the only coordinator spending time on her hands and knees painting the site.

Kendra said she was probably the only coordinator that did this, that actually subbed at the sites.

On one occasion, a supplier was running late getting furniture to one of the new sites. They were running close on time because the next morning, the licensing director was scheduled to visit the site. The furniture did not arrive until 11 o'clock the night before

and Kendra stayed up with the director and the director's husband until 4 o'clock in the morning setting up.

She is a hard-worker who is concerned with quality.

It seems to go hand-in-hand that if Kendra is so servant minded, she would be a hard worker, very persistent in completing her tasks. In one interview, she called herself persistent. During this interview, I asked Kendra what it was that she felt kept the group moving. After jokingly saying it was her personality, discussed above, she said:

And, oh, to a degree, persistence pays off . . . whatever we have to do, let's roll up our sleeves and lets just do it . . . But I've always been that way . . . It didn't matter. If it needs to be done, we'll do it . . . And we did it.

One member told me during a conversation that Kendra probably put in sixty hours of work per week. The job description only states that she should work twenty-four hours per week. Kendra even joked about this during an interview. She joked about how she had thought that would be all she would work and how she works much more than that in reality.

Kendra is also concerned with quality of work. It seems that to her, adequate is not enough. She spent a great deal of time working with various group members over an enrollment issue at one of the sites. Rather than just letting the situation go as it was, Kendra continued to face the problem, insisting that things be done right. When things come up that are areas of weakness for Kendra, she seeks help in those areas. She not only seeks the help of others in the group, but of informed persons across the region.

Interviewee: She often finds things that we may have overlooked that needed to be attended to . . . She's just on the ball with everything . . . She gets it done professional . . . We had overlooked the fact that we needed in-kind. Well, she brought it to our attention and then, uh, as a group, we got together and started doing what we needed to be doing.

Interviewee: She's strong enough to stand up to what is right, versus, to some would say, 'Well, come on, can't we just slide this a little bit, and she's strong enough to say, 'No, it has to be done this way and this is the way we'll do it.' So, she's strong at the same time.

She is humble.

As a leader, Kendra is willing to admit her mistakes and weaknesses and seek the help and advice of others. As she was reporting to the group information related to the financial aspects of the grant, she made comments like this one:

It's real confusing to me . . . I called [name of financial advisor] and I was in tears, I said . . . 'I can't do this.' . . . She was one the phone with me for two hours that day, trying to make me understand again . . . You all are shaking your heads. You know this budget stuff, don't you. You've been down this road before. So, this is all new area for me . . .

During the same meeting, she was discussing her difficulty using the computer to create a report she was required to send to the Governor's Cabinet:

I just about never got it, and so finally, she emailed me hers and what, a second phone call, and I said, 'I can't do this! I can't get it . . . ' and so she walked me through it once on how to get that part opened up to do . . .Whoop! Me and that computer . . . I didn't call it too many bad names.

During another meeting, Kendra admitted to making a mistake about a funding issue. I recorded this observation:

She realized that there was more they could call the in-kind match than what they had originally thought. She apologized for the misinformation that she had previously presented.

Following this observation, I made this reflective comment:

Kendra seems to be a very motivated personal, an intelligent person, also, and one who is not afraid to admit she is wrong. There is a humility about her and an enthusiasm that is drawing.

At one point, she even said about herself:

It's probably very good for all of them, including myself, that it doesn't bother me that I don't know what to do and when I don't know what to do, I just simply call and say, 'I don't know how to do this. I don't know what this is.'

She also shows humility with reference to interpersonal conflict situations. In an interview, she said this about herself:

There's humbling experiences in our lives where we've had to go to people and apologize when we've, you know, they're not fun, but they are character-building . . . I hope I don't have to do that, but if I do have to do that, I'm not above doing that, you know, if that's what it would take . . .

Another way that Kendra expresses her humility is through her faith. Betsy seems reluctant to take the credit for things, often turning the attention to God. When asked what it was she thought kept this group moving, she responded first by saying it was her personality. She was laughing when she said this, then quickly added, "It has to be the grace of God, now, it just honestly has to be." I probed her about this response, asking if she thought it really might have been her personality in some way, and she laughingly responded, "Oh, gosh, no. No, probably, no. Probably my prayers than anything. Then, after a slight hesitation, "And, oh, to a degree, persistence pays off."

She is not a stakeholder in the grant.

Kendra is not connected to any particular interest represented by the group. She is, for the most part, an unbiased third party, enabling her to fulfill the function without an obvious conflict of interest. In the past, she had worked with several of the members of the collaborative in three of the seven agencies represented. While this involvement may have given her some level of bias, her experience being with several of the agencies as opposed to a single agency seems to have lessened that bias. Also, she was hired by the collaborative to be someone who did not represent any particular interest relevant to the issues at hand. Part of her job description is that she "Insures the coordination

between the [Childcare] programs” and that she revealed these feelings she had about taking the position in our first interview together: “I was very intimidated . . . I just always thought of her as the archenemy of all these kids . . . And she is not at all. That concept is so very wrong and it’s, it’s wrong . . . to depict her in that way. This person became someone Kendra relied upon a great deal throughout the grant process. My experience interviewing and observing them never would have led me to believe she had ever felt that way.

She performs clerical and leadership tasks.

Another key to understanding Kendra’s position is her involvement in many secretarial types of tasks. In the job description, it states that she is to “Serve as the secretary to the consortium.” She writes the minutes for each of the meetings. She is responsible for all the paperwork, such as in-kind reports and quarterly progress reports. She writes the agenda for each meeting, copies it and hands it out to everyone in the meeting. When there is a celebration, such as the open house they hosted for the new center funded by the grant, she plans a lot of the food choices and plays a large role in setting up and cleaning up after the event.

In addition to the clerical function she provides, Kendra also performs leadership tasks. One of her primary leadership tasks is facilitating the group meetings. Before each meeting, Kendra contacts each of the members so that there will be “no surprises” during the meetings.

Much can be learned about her leadership through the group’s meetings. First, Kendra does most of the talking, unless the topic is such that a decision needs to be made or there is a problem that requires the others’ contributions to solve. Her talking is mostly

in the form of reporting. As each new item on the agenda is introduced, she spends several minutes explaining the current situation related to that issue. Sometimes she asks another member to report, since that member may have more firsthand knowledge of the subject, for example.

She is a facilitator.

In addition to all of the above things, Betsy also facilitates the group meetings. As mentioned previously, she prepares an agenda for each meeting, talks with group members beforehand, and writes and disperses the minutes from previous meetings. The first thing important to note related to Betsy's leadership of the group is a pattern of reporting by her, followed by punctuation by her, and then another group member introducing the next topic on the agenda, followed again by reporting. Following are examples of this pattern:

Member: Okay, next on our agenda is our budget committee report. How is this going to fit, and where do we reallocate funds?

Kendra: Okay, [names of two members] and I met on July the second . . . and we went over through the budget . . . [several minutes of speaking primarily by Kendra] . . . Okay, move right on down the agenda.

Member: Number 2, the narrative quarterly report.

Kendra: Oh, yes. I did this report. [followed by several minutes of speaking primarily by Kendra]

Sometimes this other member of the group will perform some of the punctuating function as well as introducing the next item on the agenda. The following is an example of one of these situations. The group seems to have digressed a bit from the topic at hand. Several conversations are taking place at once, and they are joking with each other.

Member 1: Anything else on that one, and you'll just send in the form for everybody.

Kendra: Yeah, I'll send in the form for everybody, you know, 'cause they, they feed us, that's why they want to know.

Member 1: Okay. And then, the, next on the agenda is . . .

This member's punctuating and introducing the next item on the agenda was functional in this situation because the conversation was not on track. Her behaviors brought the group back into focus on the task at hand.

The nature of Kendra's reporting is simply that she lets the group know where they stand on the issue at hand, what specific events have been occurring. She often poses a question for the group to discuss after providing them with a several minutes worth of information. Following is an example:

Kendra: And I don't know what to do now because none of them came to the training yet we're supposed to make them copies of this curriculum packet to use, but none of them came. So, now I don't, what do you do then?

Sometimes she encourages discussion through a statement that seems to carry an implied invitation for discussion with it:

Kendra: I don't know how you organize something of this, you know, how we want to do this, where we want to try to do everything. So, I'm kind of open for suggestions.

Kendra: I, I, I'm open for ideas.

Another time when other group members speak is when she gives the job of reporting to someone else, if that person has more knowledge of the subject than she does. She did this once when she needed to report on a recent conference. She felt the other member knew more about it than she did.

Obviously, though Kendra does a great deal of reporting and she is primarily in charge of the meetings, it is an open environment in which others freely speak. Often, a

member will interrupt Kendra during her reporting. In the following example, the interruption occurred in order to seek clarification on a subject:

Kendra: They wanted this one. You have to fill in all the boxes.

Member: Next year's?

Kendra: Yes, next year's

Another example shows how group members may interrupt simply to interject a comment:

Kendra: Now, it doesn't look very big, but this is big, big work.

Member: These quarterly reports have a habit of doing that.

Kendra: Oh, my gosh! I am just, I was just . . .

Throughout this chapter, I have identified and discussed several major themes related to leadership enactment in this group, focusing primarily on the role of the coordinator. These themes include that group members view her in a positive light, she has a strong people-orientation, she recognizes the psychosocial needs of the group, she is servant-minded, she is a hard worker who is concerned with quality, she is humble, she is not a stakeholder in the grant, she performs clerical and leadership tasks, and she is a facilitator. In the following chapter, I will discuss the obstacles this group has faced and how they have worked to overcome these obstacles and create positive outcomes.

CHAPTER 6

Overcoming Obstacles and Creating Positive Outcomes

This group has faced many difficult obstacles while trying to create positive outcomes. Upon inspection, it became apparent that these obstacles are common to all groups. However, I have discovered several factors that have enabled the group to create positive outcomes in the midst of these obstacles. This chapter will discuss the major types of obstacles the group has faced followed by the ways the group has worked to overcome these obstacles and create their own success.

Obstacles

This group faced a number of different types of obstacles as they worked toward fulfilling their goals through the grant. These obstacles are not unique to this group. Rather, they are common goals that all groups face. They include defining roles, turfism, the need for guidelines, attendance and availability, and differing policies and procedures.

Defining Roles

One obstacle that the group faced was defining their roles in the group. The following excerpts illustrate this:

Interviewee: Trying to find your way, for people to find their niche, where they, you know, kind of where they fit in whether it be any new organization or any new initiative, and I think that as you know, as I participated, people began to find a role and settle into those roles.

Interviewee: You're going through those period stages of 'Who does what?' and 'Where do I fit in?' and 'What do I have to contribute to this process?'

Interviewee: Of course, in the beginning, we didn't necessarily know what the coordinator needed to do, and so, it was a learning process again . . . she was, you know, say, 'Here,' you know, given the role and had to kind of, you know, feel her way through it, and has proven to be wonderful.

Interviewee: Now the tensions are trying to get it done, trying to get it done trying to get everything done, you know that, . . . the deadlines, and trying to figure out whose part is whose, you know, 'cause there's so many of us working on so many different things and what part we need to stay out of and what part we need to be involved in.

Interviewee: You know, it was like, defining our roles. We weren't sure what our roles . . . We knew what the core members had, who they had to be, but then, how do you define the roles for the rest of them? And, uh, that was one thing that we had some discussions over, but we never at any time really ever fell out of reach, it was just something that we needed to work with.

The following excerpt was a response of one member to a question about what it is that they had been struggling through:

Interviewer: How has this been recently?

Interviewee: Not good, but we're working on it.

Interviewer: What have been some of the things that you've been struggling through?

Interviewee: Those clearly defined roles. Who's responsible for this at what time, who's responsible for, what part everybody is responsible for . . . I still have a lot of unanswered questions.

So, the group had to work together to find their roles within the group, who was supposed to do what, etc. This was mentioned many times throughout interviews and has clearly been an obstacle this group has had to face. The group did sign an agreement in the beginning of the initiative, but many unforeseen obstacles arose that the agreement was not sufficient to handle, so role definition remained a problem.

Turfism

"Turfism" is a term that members of this group have used to describe conflict, even competition that exists between different organizations or groups providing similar services. The idea is that certain groups, in this case, children, "belong" to one agency or

another. The following excerpts from the data better how the group describes this phenomenon:

Interviewer: How would you describe turfism?

Interviewee: I think when . . . especially when money's involved, a lot of people try to make themselves look better than another agency and, you know, try to put somebody else down, or they compete for dollars.

Interviewee: You still have this dark cloud of this, 'This is my program,' and 'That's your program,' and 'These are my kids,' and 'Those are your kids,' because that's the way it's been for so long.

Interviewee: You're taught in school, when we were in college, that all agencies have their own turf and they don't want you coming over on their side taking their kids, *their kids*, you know, everybody considers kids theirs . . . who gets to count? We have to count. We have to count these kids. You have to count these kids. And any time billing is in there, it becomes a huge, huge issue.

Interviewee: All this territorialism, you know, they're on your 'turf.' School board turf and . . . mental health turf, and never the two shall mix.

Interviewee: When that raises its ugly head, you can see it, and you can see everybody else react to it.

Interviewee: Once funding depends on numbers, it changes people.

Essentially, the idea here is that turfism is when competition exists among the different agencies.

While some members felt that turfism was not an obstacle that they faced, most felt it was but that they were able to overcome and even had in some cases:

Interviewee: I've really never detected any of that in this situation.

Interviewee: And I listened to them, you know, and listened to their desire and the one goal that they shared in making this grant a success and I thought, 'Okay, . . . maybe it's possible that we could all do it.'

Interviewee: This was always a county that had everything separated. You still have that, that ghost hanging around that 'These are MY kids in MY program,'

and that has, that has had to be worked on, but I think it's really come to the point where, 'They're OUR kids.'

Interviewee: We have a very positive relationship with Head Start and we've worked very hard for that.

Interviewee: Some of the other agencies . . . I don't want to say you're told not to collaborate, but you are always instructed to be visible that to always remain, uh, to remain loyal to your agency and realizing that you're, don't overextend what your agency can do . . . So, to say that they all had a good working relationship prior to this grant, some of them did on a much smaller basis.

One member noted that these were some of the tensions in the beginning of the initiative, and were replaced by other tensions:

But that's, so that's been some of the tensions at the beginning. And then now the tensions are trying to get it done trying to get everything done, you know that, . . . the deadlines, and trying to figure out whose part is whose, you know, 'cause there's so many of us working on so many different things and what part we need to stay out of and what part we need to be involved in.

In this example, the member is indicating a switch in the cause of the tension within the group and the factor that replaced the turfism is role definition.

Need for Guidelines.

A third obstacle the group has faced is a need for guidelines for the group to follow. The group encountered problems as the result of a lack of written guidelines for the flow of communication. One person had a concern that was not brought to the collaborative; it was handled through outside means. This caused some strain in the group. Several members noted this as one of the primary challenges the group has faced.

This interview excerpt illustrates this obstacle:

Interviewee: That was probably, the thing that happened to [name of member] probably was the most negative thing that occurred in terms of the usage of the funds. And, some interference that occurred because we didn't, in terms of the consortium, we didn't realize they were going to happen, and we didn't . . . have a policy dealing with . . . If you have questions, what you need to do.

Differing Policies and Procedures.

One of the most difficult obstacles this group faced was related to conflicting policies and procedures by which different agencies were required to abide. The following excerpt from a meeting illustrates this problem:

Coordinator: [name of person] is going to help me with clarifications on enrollment. We have several kids who [break in tape]. The questions is, who counts this child if we bring in a child that's over-income?

Member 1: I think preschool. Should be the school.

Coordinator: Well, it's getting to be a very sticky point.

Member 2: If he's only 3, the school system can't count him because he doesn't have a IEP, my understanding is there's no way, shape or form he would ever qualify for an IEP and, so, the school can't count him . . .

Member 3: Why would the, I mean . . .

Member 2: Can daycare not . . .

Member 1: [rather forcefully] This is not a Head Start program, it is not a . . .

Member 3: It's an [Childcare] program.

Member 1: It's an [Childcare] program. It's not a Board of Ed program, it's not, really, it's a combination of all, so the guidelines really should be different . . . It's [Childcare]'s child.

Coordinator: I think that they need to be down. I think they need to be set down on a written sheet of paper and we say, 'Look, this is, these are the guidelines. Your child qualifies, because it really puts [name of teachers] in a hard spot when they've got parents who come, ready to enroll, and they're told, 'No, they can't be enrolled because they don't meet Head Start.'

Enrollment is not the only area in which this group faced difficulty from differing guidelines. Another area was in procedures of actually running the center. The following excerpt from an interview illustrates this:

Interviewee: We had a, we had an incident over there and we, the electric went off . . . And Head Start, not knowing the person that made the call from the Head

Start had never been there, had no idea how the school, how the center is set up and where it is in connection to the school . . . So they said, 'No, you have to stay in that center.' Well, we were mandated to put those kids on buses and send them home because the power was going to be off the rest of the day . . . And they were trying to follow Head Start policies and we were trying to follow code blue policies for the Board of Ed . . . and they contradicted each other.

Further expressing the complication of the differing policies is this statement:

Interviewee: So, you just have these, both these agencies, which to me are just at some point, they are just total opposites of what it is they do. And so exactly whose standards do you follow? Then, of course, don't forget that we are a licensed child care facility and we also have to follow all of the child care regulations and it's just too many, you know, it doesn't matter what you do, it's not going to be the right thing to do.

Attendance and Availability

Attendance and availability was another obstacle this group faced. The group did not meet on a day-to-day basis. Weeks would pass between meetings, so it was important that members be at those meetings to be part of the discussion. Some members were very busy with their respective organizations, which made attending the meetings difficult.

The following interview excerpts illustrate this point:

Interviewee: We have what we call 'low' meetings where not too much is accomplished, maybe because certain people weren't there. Yesterday, I'm required in two separate places . . . so I have to send in a substitute, which isn't the same as me being there. But at the same time, there's a conflict of interest. I have to be here, I have to be there, who do you pick . . . I think that's the hardest part, is when I have days where it, there's a double meeting, and it's physically impossible for me to be at both, and, I don't like to miss [the grant meeting] . . . I need a specific day, a specific time every month so that I can say, this day, I know, it's locked up for [the grant meeting] . . . So then I lose out on hearing firsthand what's going on, the ability to ask questions, if I do have any, and the person I'm sending in feels should they or should they not vote on something, should they or should they not ask a question on this, and, they weren't in from day one, so they don't know the whole gamut of [the grant] and what is involved with it.

Interviewee: Frankly to be quite honest, I . . . feel a little guilty in that I have not been able to participate as closely as some of the other members have. It's just, it's, my schedule is such that I'm just pulled in a lot of different directions.

From my observation of the meetings, it did pose a bit of a challenge for the group when members were not present. The following two excerpts are from meetings in which members were not present and their absence was an obstacle for the group. In the first excerpt, the coordinator is giving an update on some current fiscal issues. She expresses this as an area of weakness for her and how she wished the other member who was more knowledgeable were there to help.

Coordinator: You all are shaking your heads. You know this budget stuff, don't you. You've been down this road before. . . And that, I'm really disappointed that she's not here today. . . .

Another member: I thought she was supposed to be here.

Coordinator: She was. She was supposed to be here today. I don't know where she is.

In this second excerpt, the absence of two members made voting on a certain issue a problem:

Member 1: So we need, do we need a motion pending the voting of the absent members?

Member 2: I think we do, and then get the signatures of the two absent members.

Coordinator: So then, we'll vote and ask for two more signatures?

Member 1: Pending, the decision will be pending, uh, how the other two members vote.

Coordinator: Okay, but, do I just put that like on the minutes?

Member 1: Yes.

Coordinator: And then ask for them to sign the minutes?

Member 1: Yes.

Member 3: Yeah, let's make a motion.

Member 1: We vote to give, I move that we vote to give . . . pending the voting of the two, at least two of the additional members that are not here.

Because of the expertise of some members, as is demonstrated by one excerpt above, their lack of availability make it very difficult to work through other obstacles. One of the biggest obstacles this group faced was the conflicting policies and procedures required by the different agencies involved. It gets even more difficult when the key people from those agencies are not available to meet. One member of the group is no longer available because of a change in position. Another representative, who worked with the group but was not formally serving on the collaborative, is no longer available due to personal situations. Following is an excerpt from an interview in which the informant discussed how difficult it has been to work through policies and procedures obstacle without these key figures:

Interviewee: The parts of the grant that she put in there are things that she knew, she understood what she put in there. I don't know how much anybody else . . . know what she put in there and was familiar with. So, now you've got somebody else who's interpreting what [name of agency]'s role is . . . and that's been real difficult, you know. Let's just call it like it is, the center has been, it's been difficult at best because the person we were supposed to work with out in the [name of agency] is [name of person]. . . . That puts us without a [name of agency] person. So you have the two key people that we needed both out of the picture.

Creating Positive Outcomes

In analyzing the data, a number of ways the group worked to create success emerged. In the following pages, I will discuss these processes. They include religion, responding to the needs of the community, taking time to meet their psychosocial needs, a common sense of vision and purpose, sharing resources, protecting the process, the use

of “we” language, seeing difficulties as learning experiences, persistence, support of community leaders, and strong collaborative relationships.

Religion

A pervading theme in this group is the role of their personal faith in accomplishing their tasks. Not all members have referred to this aspect, but several have. For these members, their personal faith was a very obvious means for overcoming the obstacles they faced. It is not surprising to have found religion to be such a strong theme since the group is located in rural Appalachia, a region in which religion is thought to play a major role in the lives of people who live there. One member said that everyone there is very religious and that it’s just something they all share.

One of the primary functions of religion in the members of this group that have expressed it is that it helps deepen their sense of purpose and vision by helping to join the work with their personal value systems. This is not something I have observed in every member of the group, but in two of them primarily: Beth and Kendra. Many instances illustrate how these two women have integrated their personal faith with their work. For example, when talking about being hired for the position as coordinator, Kendra said that it was “divine intervention from God” that got her to apply for the position because she had no intentions of applying and also that she “prayed about it” and realized that she missed working with the people involved and decided to apply. This can also be observed with Beth. She says that she “prayed about” God opening doors if He wanted her to open another daycare center and that “God gave her the vision” for the center that she has just recently opened with some help from the grant. It seems that this integration of work and

personal faith serves to deepen the meaningfulness of these members' experiences with the grant.

Another function of religion that I have observed is a submission to the leadership of a higher power. Again, this is primarily in reference to Kendra and Beth. When I interviewed Kendra, I asked her about being hired for the position and she said, "It had to be divine intervention from God because I had no intentions of applying for this job." Here Kendra was acknowledging from the very being the guiding role she felt God played in her work with the grant. At another point in the interview, we were talking about the process of hiring a teacher and an aide for one of the sites they were funding through the grant and she acknowledged the guiding role of God in this as well by expressing her gratitude:

Of course, the girls that work here at this site. Now, there's just nobody in the world like [names of teacher and aide]. I just am so thankful that God brought them into our lives here . . . [They] are able to see the vision that we have for this program. And, they're going to be able to make it come to fruition . . . They're going to bring it about. And, when we interviewed for those . . . I knew, I knew the minute [aide's name] interviewed for that job, she was sent there for an express purpose and she is just awesome.

In fact, she gives so much credit to God for what is happening that she seems hesitant to take any credit. When I asked her what she thought helped the group to keep going, to keep working together in the midst of obstacles, she indicated that it was more than just the goal and desire to see it succeed. She said they went through a "pivotal time . . . where we had been working from February 'til, um, May, late May and there was nothing, well, they had been working since last year . . . There was that time where we were just working and meeting and doing all these things." Our conversation was cut off by a knock at the door and when we started talking again, I refreshed the question and her

first reaction at this point was to say, “My personality!” She laughed as she said this and then quickly followed up by saying:

It just has to be the grace of God, now, it just honestly has to be, ‘cause we had, they had just worked so hard, I mean, oh my gosh! And we just weren’t making any progress. The site, none of the sites were open, and, you know, you know the problems over the money and over the daycare and, and uh, no forward progress. It looked like there wasn’t any forward progress.

From this excerpt, we can see that, in Kendra’s eyes, “the grace of God” is what enabled the group to move beyond these obstacles. However, her quick response in saying it was her personality led me to believe there was something more to this than her attributing it God’s grace. I decided to probe her initial answer with a follow-up question:

Interviewer: You were laughing when you said it was your personality.

[Shared laughter – She almost seemed uncomfortable with me bringing this back up.]

Interviewer: I mean, do you think that it might have been your personality in some way?

Kendra: Oh, gosh, no. [Laughing]. No, probably, no. Probably my prayers [more] than anything. And, oh, to a degree persistence pays off, you know, um, okay, whatever we have to do, let’s roll up our sleeves and let’s just do it, you know. Um, but I’ve always been that way, you know. It didn’t matter. If it needs to be done, we’ll do it. Um, and we did it.

In this excerpt, we can clearly see that Kendra is very reluctant to take the credit for what has happened. She seems to be very humble, her initial response being to attribute the credit to God, first by saying it was the “grace of God,” then saying it was probably her “prayers [more] than anything,” while only joking about her own role in it until probed further.

A further example of how Kendra attributes guidance to God is a situation in which she had lost the original copy of a book they had made for the legislature for campaigning purposes.

And so I knew it had to be somewhere and so Mary found it over in her office of all things in a folder that she hadn't look at, she said, in probably six months. She said, 'I picked it up and flipped it open and there laid your book and I thought, how in the world did that get in here?' I said, 'All I can tell you is that an angel put it there because I had to find it. That's all I can tell you' . . . There is God on my side again . . . But I'm not interested in how it got there, I'm just thankful that I have it now.

Religion seems to play a similar role for Beth. She also attributes the credit to God for the things that occur, recognizing the guiding role of God. At the dedication ceremony of her newly opened childcare center, Beth spoke to those in attendance.

Following are excerpts from observational notes of this ceremony:

Beth said that she wasn't much of a speaker and that everyone kept telling her to write a speech, but she just couldn't do it, so she was just going to have to speak from her heart. She said that a long time ago she had prayed that if God wanted her to have a daycare that he would open up the doors. She started crying at this point. Then she said that that was when she opened [name of her first center]. She said that he keeps opening doors. A year ago in November, Laura called her about this grant opportunity . . . She told about how they were looking for a site to have the center and she said that when she came to this property, she closed her eyes and 'This is what I saw. What you see today, this is what I saw.' She said that God had given her that vision . . . She also said that, 'None of this is because of Beth [her last name]. She kept telling about how it was all about God.

Beth is clearly acknowledging the fundamental role God's guidance played in opening this center. As another example of this, Beth told me about calling the owner of the property she built the new daycare on:

So I called [name of owner] and I told him, I said, 'Think about it, Pray about it.' Because he is a preacher, I said, 'I've prayed about it and,' I said, 'I really think that God wants us to have this.' And he said, 'Beth don't say another word . . . I believe that's what God intends . . . It's your property. Don't worry about it.' And I prayed about it from the very beginning of it . . . I didn't know how to open a

daycare, and God opened the doors and when a door would be shut in front of me, I'd say, 'Now God, you show me, and you open it and I'll do it.'

Once again, this illustrates her yielding to God's guidance.

It seems that these members of the group not only feel that God provides guidance and so deserves credit for what has been accomplished, but their faith seems to be an outlet for their frustrations and a place to go for help, enabling them to continue in the face of adversity. One example of this in Kendra's case is her seeking God's guidance and control over the events occurring at the legislative level regarding funding. She said, "I, my prayer is that, you, God . . . we're doing a good job here and don't let them, don't let politics get in the middle of this and destroy it." Another example, referred to above, is when she says that she her prayers are what keeps the group going. In praying, she is turning to God in order to overcome the obstacles that they are facing.

A number of examples of this can be seen with Beth. Things were very difficult for her at one point during the grant. There was a situation related to funding that made it very difficult for her to continue working on the grant, but she said:

When one [door] is shut, he [God] opens another one. If the [name of grant] doesn't work, He will make ways, other ways, not as nice, but you don't have to have everything perfect in life because you strive to do your best, and He's opened doors, and, uh, the way the people have come to me with this, it's like, the daycare in [name of community] is right. People want it. They need it. And, it's all fitting in.

This excerpt shows how Beth turns to her faith to help her to get through difficult points in the grant. Further, by yielding control in this way, she seems to relinquish ownership of what is happening, which, in turn, appears to help her to accept difficult circumstances as they come. Consider the following from an interview with Beth:

My preacher said Sunday night, he said, 'You know, sometimes we try to do things on our own, but if you let God do them, they're done right.' And I'm one

that thinks you need to do everything yourself, and then I'll stop and I'll think, 'Now, wait a minute. God, you do it.' And then it just turns around and turns around right. But he said, the message was that financially, we don't always have to have the best. Sometimes we think we do, but we don't. But he said, 'God said He will never leave you or forsake you, and when He intends something to happen, if you will leave it alone and let Him help you, He will open the doors and make it possible financially. It may not be the best that you thought it should be, but it will be there.' And that's what happened at [community where new childcare site is located].

This passage not only demonstrates the guiding function of Beth's faith, but also the release of frustration and control that her faith provides, both of which enable her to overcome difficult obstacles in accomplishing the goals of the grant.

Responding to the Needs of the Community.

In order to create positive outcomes, this collaborative group took measures to identify the needs of the community and respond to those needs. During the proposal writing process, they conducted a needs assessment in order to determine the greatest needs in the community. They based their decisions on what they wanted to accomplish through the grant on the results of the needs assessment. The section setting up the context of this case provides a description of the basic needs of this community. The following data excerpts illustrate the group's consideration for the community's needs:

Group member during meeting: It was originally stated that I can't take some children because they don't qualify through DHHR and parent income is not enough to pay. Head Start doesn't, some kids don't qualify so there's still those few kids in the county that's not being touched by the program. We were supposed to try and touch them with this.

Interviewer: Do you feel that [Childcare] has met some of the felt needs of the people in that area?

Interviewee: Sure . . . There are certain issues that we look at barriers to service to moving people on with their lives and being able to be self-sufficient in . . . you know, obviously, the first is the job, and you'll also have to be able to have transportation. You have to have daycare, you know, and all of those things are

very important. You have to have those support systems and that's met one of those goals.

Interviewee: We have the second highest level of poverty in the state. So, coming into kindergarten, our students are not, not the skills they need to have. They are not exposed to books because there aren't enough resources out there. . . . Transportation is a problem in the county. . . . So we just felt like, you know, we needed to . . . focus on extending services we have for parents.

Interviewee: We did the needs assessment within the county, we pulled those together . . . and based on the needs assessment, where do we need to go and so on.

The group assessed the needs of the different areas of the county and decided, based on the needs assessment, which areas were most in need of services, and those are the areas and the services on which they focused. For example, one specific need was transportation. They provided a noon bus service so that parents could send their children to half-day programs when the parent had no way to transport the child.

The group also recognized the cultural needs of the area. As I discussed in my explanation of the context of this group, some people in these areas tend to have a fear of change. In one example, a teacher was hired for one of the sites that is originally from the area and members of the group expressed how pleased they were that they could hire someone from the area because they felt she would be more accepted. In another example, a member of the group recognized the needs of the community in her thoughts on hiring the coordinator:

Interviewer: Was there anything beyond her professional experience that would make you say that she was perfect for the position?

Interviewee: . . . She can communicate with people on all . . . financial levels. She can walk into a home that, you know, animals crawling, bugs crawling and be able to talk to that family, you know, with respect.

Take Time to Meet their Psychosocial Needs

Another characteristic of the group is that they take time to meet their psychosocial needs. One example of this is provided in my description of the coordinator and the day that was scheduled for the members to come together, talk about business for one hour, and then spend the rest of the afternoon making crafts and not talking about any business issues.

Another way they have taken the time to meet their psychosocial needs is to celebrate when they have accomplished one of their goals. For example, they held a dedication ceremony for the opening of one of the sites and an Open House for the opening of another site.

A third way they meet their psychosocial needs is through humor. As I observed meeting after meeting, I became very aware of how much humor the group used. Laughter always seemed to abound. For example, one member of the group offered to record a meeting that I had to miss. When I listened to the tape, at the very beginning, I hear laughter and someone singing “Yankee Doodle.” At another point during the same meeting, the group starting joking about something and one member said, “Turn that thing off!” and they all continued to laugh. During one meeting, a member was reporting the progress at one of the sites. The site has a boat theme and when asked about the progress, she replied, “It’s working. It’s floating.” A great deal of laughter followed this encounter and I recorded this in my notes:

[There were a number of people talking . . . so I couldn’t hear what was being said, but there was a lot of laughing!]

Common Sense of Vision and Purpose

One thing that stood out to me about this group was their common sense of vision and purpose. This seemed to be a driving force for the group. Following are excerpts from members stating how the vision helped them create positive outcomes:

Interviewer: What do you think keeps everyone working together through those difficulties?

Interviewee: The desire for you, for the kids to get this. This is such a big program. It is the chance of a lifetime and none of us want to blow it . . . but in the long run, it's the desire to see all of these kids served . . . Everyone in this county wants these kids to have the chance that they've never had before, so nobody wants to lose that, so it keeps the adrenaline, 'Yes, we can work it out, it's just a matter of finding how. And we do.

Interviewee: There've been times even here lately that I've been down . . . It's all I could do to keep it running, but those kids need that daycare . . .

Interviewer: So what was it, do you think that kept you motivated throughout that process?

Interviewee: The students, the outcome, the outcome, it's the outcome. And, it fit into, well, it fit into what I believe, and believe that, uh, well, the entire consortium, that's what we needed to do in the county.

Interviewee: I think everybody desires for this to work out so therefore I think it will.

Specifically, this characteristic helped them work toward overcoming the obstacle of turfism, as is illustrated in the following excerpt:

Interviewee: I sat and looked at every one of these women that represented all these different agencies, I was like, 'Oh, give me a break. There is no way in the world you all are going to make this fly.' But I listened to them, you know, and listened to their desire and the one goal that they shared in making this grant a success and I thought, okay, maybe, maybe it just, maybe it's possible that we could all do it.

One key aspect to the vision of the group was that it matched what the members believed personally:

Interviewee: But I supported it, so, it, you know, it was a good match.

Interviewee: That's my goal, but, that's a personal goal, but I see [Childcare] being a leader in that.

Interviewee: . . . Well, it fit into what I believe. . . .

Interviewee: I like the idea that we're doing something I believe in, which is getting the message out there about kids and their need for readiness skills before they get to kindergarten.

In some cases, members have felt that some have strayed from the primary goals of the group. The following interview excerpt illustrates this point, "I think a lot of people have forgotten the original purpose of the grant, that it is to benefit the children . . . so that's been a challenge to me." During one meeting, members voiced the original vision when they felt it was being neglected, as the following meeting transcript excerpts illustrate:

Member 1: If we want to start turning children down, are we not defeating the purpose of the grant? . . .

Member 2: The very first meeting we were in that I was in, we said, 'These are not your children, they're not my children, they're [Childcare] children.'

Member 1: That's right.

Member 2: And it does not go on guidelines.

Member 1: That's right.

Member 2: So, then, it should be a [Childcare] problem.

Member 1: I mean, it defeats the purpose of giving each child a chance. I mean, you know?

Coordinator: And access to the . . .

Member 1: Access to learning.

Member 2: That's right. And that's what it's for. [Childcare] was for every child in the county under the age of 5. . . . So there are still those few kids in the county

that's not being touched by the program. We were supposed to try and touch them with this. . . .

Member 1: When we wrote this grant, it was for all children. . . . and no child was to be disqualified.

These group members held onto their original purpose as they struggled through this obstacle.

Share Resources.

This county is short in resources:

Interviewee: Of course, within our county, in terms of early care and education, we're very lacking in resources and, uh, we have one daycare center in [name of county], which does not serve the needs throughout the county.

This lack of resources is one of the obstacles the group has faced in accomplishing their goals for early care and education. This grant was an opportunity for them to gain needed resources and work together to use them. The following excerpts illustrate how the group shares resources in order to accomplish their objectives:

Interviewee: It's been fascinating to me . . . getting us together as an organization and helping me to learn new avenues, and helping me learn ways to benefit my daycare.

Interviewee: I like it because you draw off someone else's experience and where, you know, I might have had an idea about how one way would have went and you get a group together and talk it out, you can really see where it's going to and how.

Interviewee: Working with DHHR and identifying those families and be able to expand upon the [Childcare] initiative, we'll be able to reach more families and get into more homes. Also, we're working with Head Start with the early Head Start Grant. Of course, that's not going to get us into a lot of homes, but we're going to try to make that lift the load.

Interviewee: The [Childcare] initiative has made me aware of all the different things that are happening but nothing is tied together. It has tied resources together. Even though we were already doing it, it has helped that effort.

Interviewee: I think it's a partnership. Working to maximize, again, the resources that you have available. It's important that we be knowledgeable on the various resources that we do have available to us that we can draw, various organizations can draw from those resources . . . It's important that we support each other . . .

Interviewee: They are a wealth of information and I can glean a lot and it's probably very good for all of them, including myself, that it doesn't bother me that I don't know what to do and when I don't know what to do, I just simply call and say, 'I don't know how to do this. I don't know what this is.'

Interviewee: I think it's everybody working together, sharing resources, and helping each other out, identifying what the gaps are, what the strengths are . . . you can just fill in those gaps.

One member told me during an interview about the resources she brings to the group. She does not provide direct service, but she knows of many resources that can be passed on to the families and she helps a great deal with publicity. At the end of most meetings, she has a list of programs, services, grants, etc that she shares with the group in case they want to take advantage of those resources:

Interviewee: Getting a direct link to those parents, it's very hard in this position sometimes . . . I can get information directly to them, and plus there's a, a trust that I know that the staff is responsible enough, that they're going to get that information to the parents. It's not going to sit on somebody's desk and draw dust.

This group shares resources beyond those included within the grant. During one meeting, the group discussed sharing resources that were not directly related to the grant.

Following is an excerpt from this meeting:

Member 1: There's not enough money. We were first told that we got the [other grant]. They notified us this week that they changed their mind. . . . So, [name of camp] is cancelled.

Member 2: Wait a minute, how much do you need?

Member 1: \$4000.

Member 3: It's \$150 a child.

Member 1: Yeah, \$150 a child. It was \$2000 [inaudible]

Member 2: Well, before, when was, when was it scheduled for?

Member 1: It was scheduled to start the 14th.

Member 2: Before you, well, I guess what I'm saying is, we have excess money in the [name of agency] fund that we need to get rid of. Right now, we're kind of using it until our grant money comes rolling in again, but once our grant money starts rolling in, we have to get rid of that excess funding that we have stored up, so, I was thinking maybe that, I mean, we've probably got about \$2000 that we could put into [name of camp].

Protective of the Process

During the course of the grant, there was a concern over funding usage. This concern was taken to an outside party and resulted in hurt feelings and interference in the progress of accomplishing the group's goals. They were stalled in completing one of their tasks because of the time involved dealing with this concern. As a result of this obstacle, the group developed a protocol for such issues. In the following excerpt, one member describes this protocol:

We didn't have a policy dealing with, in terms of, if you have questions, what you need to do. But because of that . . . we do have a policy that states, 'Okay, if you don't agree with something that's in this grant or you have a concern, you come to the consortium.'

So, rather than dealing with your concern or disagreement by approaching an outside figure, that concern should be addressed and worked out among the collaborative members. This protocol procedure was reactive in this situation and is proactive in order to prevent such situations from happening again. It is an example of the high value the group places on protecting the process of collaboration and trust within the group, that nothing will be said or done apart from discussion with the entire collaborative, giving the group a chance to respond as a whole.

Another example of how they seek to protect the process of collaboration is the agreement they signed at the beginning of the initiative:

When you have those collaboration things you write down these agreements, agency agreements . . . You will do this, we will do this, we will do that . . . they at least become a structure, a model that you can start to follow.

However, as the group progressed, unexpected obstacles arose and their current agreements were not sufficient to handle them. As one member explained, “Our collaborative agreement, the one that I saw . . . was just a page long . . .so that left so much gray area as to who’s doing what.” In response to this problem, the group planned to meet to rethink the collaborative agreement and work through these obstacles.

This group sought to make decisions by consensus. In the proposal, they stated that all decisions would be made by consensus. However, they also stated that, “If consensus cannot be reached then majority vote will rule.” Their conversation in reaching consensus seems to occur in a participative format in which members are free to express agreements and disagreements. The following excerpts support this point:

Interviewee: I think, you know, the process certainly is that everybody has an equal opportunity for participation and input in the process and that’s been very good . . . I think there has been, certainly, an opportunity to, for open discussion and participation.

[Name of member] told me that the collaborative works together well, but they often agree to disagree. They are not afraid to express them, but they are willing to work through them. [excerpt from field notes]

Interviewee: I think that once we received the grant, then everyone worked together again and continuing to work together, making sure that it’s implemented and if something comes up, or, a bump in the road or a glitch, everybody, it is brought before the whole committee so no one’s really left out in the dark . . . I’ve always been informed so I’ve always known what’s going on and taking place. I think that’s definitely one of our strong points.

Interviewee: I think it’s a real positive thing that if you can identify an issue and work toward a resolution and I think that that’s a positive because very often

when you can't do that, then things really fall through and I think that the group has certainly been open to that type of communication and I think that's paramount in success of any organization is that you be able to work through issues and still survive, and still move forward and meet your goals.

Interviewee: They always say, 'Well, [name of interviewee], what do you have to say, what's going on?' You know, then I can put my two cents worth in, so, they're always, um really good about that in the sense that they realize that I'm coming in from a different perspective and that, you know, I can share some things that maybe they're not aware of.

Certainly, the group had difficulties in these discussions as well. As one member put it, "Sometimes we're all talking and we're not listening."

Use of "We" Language

One thing that struck me as I attended meetings and spoke with members of this group was their use of language that presented the group as a unit, what I am referring to here as "we" language. In the discussion above about turfism, members noted the idea that "These are OUR kids," as opposed to them being each agency's kids. This is not the only situation in which members referred to the group as "we." Here are just a few examples to illustrate this point:

Interviewee: So it keeps the adrenaline, 'Yes, *we* [emphasis mine] can work it out. It's just a matter of finding how.' And, *we* do.

Interviewee: This is a county where we've put aside the one angle that hurts most collaborations, which is the 'I.' *I* did this or *my* organization did that. It's not 'I' anymore, and it's not 'my' organization, it's 'our,' this is 'our' baby. This is what *we're* doing. And, as a group we're looking at it. We're not looking at it as individual organizations. And I think that's the biggest aspect of it.

See difficulties as learning experiences.

Another factor that contributed to this group's ability to overcome obstacles and create positive outcomes was viewing the difficulties as learning experiences. Several members expressed this sentiment:

Interviewee: It's really been a learning experience. It really has.

Interviewee: We've learned that the programs *can* work together, with each other, for the benefit of the kids instead of fighting against 'This is my set of kids and that's your set of kids.' We can share 'em.

Interviewee: You always find this roadblock along the way that you don't anticipate, but I, it's a learning experience. I don't see it as a negative; I see it as a learning experience.

Interviewee: I think we've learned so much on what we should have done prior to starting.

It appears that this perspective led at least some members to view their obstacles in a positive light rather than a negative light, enabling them to work through them rather than give up.

Persistence.

Persistence is a very strong theme in how this group overcomes obstacles and creates positive outcomes. Like the coordinator, many other members have expressed their level of commitment to accomplish the task at hand and have gone to great lengths to accomplish their goals. The following excerpts illustrate this point:

Interviewee: We had to do what we had to do, and we accepted it because this was what we thought we'd do. I'm one of those people that if, if you gotta do it, you gotta do it, just do it and don't worry about it.

Interviewee: There's been times even here lately . . . it's all I could do to keep it running, but those kids need that daycare . . .

Interviewee: Whatever we have to do, let's roll up our sleeves and let's just do it, you know . . . If it needs to be done, we'll do it. And, we did it.

Interviewee: There've been hurdles, but we've, we've mastered them, and we'll continue to do so . . . we'll get the money spent and then, in the allotted time, we'll do it. We'll make this a reality.

The high level of persistence exhibited in the words of these group members provides a glimpse of the attitude the members have, one of persistence, of pursuing their goals until

they are reached. The discussion of the role of the coordinator provides further evidence of persistence among the members of this group. In my analysis of the coordinator's role, I found that she is a hard worker and provided this excerpt as illustrative of her persistence:

And, oh, to a degree, persistence pays off . . . whatever we have to do, let's roll up our sleeves and let's just do it . . . But I've always been that way . . . It didn't matter. If it needs to be done, we'll do it . . . And we did it.

Support of Community Leaders

One factor that helped this group to overcome obstacles and create positive outcomes was the support of community leaders. Members told me about various community leaders who had shown their support of the grant effort, including their representative in the House of Delegates. The following excerpts from the data show the support various leaders in the community provided for the group and their effort:

Interviewee: We have a principal currently . . . at the school who is, formerly a first grade teacher who is very focused on early childhood and the needs of early childhood and who supports the blending of resources as well as the need to get early care and education.

In one interview, a member shared with me how the dentist in the community offered his services at the early care sites to provide screenings for the children free of charge.

Interviewee: You know, and that way if it's in the grant then we're increasing quality because we're having him in all the pre-schools and the daycares . . . he doesn't care to do that.

Strong collaborative relationships

A final and very prominent factor in how the group overcame obstacles and created positive outcomes was through having strong collaborative relationships. A thorough discussion of these relationships is provided in chapter three, since it is related to the nature of the relationships among the members.

This chapter has outlined the common obstacles this group shares with other groups and discussed the ways this group has sought to create success. They have done this through religion, responding to the needs of the community, taking time to meet their psychosocial needs, sharing a common sense of vision and purpose, sharing resources, protecting the process, using “we” language, seeing difficulties as learning experiences, persistence, support of community leaders, and strong collaborative relationships. Previous chapters have discussed the nature of the relationships among the group members and leadership enactment in the group. Chapter seven will provide a discussion of the relationship between the current research and previous research, providing implications for future research.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusions

Kurt Lewin would commend the study of community collaborative groups. Lewin urged researchers to seek understanding and develop theories that can be applied to important social problems. The current research has heeded his call by adding to current knowledge about community collaboration, a complex process becoming increasingly more popular for solving complex community problems. In community collaboration, people come together for a common cause, which is to improve their community in some way by solving complex social problems. The collaborative group for the current research came together to solve problems related to early care and education in their community, namely to increase quality and accessibility of early care and education programs as well as to provide linkages for families to various community resources.

Many themes have emerged in the ethnographic study of this collaborative community group in rural Appalachia. The current findings have a strong connection to previous research and also carry several implications for future research. This chapter will outline the findings for each research question and discuss how they are related to previous research and provide implications for future research.

Research Question 1: The Nature of the Relationships

The first research question is “What is the nature of the relationships among the members?” In answering this question, several distinct themes emerged. Being established before the conception of the grant, being cohesive, having an informal climate, and being positive and supportive of one another characterize the collaborative relationships. Having established relationships, both personally and professionally, is not

surprising because of the location of the community. It is in a very remote region of the country, a rural Appalachian community. Such interconnectedness is characteristic of rural Appalachian culture (Crickard, 1974). Also, the limited resources in the area almost forced the group to work together. They needed each other's resources. According to Chaskin et. al (2001), community capacity, or the ability to maintain and improve the well-being of others, to respond to changing circumstances, and to achieve collective goals, is developed in part through interorganizational collaboration. Their history of collaboration, then, may have increased community capacity, enabling them to work together to solve the current problems they faced in early care and education.

Another characteristic of their relationships is that they are cohesive. They have stayed together through difficult circumstances and worked through them together. It is possible that their past relationships have contributed to their ability to do so, providing a foundation for a collaborative climate to progress. Many scholars, including Chrislip and Larson (1994) claim that getting stakeholders to come to the table and work together in a trusting environment is a time-consuming process, and it is possible that much of this work was finished before the grant process began. This expands the current research by posing a proactive way to approach collaboration, which is to develop and maintain positive interorganizational relationships in order to save time developing a trusting collaborative climate. Clearly, given some of the internal obstacles they faced, such as turfism, the group still had some work to do in this area, but their history of relationships with one another may have given them a head start in this process.

Another aspect of their relationships that bears a strong connection to previous research is that group members are positive and supportive of one another. Chapter three

discussed ways in which the members demonstrated their supportiveness of one another, and even their liking and affection toward one another. Supportiveness is one of the characteristics LaFasto and Larson (2001) found to be characteristic of effective team members. They state that, “At the core is a desire and willingness to help others succeed” (p. 14). Further, they describe it as “putting the team’s goal above any individual agenda, being easy to work with, and demonstrating a willingness to help others achieve” (p. 15). Supportive group members are interested in what needs to be done and in helping the team succeed. While the group was not completely supportive, they were primarily supportive. That they put the team’s goal above their individual goals can be seen in their common vision and purpose. That they are easy to work with can be seen in the pleasure they express through laughter so frequently when they are together and in the things they have said about their relationships in interviews. That they demonstrate a willingness to help others achieve can be seen in how more experienced and knowledgeable members of the group have played a mentor role for those who are less experienced, including the coordinator. Thus, the current research confirms and expands LaFasto and Larson’s work on this subject. This aspect can also be explained by the rural Appalachian location of the community since individuals in such communities are often characterized as being neighborly and personal in their relations with others (see Crickard, 1974).

Research Question 2: Leadership Enactment

Before hiring a coordinator, the group clearly had members who served as catalysts of the process. Chrislip and Larson (1994) had similar findings in their research.

In every example of successful collaboration we encountered, there were people who served as catalysts – one or more people who had the clear vision, or the

energy to get people moving, or the words to inspire imagination, or the influence to marshal the resources, or simply the nerve to call the meeting. In the beginning, collaboration is fueled by individual acts (p. 83)

Such was the case for this collaborative group. Laura was unanimously credited for doing most of the work in the early stages of the process. Sandy also played a large role in the process by rallying support for the grant in the very early stages.

Once these early processes were completed and they had received the grant, the work seemed to become more of a group effort. They also hired a coordinator. Several themes emerged for the role of the coordinator when answering research question two regarding leadership enactment. They are as follows: group members view her in a positive light; she has a strong people-orientation; she recognizes psychosocial needs of the group; she is servant-minded; she is a hard worker concerned with quality; she is humble; she is not a stakeholder; she performs clerical and leadership tasks; and she is a facilitator. In the following pages, I will discuss how these findings are related to previous research.

If the group members had not viewed her in a positive light, they probably would not have hired her for the position, but they had faith in her abilities to perform as a leader of the group, and so chose her. For the most part, her performance in the position did not change this perception. Her strong people-orientation may have had something to do with this perception.

Further, her people orientation confirms the work of numerous researchers who argue that collaborative leadership is primarily relationship leadership. Taylor-Powell et. al (1998) identify leadership that is democratic and people-oriented as characteristic of

collaborative leadership. Chrislip and Larson (1994) describe the collaborative leader's role in this way, "Their energy is invested in the people – building relationships and the process" (p. 140). Rubin (1998) characterizes the collaborative leader's role as "the skillful and mission-oriented management of relevant interinstitutional relationships" (p. xvii). Thus, the coordinator's people-oriented leadership is like the current typology of collaborative leadership in this way.

However, her leadership includes a large number of task-oriented behaviors as well. Not all of these are exemplary of leadership tasks, per se, but are often more clerical or secretarial in nature. This does present a unique understanding of the role a collaborative leader might fulfill. Beyond the relationship- and process-oriented behaviors, it may be functional for the leader to perform such tasks. The coordinator's focus on task issues within the group is part of the job description offered in the group's proposal for funding.

The coordinator's servant-nature is characteristic of collaborative leadership as described by Chrislip and Larson (1994). They compare Robert Greenleaf's notion of "servant leadership" to collaborative leadership by saying, "Collaborative leaders are servants of the group, helping stakeholders do their work" (p. 143). This also helps to explain the clerical nature of some of the tasks of the coordinator, discussed above. She may perform those duties so the other members can be freed from those responsibilities in order to continue collaborating. In fact, the coordinator also has a self-proclaimed problem delegating tasks, tending to do many tasks alone. She said she felt responsible for the getting those things done, thus revealing her hard-working and servant characteristics.

Chrislip and Larson (1994) found that strong leadership focused on the collaborative process, as opposed to leadership through advocacy of a particular point of view, was a central characteristic of successful collaborative efforts. The coordinator in this collaborative was not a stakeholder in the grant, which may have freed her from advocating any particular point of view. She was not neutral on all issues, however, it may have helped that she was not representing any particular interest. Instead, she was a facilitator, helping to ensure a collaborative climate in which communication is safe, a collaborative approach is demanded, and problem-solving is productive, as LaFasto and Larson (2001) argue is a central characteristic of an effective team leader.

Finally, she demonstrates humility, or as Crickard (1974) calls a similar concept, modesty. Modesty about their abilities has been identified as one of the central characteristics of people within the Appalachian culture, and this coordinator fits the description. This comes as no surprise since she is a native to the area. This characteristic also seems related to her servant leadership role in the group and her focus on quality. As a servant, she was not one to overrate her abilities and, in fact, was more likely to underrate them. As a hard worker focused on quality, she sought the advice of others, both within the group and people in other communities performing similar duties to be sure the work was completed correctly. This furthers LaFasto and Larson's (2001) notion that team leaders should manage their ego and personal control needs by illustrating how a collaborative leader might lead in such a way that she is willing to be corrected and seek help, not feeling as though she has to be right in everything. It seems that the current leader does not rely upon being right or having certain knowledge to fulfill her ego needs.

Research Question 3: Overcoming Obstacles and Positive Outcomes

The collaborative group that is the focus of the current research faced many obstacles, which are not unlike those faced by other groups. These include defining roles, turfism, the need for guidelines, attendance and availability, and differing policies and procedures.

The problem of turfism, identified by several members of the group as a problem and by others as a non-issue, is similar to the notion of interests discussed by Chrislip and Larson (1994). One characteristic of successful communication in collaborations is a shift away from narrow, parochial interests to broader interests of the community. It is clear that the primary focus of this group was on the broader interests of the community, but at least in working through one issue, narrower interests became the focus. This narrow focus was fueled by policies and procedures that were contradictory among the agencies in question. However, they still seemed to recognize that “their ability to do something about complex issues required them to collaborate as equal partners rather than as advocates of particular interests” (Chrislip & Larson, 1994, p. 54).

Further, this collaborative group seemed to have somewhat of a mixed motive goal structure, based on Social Interdependence Theory, in which some outcomes encouraged competition and others encouraged cooperation. The cooperative nature of the group is clear because, if they viewed themselves as being purely in competition, they would not have agreed to come together to collaborate. Also, some of the competition can be seen within the group, especially, according to a few group members' comments, when money is involved.

One of the problems that surfaced within the group was attendance and availability of members of the group as well as those closely related to the group's work who were needed to help the group overcome obstacles. Taylor-Powell, Rossing, and Geran (1998) discuss how sustaining participation may become an issue that needs attention in a collaborative. My findings show the group having difficulty having effective meetings at times because of a lack of attendance.

Another obstacle they faced was a need for guidelines for the collaborative process and for their roles within the collaborative. These two issues led to some difficulty within the group, confirming Taylor-Powell et. al's (1998) argument that members of collaboratives should have clear, accepted roles and responsibilities and that there should be a system or procedures for dealing with internal conflict. These are lessons several group members reported to have learned throughout their collaboration in the current research.

The group worked together, even in the face of the obstacles, to create positive outcomes. Themes that emerged through data analysis suggest the following as contributing factors: religion (personal faith), responding to the needs of the community, taking time to meet psychosocial needs of the group, having a common vision and purpose, sharing resources, being protective of the collaborative process, using "We" language, seeing difficulties as learning experiences, persistence, and the having the support of community leaders.

Religion was mentioned by several members, but became a clear theme only through a few. This does not mean it was not a factor, but it was only discussed forthrightly by a few members. Being a very prevalent part of rural Appalachian culture,

it is not surprising that this theme would emerge (Crickard, 1974). It played a clear functional role for these group members, keeping them at the table as they worked through various obstacles, and providing motivation and purpose to stay at the table. Their personal faith seemed to be one of the major contributions to their modesty and their ability to maintain a collaborative climate.

Clearly, as far as responding to the needs of the community, this group would not have formed if they had not done so. According to Chrislip and Larson (1994), good timing and a clear need are essential to the success of a collaborative effort. This group had the sense of urgency, in part due to the grant deadlines, and they critically evaluated the needs of different areas of the community in order to decide how to focus their efforts.

Perhaps their concern with psychosocial needs is closely related to the Appalachian context. Personalism and neighborliness are characteristic of rural Appalachian culture as opposed to urban cultures in which the person becomes an object filling a role (Crickard, 1974). This may simply be something to be expected in a context such as this one, but must be developed and nurtured in other contexts.

According to Lawrence et. al (1999), collaboration is socially constructed through communication. If this is true, then the use of “we” language among the members serves to shape the nature of the collaboration. Thus, this language may not only reflect interdependence among the members, but it may spark more interdependence among them by shaping the nature of their collaboration. The current research reveals that this group is interdependent demonstrated both in their use of “we” language and in their sharing of financial and informational resources. Hackman and Johnson (2000) say this

about the use of “we” language: “The selection of the word ‘we’ is revealing. It reflects a willingness to share power and credit and to work with others” (p. 234).

Shared vision has permeated group and leadership research. The current research affirms the common notion that successful collaborative groups have a shared vision and focus. For example, LaFasto and Larson (2001) found that focus is a characteristic of effective problem-solving teams. Hackman and Johnson (2000) argue that, “Compelling visions provide people with a sense of purpose and encourage commitment” (p. 105). Perhaps, then, this shared vision is what urged the group to show persistence in their work as well.

Their protectiveness of the process and support of community leaders are themes that have emerged in previous research as well. Having a climate in which communication is safe and the process is protected are fundamental aspects of effective collaborative groups. Previous research is filled with discussions about the protection of the process in these groups. The importance of support from community leaders can be seen in Chrislip and Larson’s (1994) work in which they found this to be one of the primary characteristics of successful collaboratives.

Implications for Future Research:

The current research has many implications for future research. For example, the implications of Appalachian culture could be explored in a separate study to find the cultural effects, if any, on community collaboration. Perhaps collaboration is characteristic of rural Appalachian culture or another regional culture. Studying collaboration while paying particularly close attention to culture could expand not only our current understanding of collaboration, but also the culture in question. One format

for studying this would be comparative case studies, such as conducting one case study in rural Appalachia, one in urban Appalachia, and another in other rural, urban, and/or suburban settings.

Also, each research question has potential to be a single, in-depth study of its own. The first research question about the nature of the relationships among the members could be given more attention than it has in the current research. Scholars might interview members more intensely in reference to their relationships, conduct observations focused on studying the relationships, or even study their discourse in order to draw conclusions about their relationships.

The second research question would be worthwhile as an individual study as well. A close examination could be conducted of the leadership behaviors each member of the group may exhibit. This could also be achieved through in-depth interviews and observations, through the study of their discourse, and even by applying Bales Interaction Process Analysis to the group.

A single study could also be conducted seeking to know how the group creates positive outcomes. This might include the study of how the group makes decisions and solves problems. It might examine more closely the goal structure of the group and how they respond to that structure. It might also examine motivation and what keeps people at the table in collaboration. One factor that served to keep some members at the table in the current research was a focus on personal faith. Certainly, this will not be the case of all collaborative group members, but it would be interesting to find out if a comparable factor might play a similar function as religion in a different group and among different members.

It may also be beneficial to conduct longer-term studies to gain an even deeper understanding of the issues at hand. For example, following this group for six months to a year beyond the official end of the grant funding would almost certainly provide a richer understanding of how the group works and what the effects of the grant have had on collaboration.

A micro-level understanding of the discourse within the group could be achieved by conducting a conversation analysis of one or more meeting transcripts. Falk and Kilpatrick (1999) employed such an approach in their study of social capital in a rural community. Their contention is that social capital is created in micro interactions, so studying these micro interactions should help us to understand what is happening in the macro social order. Likewise, collaborative leadership is a product of communication, so studying micro interactions within a collaborative group may help us to understand the nature of collaborative leadership.

Finally, studying collaboration as it relates to gender would serve to expand knowledge related not only to collaboration, but also to gender differences and/or similarities in communicating. For example, the collaborative group members in the current research are all female except for one male. An interesting study might be to conduct a multiple case study comparing collaborative groups, one perhaps being completely female, one half and half, and one completely male.

The current research has revealed similar themes as previous research and has expanded the knowledge base, incorporating new and different concepts into current understanding of collaboration. It has provided many opportunities for conducting future research that will expand further upon the current findings as well as previous research.

As we move more and more into an “age of collaboration,” it is important that we gain a scholarly understanding of how collaboration occurs so that trustworthy findings may be applied in real settings, taking heed to Lewin’s call to address important social problems in scholarly research.

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