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GETTING IN EACH OTHER'S WAY: ENLARGING THE POSSIBILITIES OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COMMUNICATION

CECELIA M. LONG

89 Pages

The ultimate aim of sustainable community development is to produce, promote, and preserve community well-being. When community developers are unable to effectively articulate and actualize this aim, the individuals and communities they serve needlessly suffer, especially those in poverty circumstances, homelessness, and other forms of destitution. In this thesis, I explore the communication between organizational leaders, their collaborative partners, and participatory community members as a vital component of sustainable community development. This study addresses the lack of a comprehensive set of communicative strategies for community developers to produce sustainable change and well-being for all. I conducted twenty-five in-depth interviews with professionals working in areas of community development in a Midwestern city in the United States. The resulting communication practices are organized into themes corresponding with the research questions exploring communication and sustainable community development as it relates to (a) articulating purpose, (b) communicating collaboratively, and (c) incorporating community members. Specific methodological, theoretical and practical implications of this study are discussed.

KEYWORDS: Community Participation; Community Well-being; Inter-organizational Collaboration; Sustainable Community Development

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GETTING IN EACH OTHER'S WAY: ENLARGING THE POSSIBILITIES OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COMMUNICATION

CECELIA M. LONG

A Thesis Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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GETTING IN EACH OTHER'S WAY: ENLARGING THE POSSIBILITIES OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COMMUNICATION

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

> The next necessary thing is to enlarge the possibility of an intelligible discourse between people quite different from one another in interest, outlook, wealth, and power and yet contained in a world where, tumbled as they are into endless connection, it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other's way (Gertz, 1988).

The ultimate aim of sustainable community development is to produce, promote, and preserve community well-being. When community developers are unable to effectively articulate and actualize this aim, the individuals and communities they serve needlessly suffer, especially those in poverty circumstances, homelessness, and other forms of destitution. Despite the vast amount of research on and funding for community development projects, actual community developers remain fragmented in their approaches to defining problems and identifying sustainable solutions (Suiter, 2017). Although there exist several competing definitions of community development, this study will elaborate on a definition that emphasizes long-term positive impact, also known as sustainability. Melkote (2002) provides a suitable starting point: Community development is "a process that should provide people with access to appropriate and sustainable opportunities to improve their lives and the lives of others in their communities" (p. 428). Perhaps the greatest component of community development is the communication between organizational leaders, collaborative partners, and participatory community members. This study addresses the lack of a comprehensive set of communicative strategies for community developers to produce sustainable change and well-being for all.

Communication and Community Development

Communication and community originate from the Latin words *communis* and *communicare,* referring to participation and the sharing of a common space. The essence of a

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community is founded on the ties between people mediated through communication. Therefore, without communication, there can be no community (Annan-Prah, 2015). Besides the shared etymology, the fields of communication and community development overlap naturally and share a basic foundation of what it means to be a human and connect with the world around us. The integration of these two fields is not only rewarding for scholars on both sides, but also widely useful to understanding day-to- day life and the human experience.

This idea of community being held together through communication is by no means a new one. The Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle held that a community is "composed of functionally differentiated sets of relationships" and speech, voice, and location are elements that bind people to one another and a specific place (Depew & Peters, 2001, pp. 3-4). Other scholars use communication and interaction as synonymous terms, which dictate an understanding of relations between people and their surroundings. Mead (1934) describes social interactions in terms of expressions, symbols, and gestures that are interpreted and performed through social bonds filled with shared meaning. Parsons (1960) describes the communicative complex as one of four principal structures of community that contribute to the formation of meaning. The combination of elements entailed in communication, such as constant message transmission, reciprocation, and a commitment or refusal of commitment to a then-specified action, all explicitly contribute to a common culture. Communication is the medium through which a common culture is shared in patterned behaviors between social units.

There are a variety of ways in which scholars define a community and the relevant processes involved in spurring development and producing social well-being. An interactional approach defines a community as a social system or a field of interactions. Wilkinson (1999) describes social interaction as a central property of any community and as an element that adds

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substance to other perspectives, particularly ecological, cultural, and organizational perspectives. He emphasizes "interpersonal bonds such as shared territory, a common life, collective action, and mutual identity" as components involved in this interactional approach (p. 11). He explains that the essential "ingredient is social interaction. Social interaction delineates territory as the community locale; it provides the associations that comprise the local society; it gives structure and direction to processes of collective action; and it is the source of community identity" (p. 11). Reiterated in another way, humans have an innate desire to belong and solidify a common understanding with other people (Wilson, 2012). Scholars have conceptualized this interactional approach to understand community and highlight elements involving a specific locality. A local territory is the place in which individuals develop their personal identity, affirm their values, and take part in social activity (Ayala, 2015). A common definition of community often includes a shared space in which people participate in activities and allocate resources (Bender, 1978; Warren, 1978). Kaufman (1959) lists a geographic area where people live, a local society of interconnected networks and associations, and a community field or arena all as interactional spaces where collective actions between people are performed.

Community Well-Being

The ultimate purpose of community development is to produce, promote, and preserve community well-being. Community well-being has been used synonymously with terms like community, happiness, social quality, healthy communities, socioeconomic equality, and sustainability. Lee, Kim and Philips (2015) define community well-being as "the state in which the needs and desires of the community are fulfilled … and the predominant focus and value of community development is to improve people's lives" (p. 2). The concern for community well-being has been a topic of conversation for thousands of years. To discuss well-being, Aristotle

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(1999) used the term *eudaemonia*, referring to a state of flourishing or happiness that is reached by each person living a life of virtue, with a prudent emphasis on well-being for all, rather than personal pleasure. Developing a good life is dependent on complex and meaningful goals set by individuals and communities and is pursued with the other in mind (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Henderson & Knight, 2012; Keyes & Annas, 2009). Mulgan, Hothi, Brophy, and Bacon (2008) distinguish individual and national well-being: "We use community to refer to a geographically bound group of people on a local scale who are subject to either direct or indirect interaction with each other" (p. 11).

The multiplicity of definitions for community well-being brings about a great deal of confusion and a lack of common understanding among community developers (Lee & Kim, 2015). Operating under different definitions prevents people acting in different groups from working together and finding efficient solutions to community problems. This basic confusion causes many unforeseen issues. Without a common definition, policymakers struggle as they create policies that counteract each other. Navigation and application challenges to practitioners and academics also arise, as well as large costs to public and environmental resources. Meanwhile public dissatisfaction increases. Lee and Kim suggest a continuum of understanding for well-being, from an individual to collective emphasis, and present an array of factors that can impact well-being as it relates to political, social, environmental, economic, and relational factors. The elements all interact with one another, producing varying levels of well-being.

Wilkinson (1999) provides a systematic understanding of this relationship between community development and three interconnected dimensions of community well-being, comprising individual, social, and ecological well-being. Ecological well-being refers to a healthy and nourishing physical environment that is preserved and protected from unnecessary

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degradation and a conscientious relationship between people and the surrounding ecology. It is suggested that collective well-being will reduce behaviors and habits that are destructive toward the environment. Individual and social well-being will be the most relevant for this review of literature and merit more detailed attention as they are directly facilitated by communication.

Individual Well-Being and Poverty

Individual well-being is "a natural state that emerges when a person is freed sufficiently from the demands of reducing chemical deficits" and is able to be more socially responsive and can pursue self-actualization (Wilkinson, 1999, p. 62). These chemical demands are described by other scholars as lower level or basic needs, including food, shelter, safety, and security, which allow individuals to spend more time on higher level needs including relationships, belonging, and self-discovery (Allport, 1955). Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs is a well-known theory founded on the idea of motivation. He suggests that people are first motivated by physiological needs, such as food, water, warmth, and sleep. They are then motivated to find safety and security through shelter and other means. Belongingness and love, self-esteem, and self-actualization are then the goals that motivate someone. The needs transition from basic and psychological satisfaction to self-fulfillment. After the lower level needs are provided for:

> The person will feel keenly, as never before, the absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife, or children. He will hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in his group, and he will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal. He will want to attain such a place more than anything else in the world and may even forget that once, when he was hungry, he sneered at love. (Maslow, 1943, p. 376)

Maslow's model reminds us of the indisputable importance of social interaction for human survival and community well-being.

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Since the purpose of community development is to produce well-being for all, much of the effort within the field is targeted toward those who most lack well-being: those chronically living in poverty. As recently as 2017, one in every seven Americans live in poverty. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that about 40.2 million people are living in poverty circumstances, which is about 12.7% of the population (Semega, Fontenot, & Kollar, 2017). Blow (2014) states:

> Poverty is a demanding, stressful, depressive, and often violent state. No one seeks it; they are born or thrust into it. In poverty, the whole of your life becomes an exercise in coping and correcting, searching for a way up and out, while focusing today on filling pots and plates, maintaining a roof and some warmth, and dreading the new challenge tomorrow may bring. (p. 18)

The experience of poverty runs counter in nearly every way to community well-being and deteriorates efforts to enact community-level change. McNall (2016) explains that inequality not only reduces trust between individuals and limits civic engagement, but also prevents a community, state, or nation from adapting more readily to political, economic, and environmental changes. Inequality also wastes human potential and ultimately takes more resources and energy to maintain when compared to a more equal system.

Impoverished people tend to work low-status, blue-collar jobs that do not offer many opportunities to increasing and diversifying their social networks (social capital) or learning new skills and advancing their education (human capital) (McNall, 2016). Simon's (1990) theory of bounded rationality asserts, "Our decisions are bounded by the knowledge we have at any given time; we do the best with the information we have available to us" (p. 19). When people have an increased capacity to make decisions, they have more opportunities to make decisions that can benefit them in the long run, rather than being left with short-term fixes that keep them in

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survival mode. Once the emphasis on basic individual sustenance needs are met, a transition to social interaction and community life can be further pursued.

Social Well-Being and Interaction

Individual well-being is dependent on social well-being and community responsiveness. Individual behavior cannot be "understood in isolation from the characteristics of the community and the relationships in which they [those characteristics] are embedded" (Halpern, 2005, p. 5). Durkheim ([1893] 1951) observed that occurrences of suicide happen more often in groups and societies that have less frequent and less meaningful social ties than in areas with higher amounts of social cohesion, shared collective energy, and mutual support. In a study examining the relationship between mental health and social support affecting teenagers, Rojas et al. (2017) found a significant effect between suicide attempts and parental support and familial cohesion.

To understand social well-being, Wilkinson (1973, 1999) suggests five dimensions that produce the most amount of good for more people: distributive justice, tolerance, open communication, collective action, and communion. Distributive justice takes a stance of equity and fair distribution, rather than social welfare and equal opportunity. Tolerance exercises acceptance of differences and a shared value of commonalities. Open communication is "the fundamental element of human social interaction. It is the instrument for achieving tasks and also for creating and maintaining relationships among people that operate to produce social well-being" (Wilkinson, 1999, p. 67). Collective action refers to community participation in common interests, solving problems, and pursuing community goals. Lastly, communion is the celebration of community and connection, which creates even stronger bonds between people and spurs community development in a way that less connected communities are unable to accomplish.

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Human connection is an element necessary for social and individual survival. Habermas (1992) grounds interaction in a social lifeworld that is saturated with inter-subjectivity, conflict, and complementary learning processes. Technical phrases such as "communicative action," "discourse ethics," and "ideal speech situations" comprise the rational and deliberative basis for human recognition, exchange, and connection in a democratic context. The point that Habermas and many other interaction theorists (Goffman, 1959; Grant, 2003, Mead, 1934) make is that connection is ultimately made through communicating with others and sharing in life experiences. It is the very essence of belongingness and relationship building. Zufferey and Kerr (2004) found that individuals living in poverty witness and experience violence, struggle with substance abuse and mental health disorders, and deal with legal and familial problems. After surveying a group of homeless individuals, they found that, though the participants felt that shelters are able to provide basic physiological needs, they lack in their abilities to provide adequate psychological, emotional, and social needs.

Summary

This chapter introduces some main concepts in this study, community development, communication, and community well-being, and demonstrates the interconnections between them. Community well-being is produced, promoted, and preserved through those working in community development and communication plays a large role in the whole process. The next chapter discusses the specific components of this study in the context of these larger phenomena.

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CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Achieving community development efforts that are sustainable and long lasting is an objective for all those working in the field. This chapter will define sustainable community development and the types of people and organizations involved in this work. As communication can refer to a whole number of topics, this chapter will direct the scope to specifically inter-organizational collaborative communication and participatory communication, as they play large roles in creating positive and lasting change.

Sustainable Community Development

Community well-being depends on consistent and reliable development strategies. Since most people pursue their well-being with the hope of lasting results, many scholars have begun to conceive of well-being in terms of sustainability (Rogers & Ryan, 2010). Although sustainability is popularly used in relation to environmental awareness, consciousness raising campaigns, and "green" solutions, for the purpose of this study, the notion of sustainability is nested within *sustainable community development.* In this context, sustainability means an emphasis on positive and lasting impacts. Keeble (1988) defines sustainable community development in terms of "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p. 15). Keeble goes on to say that "Poverty is not only an evil in itself, but sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations for a better life" (p. 16). Sustainability covers a great deal of conceptual ground, such as intergenerational equity, ecological viability, social desirability, and economic feasibility (Hamstead & Quinn, 2005; Swisher, Rezola, & Sterns, 2003). Sustainability also means challenging the predominant assessment of community

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growth seen only through quantitative indicators, and therefore points to re-conceptualizing obsolete and dangerous notions of progress.

While there is no uniform operationalization of sustainability in the literature, it is widely agreed upon that sustainability, whether as a concept, as a variable, or as a desired outcome, is both relevant and vital to community development. The various applications of sustainable community development include ecologically focused economic models (Hamstead & Quinn, 2005), structural engineering and design (Lucena, Schneider, & Leydens, 2010), public education (Hardesty, 2005), the promotion of social health (Thamrongwaranggoon, 2004), and balanced lifestyles/livelihoods (Mazibuko, 2013; Scoones, 1998). In particular, the link between social capital and sustainable community development has been well-established (Dale & Newman, 2008; Dale & Onyx, 2010). Dale and Onyx (2010) argue that social capital is a necessary condition for sustainable community development insofar as multiple voluntary associations increase community access to resources and strengthen community ties. Contrary to predominant notions of community development based on economic capital, the practical application of social capital infuses the development process with stable and vibrant social networks built on trust and support. That said, Dale and Newman (2008) note that social capital is "not always sufficient to sustain and develop local community initiatives, as infusions of economic and human capital are often necessary" (p. 5).

In 2011, Japan experienced one of the most powerful earthquakes in history, followed by a tsunami with waves reaching as high as 36 feet tall, leaving 20,000 people dead or missing, one million buildings and homes damaged or destroyed, over 400,000 homeless, and miles of radiation leakage. Chaotic environmental conditions did not result in social disorder or crime, but instead, organized collective action. McNall (2016) describes the efforts of one isolated fishing

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village in particular, Hadenya, which maintained social order through effective delegation, collaboration, and strong communal bonds. Their vibrant display of social capital and collective efforts allowed them to survive and reach stability faster than many other areas in Japan.

Putnam (2000) explains social capital as connections among individuals that are expressed through civic, political, familial, friendly, philanthropic, and occupational participation. These connections tend to promote safe and productive neighborhoods, child and family welfare and education, economic prosperity, and overall health and happiness. These connections also create a lasting accountability structure through sustained rules of conduct, mutual obligations, trust, and reciprocity. The continuum of social relationship types can be understood in terms of bridging and bonding, in which bridging is exemplified by "volunteer associations and horizontal ties based on common interests that transcend differences of ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status in communities; the latter refers to social ties built around homogenous groups that do not span diverse social cleavages" (National Research Council, 2014, p. 3).

Social capital plays a day-to-day, functional role and refers to the membership in social networks, connections built on trust, and thus accessibility to resources and rewards, mutually obtained and given (Potyeva, 2016). These social interconnections have been tied to "levels of employment in communities, academic performance, individual physical health, economic growth, and immigrant and ethnic enterprise… [and] lower crime rates in the community" (p. 1). Hanifan (1916) was one of the first to coin the term "social capital" and defines it as "that in life which tends to make these tangible substances count for most in the daily lives of a people, namely, goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families who make up a social unit" (p. 130). The possession of social capital

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allows people to accumulate resources, enter social gatherings, and improve connections between neighbors, which then can lead to a collective community well-being.

Bourdieu (1986) conceptualizes social capital as "membership in a group which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity" (p. 51). A person who has more social capital credentials will navigate society with greater ease and can more readily maximize their resources. Other than a relational state, social capital may also take the form of a material exchange or symbolic representation. Exchanges and interactions made between people help preserve the established relationship and allow for the accessibility of resources down the road. Bourdieu also explains the proximity component, in which geographic closeness increases interaction frequency and assists in maintaining relationships.

Coleman (1988) expands the concept of social capital as an assortment of various entities that function to provide communities with social structure, relational facilitation, and resource collection and distribution through organizational leaders. Social connections, embodied through the relationships between people, create new pathways to achieving ends that could not have otherwise been possible. Social capital "inheres in the structure of relations *between* actors and *among* [individual] actors" and corporate actors (certain organizations), rather than within the person or physical organization itself (p. 98). His concern is with the resources that people can gain and the value of those resources.

Kretzmann, Puntenney, and McKnight (1996) present a guide by which communities can reach a higher potential and build their local economy by identifying individual capacities and organizing group participation. They define a local economy as one in which the people of a given community are working, own local businesses, purchase and invest locally, and actively participate and connect with one another. A healthy local economy produces a cash flow that

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recirculates and is retained within the community to provide long-lasting benefits that positively impact the lives of everyone.

Community Developers and Organizations

Professionals operating in the type of community development work referred to in this thesis work in a wide variety of organizations, but the majority reside within the non-profit sector that provides social services. They work toward diverse goals to produce local change within their communities. For example, Community Development Society (2017) is an organization that provides leadership opportunities, idea dissemination, and network building to a broad spectrum of professionals, more than 80% of whom work domestically and about 20% internationally. These professionals work in areas including, but not limited to, education, healthcare, social services, government, economic development, and policymaking. They suggest the purpose of sustainable community development is to:

- Promote active and representative participation toward enabling all community members to meaningfully influence the decisions that affect their lives.
- Engage community members in learning about and understanding community issues, and the economic, social, environmental, political, psychological, and other impacts associated with alternative courses of action.
- Incorporate the diverse interests and cultures of the community in the community development process; and disengage from support of any effort that is likely to adversely affect the disadvantaged members of a community.
- Work actively to enhance the leadership capacity of community members, leaders, and groups within the community.

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- Be open to using the full range of action strategies to work toward the long-term sustainability and well-being of the community. (2017)

These principles broadly overlap with goals of community development organizations all over the country. The International Association for Community Development (2017) prioritizes resource sharing and networking opportunities for fieldworkers, academics, students, and other practitioners as a part of their 2016-2020 strategic plan. These priorities all aim to ensure "short, medium, and long-term sustainability" of the association. NeighborWorks America (2017) is an organization dedicated to affordable housing and community development, which networks with "more than 240 of the nation's best community development organizations." They emphasize empowering individuals to work toward local initiatives in order to transform communities. The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (2017) invests in local leaders who work toward promoting well-being by fulfilling the basic needs of a community, including housing, health, education, public safety and employment. The community development organizations listed above are some of the largest within the field at the national level and support an entire network of smaller non-profit organizations and community action agencies that are working toward local change. Organizational goals and practices repeatedly mention local initiatives, sustainable change, and knowledge sharing between professionals. For the purpose of this study, current literature on effective and ineffective communication practices that impact sustainable community development strategies will be the focus.

Inter-Organizational Collaborative Communication

Professionals working within the field of community development rely heavily on formal networks and collaborative communication to achieving local goals more effectively. Collaborative communication involves interactions between professionals operating from

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different organizations and groups working toward a common purpose. Koschmann (2016) conceptualizes collaboration as a set of communicative and discursive processes that take place within civil society. Salignac, Wilcox, Marjolin, and Adams (2017) suggest that interorganizational collaboration is best understood as relation-based networking to collectively deal with social issues, such as poverty. The collaboration process involves much more than just interactions (Zhao, Sullivan, & Mellenius, 2014). According to Garrison (2016). the process requires open, critical, exploratory, and interdependent communication. These elements must be established through long-term stability and trust, in order to ensure maximum collaboration benefits. Collaboration preserves the self-interest of individuals, while also promoting compatible and shared interests through a mutually enriching experience.

When managed productively, collaboration can bring about long-lasting benefits such as cooperative relations (Hardy, Lawrence, & Grant, 2005) and a collective identity (Koschmann, 2013). Several scholars note the value of including community stakeholders in the collaboration process, bringing about mutual respect and mutual motivation (Blundell, 2007; Bowen, 2009; Kuhn, 2008). Competition, on the other hand, undermines group cohesion and stifles open communication and idea sharing. Leadership is the key element that makes possible an environment that is critical, respectful, and challenging, while also still remaining open, positive, and productive (Garrison, 2016). Mitra (2013) suggests a critical dialogic perspective as a transformative leadership approach that involves a three-part process to producing transformative change. The process begins with human connection through self-identifying dialogue that acts to promotes mutuality. It then requires collaborative dialogue, which has the power to create a common goal and vision. Finally, conveying transformation through dialogue on a regular basis will gradually build a strong foundation and concretize strong relations among group members.

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The collaboration process may involve varying combinations of professionals, experts, and community members, but the most common type of collaboration is inter-organizational collaboration. This type is broadly defined as a group of individuals, each representing an organization, who take part in a set of communicative processes to achieve a set of common objectives (Keyton & Ford, 2008). The outcomes of these collaborations can be both beneficial and harmful, depending on whether the process is done in a productive manner. They observe organizations with loosely connected networks and instability in investment as harmful to a collaboration. These behaviors will have an impact on how successful the group is and if they even accomplish anything, rather than wasting everyone's time.

Scholars explain several other benefits and challenges with collaborative efforts in regard to complexity. Bradshaw (2000) notes the complexity of community development as a result of societal complexity that makes it increasingly challenging to find solutions that work. His study involving two organizational case studies suggests that successful community development strategies cope with the complexity by developing "multi-organizational" collaborations or coalitions that can operate at a higher capacity than single organizational efforts. These groups pool resources, identify projects of mutual interest, and solve several problems at the same time. Selsky (1991) also describes an inter-organizational approach to sharing resources and decision-making between collaborating organizations. He asserts that many times these benefits are outweighed by the challenges. Uncertainty in funding and resource availability, inconsistent values and norms that challenge cooperative environments, and the density of the development process when dealing with systemic and policy changes all contribute to collaboration as an increasingly complex process. Huxham (1996) also expresses the complexity and difficulty that can result due to procedural, cultural, and power dynamic differences.

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Keyton and Ford (2008) utilize an inter-organizational model where "communication is elevated to the essence of collaboration" (p. 376). They identify and challenge three common assumptions regarding the collaboration process. First, the process should be open to everyone. This assertion fails to recognize not only that a group with too many members can be unproductive, but also that members must be specialized with relevant skills and prior experience for a more efficient process to unfold. The second assumption asserts that interaction and collaboration should form organically, when, in fact, a structure is necessary for a team to be effective. A collaborative structure builds trust between members (Vangen & Huxham, 2003), allows sharing of critical resources and relevant knowledge (Hardy, Philips, & Lawrence, 2003), and fulfills a set of goals the team aims to achieve (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2015). The third common assumption Keyton and Ford (2008) note is that if a collaboration process proves to be beneficial, the outcome will also be fruitful. This assumes direct causation even though other factors may influence whether a collaborating group reaches its objectives or not. Mattessich and Monsey (1992) list several of these collaborative challenges, such as insufficient resources and funding, infrequent and conflictive communication, unnecessarily complicated decision making structures, and unhelpful political and social factors. They also suggest that a lack of experience in collaborating may prevent groups from reaching their goals in an effective and efficient manner.

Participatory Communication

Organizations geared toward sustainable community development strive to incorporate community members into project planning and implementation, such as health programs (Obregon & Mosquera, 2005), natural resource management (Bessette, 2012), adult learning and life skills education (McKee et al, 2008), technology (Lie, 2008), media outreach (Russo,

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Watkins, Kelly, & Chan, 2008), and local entertainment (Sloman, 2011). Participatory communication is the central communicative paradigm in the community development literature and is widely understood as the approach that reliably leads to social change (Servaes, 2008). Participatory communication reframes development as a dialogue-based process that brings together organizational leaders and the community writ large. It is a theoretical concept, as well as a practical strategy, that encompasses social mobilization, individual and group empowerment, shared ownership, and community action. According to Bessette (2012), "This kind of communication requires moving from a focus on information and persuasion to facilitating exchange between different stakeholders to address a common problem, to develop a concrete initiative for experimenting with possible solutions, and to identify the partnerships, knowledge, and materials needed to support these solutions" (p. xvi). Interorganizational collaboration, then, also necessitates participatory communication.

Participatory communication is founded on the idea that, through the formation of interactive and interpersonal bonds, the development process is strengthened and the beneficiaries of development programs, that is, the members of the community, are gradually enabled to bring about positive structural change and sustainable outcomes. Syme and Ritterman (2009) state, "The evidence now shows that no matter how elegantly wrought a physical solution, no matter how efficiently designed a park, no matter how safe and sanitary a building, unless the people living in those neighborhoods can in some way participate in the creation and management of these facilities, the results will not be as beneficial as we might hope" (p. 1). Tufte (2008) contends that participation "speaks of people as key agents of change, emancipation, dialogue, balanced ecology and of communication processes where the output—the produced meaning—is not highly predictable nor readily controlled" (p. 338).

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Historically, participatory communication is packaged with the developmental models of 20th century modernization (Huesca, 2008). However, participatory communication diverges considerably from the hugely influential and heavily criticized "diffusion of innovations" theory introduced by Rogers (1962), which holds that development is largely a matter of transactional flows rather than transformational encounters. Other scholars argue that development should be highly transformative and incorporative of community members and what they can offer. As Servaes (2008) describes the participatory model, "It stresses the importance of cultural identity of local communities and of democratization and participation at all levels—international, national, local and individual. It points to a strategy, not merely inclusive of, but largely emanating from, the traditional 'receivers'" (p. 21). Servaes enumerates four features of participatory communication that frame community members as the agents of change, as the center of development, as locally encultured, and as democratically motivated. Participatory communication is seen as an organic and humanistic model of social relations, whereas the diffusion model is mechanistic. These models differ in terms of overall objectives, policy, planning, communication projects, implementations, and evaluations. Huesca (2008) refers to participatory communication as "the most resilient and most useful notion that has emerged from the challenges to the dominant paradigm of modernization" (p. 194), and traces its democratic component to Latin American development literature. Freire (1983), for instance, stands out as a longtime activist for participatory approaches and advocates for the inclusion of many voices as a condition necessary for sustainable development.

Several important studies in Africa further suggest that effective communication practices are essential to sustainable community development. Soola (1995) attempts to clarify the communicative dimension in sustainable community development, specifically the role of

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participation as an active and influential factor that incorporates the recipients of development programs into the development process. This participatory communicative process includes elements such as "needs identification, prioritization, project initiation, financing, execution, monitoring, evaluation, and consequent sustainability" (p. 16). Onwumechili (1995) focuses on the benefits of organizational communication in community development, such as increasing the quality of communication through cultural sensitivity and competency, as well as the inclusion of complementary communication practices. Onwumechili also emphasizes the addition of "context" to the components of source, receiver, channel, and message in the traditional communication model. Buddenhagen and Baldwin (2011) outline three communicative functions endorsed by professionals and scholars that are performed in community development projects: assessing community needs, seeking community support, and involving community members through participation. The study suggests that it is not enough to just conduct a community needs assessment. For a project and its outcomes to be sustainable, it is also necessary to facilitate continuous engagement between project committees and beneficiary groups that encourages inclusion, open communication, and combined effort towards design and implementation of community projects.

Even Rogers (1976), the original theorist of the diffusion of innovations theory, answered some criticisms by defining development as a "participatory process of social change in a society, intended to bring about both social and material advancement, including greater equality, freedom, and other valued qualities for the majority of people through their gaining greater control over their environment" (p. 225). Thirty years later, the World Bank (2006) echoed Rogers's description of participatory communication as integral to community development: "Development communication involves creating mechanisms to broaden public

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access to information on reforms; strengthening clients' ability to listen to their constituencies and negotiate with stakeholders; empowering grassroots organizations to achieve a more participatory process; and undertaking communication activities that are grounded in research." There seems to be a consensus in the community development literature as to the strategical shift that occurred in the last half-century toward the participatory school of thought.

Participatory communication is subject to a wide range of operationalizations, from experimental campaigns to tried-and-true methods inclusive of general public members into the participation process. According to Melkote (2002),

> Although the practice of participatory communication has stressed collaboration between the people and experts, a co-equal knowledge sharing between the people and experts, and a local context and cultural proximity, the outcome in most cases has not been true empowerment of the people, but the attainment of some indicator of development as articulated in the modernization paradigm. (p. 429)

In many ways, the modernization paradigm still defines community development writ large and even impinges on notions of sustainability. Thomas (2008) highlights the cynical political treatment of community development, namely the penchant of governmental subsidiaries "to co-opt and dilute the notion of participatory change—from its original meaning rooted in the idea of grassroots, people-led, inclusive, autonomous change to that of people led change defined by NGOs and governments" (p. 38). The concern is that participatory approaches are vulnerable to developmental schemes that fail to promote sustainable solutions or changes to the status quo. With regard to the local and regional levels of community development, Gumucio-Dagron (2008) similarly complains that participatory communication research is out of "sync" with the various efforts of professionals at the ground level. For a definitively bottom-up

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approach, participatory communication is being driven by ad hoc research that "tends to generalize based on very few examples" (p. 71).

The lack of strategies that actually work and empower people to participate is echoed by other scholars. Manyozo (2017) warns that professionals must be critical of practices that "continue to perpetuate, obscure, justify, and marginalize" other people (p. 13). He explains that sometimes intentions are not honest and people use participation as means to gain public attention and dollars. The "strategic dishonesty and obfuscation of development narratives, otherwise known as the bullshit of development, is vulgar and inconsequential for the lives of the majority of targeted benefiaries" (p. 13).

The dual nature of communication as participation and effectiveness poses a significant challenge, especially given the "strategic turn" in communication theory. Torp (2015) claims that this turn has often resulted in a trade-off where either participation or effectiveness takes the lead, at the expense of the other element. The strategic turn designates an expansion of communicative scope to all aspects of an organization, which is to say, everything becomes communication. Torp (2015) implicates the promoters of both participation-oriented communication theorists and effectiveness-oriented communication theorists in a reductionist understanding that collapses communication to their selected lens. An improved understanding entails the mutual reinforcement of this dual focus. In principle, Torp suggests, the strategical ground has been prepared to "dissolve the difference between the fundamentals goals of communication… in which participation is used to promote effectiveness, while effectiveness is used to promote participation" (p. 48). However, it remains to be seen whether such a hybrid is strategically viable in practice, much less in practice at local levels.

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Waisbord (2008) contends that the strategic turn has not gone far enough to establish communication as an organizational panacea. Rather than participation and effectiveness coming together and being mutually reinforcing, organizational goals largely determine strategical emphasis. This organizational view is not merely instrumental, but is based on bureaucratic expectations, standard operating procedures, and the inability of communication theory to penetrate organizational communicative practices. Hayward, Simpson, and Wood (2004) suggest that the relative lack of applied theory has perpetuated a myth of participatory communication in terms of solving problems and empowering individuals. It is unclear if participation is strictly a means to greater social inclusion or the ends of community development. In either case, the variability of the approach is a challenge to theorists and developers alike in search of a robust definition. While Waisbord (2008) argues that these challenges spell disaster for the incorporation of participatory approaches into effective organizational programs and the professional mindset to encourage sustainable change, Hayward, Simpson, and Wood (2004) are more optimistic. So long as participatory approaches are rigorously studied, myth may well become reality. Keyton and Ford (2008) conclude that studies distinguishing effective and ineffective modes of communicative collaboration do not specify the relevant practices that facilitate or limit collaboration. This is perhaps the most egregious gap of all. Enumerating the characteristics is insufficient to concretize specific communicative principles in community development practices.

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Research Questions

To address these challenges and bridge these gaps, I focus on a well-defined locality and the present situation for community developers in order to clarify the nature and role of communicative collaboration and participatory approaches in sustainable community development. Given that participatory researchers already prize qualitative research (Servaes, 2008), it is abundantly clear that in-depth interviews with community developers will enable a unique assessment of the implementation and complications of collaborative and participatory communicative approaches. The purpose of my thesis is to examine the relationship between communicative approaches and community development practices on the ground, determine the extent to which they are in sync, and appraise the sustainability and communicative power of developmental pathways.

RQ1: How do professionals working in areas of community development articulate the purpose of their work?

RQ2: What communication practices do professionals perceive to be effective in inter-organizational collaborations?

RQ3: How do professionals incorporate community members into the collaboration process?

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CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Efforts put forth by professionals in the field of community development yield both successful and unsuccessful results at combating the issues that plague communities. Although scholars place emphasis on communication as a key to producing effective community development, the research on specific professional communication practices is limited. The resilient issues that threaten community well-being, especially poverty circumstances, dictate a need to further explore effective community development and communication strategies. This study sought to explore and identify communicative practices and other elements that produce sustaining change and far reaching well-being. As discussed in Chapter two and evident in the research questions, the focus of this study is on how sustainable community development and communication relates to (a) articulating purpose, (b) communicating collaboratively, and (c) incorporating community members. The study utilizes a qualitative research approach as the most appropriate method to carrying out the objectives and answering the research questions. Qualitative methodology provides insight into elements of a community that are not as accessible through quantitative methods. These methods also, more often than not, allow community members to be involved in the research process, allowing for more meaningful and relevant results (Priest, 2005). The combined effort of researchers, other experts, and the general public produces greater participation and more fruitful outcomes.

Methodological Rationale

Qualitative interviewing provides the opportunity for someone to share their narrative and experience as it relates to a specific context and provides a starting point to understanding various perspectives. The interview acts as a tool to extract information through a private conversation that serves a specific purpose. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) explain that interviewing

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is suitable to "understanding the social actor's experience, knowledge, and worldviews" (p. 173) It is useful for gathering "information about things or processes that cannot be observed effectively by other means" (p. 175). It also allows the researcher to specifically identify and choose people who can provide the most relevant information because of their unique positon and knowledge. The interviewer must guide a purposeful conversation and create a comfortable tone and environment that encourages the respondent to freely share and disclose personal experiences and professional knowledge (Oishi, 2003). Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain the usefulness of the "human instrument" in naturalistic inquiry and interviewing, which allows the researcher more fluidity and a chance to adapt when the situation calls for it. Since the goal of qualitative interviewing is to enrich and extend our understanding of the person in the moment, the process allows a depth and development unachievable by other methods (Weiss, 1994).

Participants and Procedure

Participating community developers in this study come from various organizations within a Midwestern city in the United States area that are currently involved in a collaborative effort with other community developers. For the purpose of this study the pseudonym of the participating city will be referred to as Normington. The method utilized a mixture of three types of sampling: criterion, snowball, and maximum variation. Criterion sampling is used when one is collecting information regarding a specific topics in which a particular group or demographic of people have experience. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) state, "We recruit particular persons for interviews because they have had experiences that are vital to our research questions, or because they possess specific kinds of knowledge, or because of the stories they have to tell" (p. 111). The second type of sampling, snowballing, is useful when studying social networks or people who share similar characteristics or experiences. Participants are asked after interviews if they

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are willing to share referrals and contacts with the researcher. Maximum variation sampling seeks to include a wide variety of people, rather than equal representation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants in this study were recruited from non-profits, social service organizations, and sometimes governmental and public agencies. These organizations serve a number of causes including homelessness, poverty circumstances, inequality, discrimination, mental health, at-risk youth, addiction, and domestic violence.

The following criteria determined participants' inclusion in the study: (a) a professional title designating leadership experience in community development, organization, or action; (b) a current position or previous background with an organization or program involved in community development or social service; (c) participation in an inter-organizational collaboration effort; and (d) willingness of the individual to participate. All criteria had to be fulfilled to partake in the study. Participants were identified and contact information acquired through organizational website contact pages. Professionals were invited to participate through an email invitation which explains the study in detail and encourages them to respond back with a time, date, and place they are most comfortable meeting. The professionals who accepted the invitation participated in a face-to-face, in-depth interview with myself. Before starting the session, participants were asked to sign a form giving consent to participate. Consent for the use of an audio recording device was also requested, though I indicated that I was prepared to take detailed notes if a participant did not wish to be recorded. All participants consented to the use of audio recording which made the transcription and analysis of results much easier.

Data Collection and Analysis

Using a combination of styles, the in-depth interview uses questions that are considered respondent and narrative (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). *Respondent* style interviews work to clarify

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common meanings, better understand what influences people to make decisions, and organize common behavioral patterns. The purpose of using a *narrative* interview style is to listen to someone's story and grasp a more holistic view of who they are and what motivates them. In the case of those working in community development, we must first understand what type of worldview they operate out of, then the factors of their environments that influence behavior and, finally, listen to their stories to more fully grasp the elements that influence how they carry out their work and pursue goals. Questions and interview topics concentrated on sustainable community development and communication as it relates to the main themes of the study: (a) articulating purpose, (b) communicating collaboratively, and (c) incorporating community members. An audio device was used for recording purposes for later speech-to-text transcriptions. The interviews followed a semi-structured format to allow conversations to flow more naturally, while also staying on topic. The interview protocol appears in Appendix A. Interview sessions lasted between 60-120 minutes and took place in local coffee shops and participants' private work offices. The intention of meeting in professionals' offices and local coffee shops, rather than a rented space specific to research, was to encourage participant's to relax and speak openly in a safe and comfortable space.

Data management, data reduction, and conceptual development are all a part of the process when analyzing interviews (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Data were managed by saving audio files to a computer, uploading them to transcription software that slows speech, and then transcribing content by hand-typing. Data reduction is the way in which information is prioritized, sorted, and organized to create themes. The transcriptions were first read through carefully and then words and short phrases from the interviews were coded by labeling the relevant topics. After coding, I unitized the data by connecting similar concepts together and

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pulling out larger text segments from each interview. Every five interviews, I examined the various codes and continued to unitize information, adding new groups of text as new topics came out of the interviews. After unitizing, the text segments were placed in relation to one of the three research questions and then further organized into themes. The themes of this study also have second levels referred to as categories and third levels referring to specific communication practices that require greater depth of analysis.

Summary

Qualitative methodology utilized in this study proves useful to collecting information relevant to sustainable community development and applied communication practices taking place in the professional arena. In-depth interviews allow participants to recount professional interactions and events. This is a viable method for capturing the richness of participants' experiences. By analyzing and thematizing the descriptive data from the interviews, the overarching focus, sustainable community development and communication and the three major concentrations of this study, (a) articulating purpose, (b) communicating collaboratively, and (c) incorporating community members, provide much insight into the professional communicative practices that aid in the process of identifying solutions that produce real change and well-being for more people. The specific themes and communication practices are laid out in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to understand how professionals describe communication in the context of sustainable community development. Every professional in this study expresses that communication is essential to their community work. Damian, the CEO of a non-profit organization states, "Communication is essential. Absolutely. Here is something that we don't really talk about even through it's at a really fundamental level." In addition to professionals describing it as an obvious necessity to their work, they also express the need to know how to manage it. Alea, the CEO of a non-profit organization explains, "Communication is really important and is something that will always be evolving. We are always trying to figure out the best way to manage it." This chapter will explore communication and sustainable community development as it relates to (a) articulating purpose, (b) communicating collaboratively, and (c) incorporating community members. From the thematic analysis, each research question is categorized into two to three levels: themes, categories, and practices. *Themes* represent the patterns from each data set, while *categories* cluster relating communication practices together. When it is necessary to examine more thoroughly, a third level will be utilized to organize communication *practices*. Figure 1 outlines in full the results of this study to aid in the reader's understanding. At the end of this chapter, a section that goes beyond the scope of the research questions shares insights into what encourages professionals to feel hopeful for the future.

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A. ARTICULATING PURPOSE
   1. To Develop a Comprehensive Community View
      a. People being served
      b. Issues and needs in the community
      c. Community resources
      d. Holistic strategies and solutions
   2. To Act as Servant Leaders
      a. Building capacity and connection
      b. Engaging the people they serve
      c. Increasing public awareness
      d. Empowering people to do for themselves
      e. Working themselves out of a job

B. COMMUNICATING COLLABORATIVELY
   1. Building Sustainable Collaborations
      a. Finding value and strength in diversity
      b. Developing deep relationships
      c. Recognizing a common purpose
      d. Setting rules for engagement
      e. Defining commitment level and success
   2. Maintaining Sustainable Collaborations
      a. Communicating consistently
      b. Reflecting regularly
      c. Planning continually
      d. Preventing and managing conflict
         I. Sharing leadership
         II. Validating others
         III. Moving beyond consensus

C. INCORPORATING COMMUNITY MEMBERS
   1. Barriers to Participation and Incorporation
      a. Barriers for community members to participate
      b. Professionals neglecting to incorporate
   2. Traditional Practices of Incorporation
      a. Collecting data and feedback
      b. Holding public meetings
   3. Unique Practices of Participation
      a. Community conversations
      b. Responsiveness
      c. Encouraging ownership

Figure 1. Communication and Sustainable Community Development Practices

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Articulating Purpose

The first research question asks how professionals working in areas of community development articulate the purpose of their work. The variety of disciplines in which professionals are working and the numerous causes they support demonstrates substantive diversity in purpose; however, there are many roles that all professionals could agree on, and two themes summarize them: To *Develop a Comprehensive Community View* and *To Act as Servant Leaders*. The specific components of these themes are below.

To Develop a Comprehensive Community View

All professionals articulate in some way or another that their purpose is to develop a holistic view of the community that is comprehensive of the people they serve, the community and its resources, the problems and needs they identify, and the solutions they implement. Looking at something through a vacuum can limit professionals' options. Anna, the CEO of a non-profit organization states, "Non-profits need to start talking about themselves as improving the well-being of the whole community instead of just helping a person get healthy with just one part of their life." By treating the whole of a person rather than just a piece of them, professionals can better understand what needs to be done to create lasting rather than temporary change. The bureaucratic culture of services operating in isolated areas of care is related to why a "person who has needs spends half their life bouncing from office to office on a bus or in a cab trying to meet those needs. They end up getting caught up in a circle—now go there, now go here" (Fred, director of a research program). Professionals describe their purpose in terms of having a holistic view of the community to producing the most amount of well-being for all. There has been more recent movement to move toward this approach. Damian, the CEO of a non-profit organization suggests that "community development is not limited to three-quarters of the community or

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certain segments. It's the community in its entirety." Inter-organizational collaborations make it easier for professionals to share information and resources. The holistic view of needs in the community also helps to provide more effective strategic planning and total solutions. Sara, a director for a social service organization explains, "Issues are not just one-sided; there are many dimensions with every problem… with solutions, you need to look at many options and look at what previously has and hasn't worked." The world around us is very much interconnected and related to everything else; therefore, as professionals approach their work with this in mind, this moves us towards a more comprehensive view of the communities they serve.

To Act as Servant Leaders

Professionals describe their purpose as acting as servant leaders for the people and communities they serve. Servant leadership is very much about spurring leadership growth in the people that one serves to create a ripple effect of community improvement. To evaluate efforts, Peter, an active leader in several collaboration efforts asks, "Are the people you work with healthier, wiser, and better? Are they more autonomous and willing to be servant leaders when you are done working with them? A servant leader finds success in the success of other people." This approach to community development is very citizen and client-centered. Leaders try to initiate projects that are relevant to what people need to become better people. Alea explains, "We use a servant leadership philosophy. You are helping empower people, you're leading from a place of service, and you're trying to collaborate with the people you're leading to help them become better leaders." To further demonstrate this theme, five categories will explore: (a) building capacity and connection, (b) engaging the people they serve, (c) increasing public awareness, (d) empowering people to do for themselves, and (e) working themselves out of a job.

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These categories overlap with one another and the roles professionals describe are very much interconnected.

The first category, *building capacity and connection,* refers to professionals using their positions of power to expand resources and services, prepare their organizations to serve the community, and ensure adequate access for the people they serve. Mitch, the CEO of a non-profit organization, explains that he acts to "assess the community's readiness to serve its citizens and make our communities more accessible for all." Building capacity is a common term in the community development literature referring to expanding resources, skills, and opportunities; however, professionals also explain it as building connections between people. Damian states, "Non-profits and others who do this kind of work have an opportunity and really a responsibility to bring people together to focus on the common good of the community or bringing about the betterment of a community." This combination of building community capacity and fostering connections is necessary for servant leadership.

Before capacity building and connection can be effective, professionals need to ask people what they need. *Engaging people* is the second category professionals articulate to be a role of servant leaders. To understand their role and how they can be of service to the people they serve, they must community members. The CEO of a social service organization explains, "We do not want to assume that this person or neighborhood has this problem. We really have to ask people what they need" (Deirdre). It is impossible for anyone to know all aspects of a situation or community by merely predicting based on limited knowledge within one's scope. Fred adds that "people know what they need. Our job is to ask them and facilitate a means by ways they can ask each other." Many people still don't feel comfortable with the people they serve and therefore engaging them is that much more difficult. To really be a servant leader,

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professionals must advocate for engagement as a means through which better understanding can grow.

The third category, *increasing awareness*, refers to professionals using their privilege to advance community causes in the public sphere. Jasmine, the director of a social service program, states:

> The purpose of my field is to raise consciousness about issues. A lot of people's negative reaction to immigrants, people of color, or feminist movements are born out of misunderstandings of the world and of the things that necessitate these social movements. I try to break things down to an accessible level so people can understand why we need to fight for human rights issues.

Professionals also describe this role as a way to bring light to the community. Paul explains, "We shine light on issues of poverty. The more we hide things the more cancerous they become." Some professionals share that they have seen others they work with try to avoid conversations dealing with issues that need light. Damian shares, "They want to ignore. When you bring it up, it's a deafening sound. We can't remain a community where we walk around with our eyes wide shut and act like we don't see the trailer parks in our town." By sharing the stories of the people leaders serve and putting out a message to the world, professionals are not only advocating for people, but are also providing opportunities to spur education and dialogue. Jasmine explains, "Even if we lose the campaign, this was still a worthwhile nine months because we made people who really didn't want to talk about racism talk about it and have to hear about it." A professional using their platform to raise public awareness about the topics that community members define as important to them is another way to act as a servant leader.

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The fourth category is *empowering people to do for themselves*. There are times when advocacy is necessary and times when it is not. It is up to the leader to know when to make space for the voices of those they serve. Damian asserts, "There are times when I just need to step out of the way and shut up and listen and learn. Then there are times when I need to use my privilege as a male to advance the cause." Providing people with the tools and skills they need to succeed is a reciprocal process of asking people what they need and helping them to find it. Paul says, "I don't think we can give others power. I think we can see power in other people. I can't give you power. I can create a space that is conducive to learning and allows you to be yourself though." If we allow people the opportunity to take control over their own lives, they can gain personal satisfaction and ignite their own passions. Oliver states, "Ownership and self-motivation promotes personal dignity." Passing the leadership on can have a lasting and sustainable impact. Jasmine shares in terms of sustainable work, "When you plant that seed in people and help them gain their dignity and encourage them to believe that they can be leaders."

Working themselves out of a job is the fifth category professionals articulate as a servant leader. Paul explains, "The goal is to make yourself obsolete. If I am a good teacher, after a while you won't need me anymore." The extent to which a project is sustainable relates to whether professionals have fulfilled their purpose. Oliver states, "We try to create projects that will stand on their own once we leave." If the purpose of an initiative is failing to create significant value and impact, professionals are left to wonder, "if we are not creating something that can be sustained maybe we shouldn't be doing it" (Fred). If done right, once people gain the leadership skills they need to take charge of their own community, professionals can shift their focus elsewhere. Professionals' roles are fluid and adapt to the changing needs of a community.

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Communicating Collaboratively

The second research question asks what communication practices professionals perceive to be effective in inter-organizational collaborations. Professionals report a variety of communication practices and two themes summarize them: *Building Sustainable Collaborations* and *Maintaining Sustainable Collaborations*. Communication practices throughout the collaboration process vary depending on purpose and who is involved, however, professionals identify several elements as critical to the success of a group's efforts and impact. The specific communication practices are below. Before delving into these themes, some attention will be paid to determining whether or not a collaboration is necessary and why this is an important first step.

Professionals working in areas of community development in this study typically work for non-profit and social service entities that are resource, time, and energy restricted. As one can imagine, in this type of work, time is of high value and before committing to something, professionals must decide if collaborating is even possible, and if it will end up costing more than benefiting them in the long run. Diane, the director of a research program explains:

> I think people need to be realistic about their ability to add new layers to their work. I don't know a single person in non-profit work that has any free time. Woefully underpaid, need is rising, funds are decreasing, stressful work environment and then to go and add another layer of collaborating. It's ridiculous… if you've created this convoluted way to do something simple, that's a nightmare and it's not good for anyone.

Conversely, establishing a collaboration can serve as a great resource for those struggling to meet their goals and serve their community in a significant way. Potential community-wide benefits can motivate professionals to collaborate. Fred states, "We need to collaborate.

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Certainly we aren't going to meet everybody's need because there are certain things we just don't do well." Combining resources can allow organizations to better serve their clients in multi-dimensional ways. Jasmine explains, "We don't have legal staff in house so we use that partnership to make sure that folks are having their legal needs met." Thus, when an opportunity to collaborate arises, it is necessary for professionals to weigh whether or not collaborating is the right choice for them.

Building Sustainable Collaborations

Participating professionals articulate the importance of building a strong foundation in the initial phases of establishing new collaborations. This building process is crucial and may determine the future success of the group's work and long-term compatibility. Diane says, "Our big amazing collaborations didn't start at this big shiny level. They really start in some proving ground and there are some simple things the group must do first." Being in professions that are time-restrictive can cause people to rush through the formation phases and, in doing so, actually cost them more. Issues that could have been avoided had the group spent time developing incrementally can take up more time in the long-run. The theme that envelopes this critical foundation forming process is *Building Sustainable Collaborations*. Finding value and strength in diversity, developing deep relationships, recognizing a common purpose, setting rules for engagement, and defining project commitment and success represent the major categories within this theme.

The first category, *finding value and strength in diversity*, describes the process of gathering professionals that all have some kind of stake in a need or issue, inviting them to the table, and then appreciating one another for the variety in expertise each person brings to the group. Deirdre, explains that "you have to have diverse expertise to look at something

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holistically so that sustainability can happen." The inclusion of several voices can allow for a more representative view of a certain issue. Shelley, a director of a non-profit program, states:

> It is so important to involve multiple stakeholders with multiple views because everybody has a different perspective and together we have a fuller picture. Each of us has a limited piece that we need to share so we can go in with our best case and set of knowledge to address an issue.

Damian defines community development as "that collective impact. It's everyone coming together and understanding the strength we have with people from different wheelhouses. In our alliance we had political agitators, negotiators, planners, strategists, and people in between. It takes a little bit of everybody." The pluralism of people with different world perspectives in a collaboration can help people create a more effective plan for dealing with an issue. Paul states:

> That's what's really cool about having people from different backgrounds coming together to the table to solve a problem; if you surround it enough with many minds you're more likely to find an effective solution. If you reduce everything to say an economics perspective, do you lose the humanity?

A collaboration can provide a unique opportunity for people to expand their social networks and share space with people they may have otherwise never come in contact with. Interacting with different types of people operating from various disciplines can strengthen the skill base within a collaboration. Mandy, a founder of a non-profit organization states that "People who think like I do can't just run things; that's unbalanced. We need people with a social conscience in the business world. I'm not a business person but I have learned to work with and appreciate that diversity."

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The second category for building sustainable collaborations is *developing deep relationships*. Communication is the key to getting to know someone and continuing a positive relationship. Peter explains, "It's all a matter of relationship building at the end of the day. Communication is a means through which you can keep that glue in the relationship together." Developing relationships with those one will share space and time with may seem simple and obvious, but is something that is often skipped or not done thoroughly. Jasmine explains:

> I think that's the missing piece in collaborations is they don't really know each other. They can sit at a collaboration table for years but we have this bifurcation for our public and private lives which we separate. But we bring our whole selves into those meetings so it's important for you to know where I'm operating from in this work.

Even if the bond is meant to serve a professional purpose, the personal connection can help the process to be more fruitful for everyone. Diane says, "Even if your effort doesn't produce all the results you wanted, if you're forging new relationships and uncovering new ways to work with each other it can still be positive and worthwhile."

Bypassing the relationship building phase can cause major miscommunication later in the collaboration. It allows room for wrong assumptions of someone's intentions and inaccurate understandings of a person's character. Oliver, a community development scholar, states that "wrong assumptions made about people can be very detrimental to the success of one's attempt to collaborate and help." Building deep relationships within a group can not only help avoid personal misunderstandings but also help the group move through moments of high stress more effectively. Damian speaks to this point: "At times there was a lot of tension in the room but that trust building really laid a good ground for us to stay together and make it through the end of the campaign." Creating meaningful relationships can help people to stay motivated on a project

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even when things get rough. Participants shared specific communication techniques that they have found useful to developing deeper relationships:

> "Talking about ourselves personally like what are you bringing into this meeting? What's your week been like?" (Jasmine)
>
> "We also had one-on-ones during our first meeting. We had folks pair up and talk about what brought them into this work and other exercises that would promote us to building real authentic relationships" (Jasmine).
>
> "We definitely butted heads at first and did not like each other but then we went out for coffee a few times and I've come to really respect her" (Harris).
>
> "People kind of puff up and can't be embarrassed and want to show that they are just as smart. If you can do a lot of work behind the scenes, offline meeting with people can really help increase that respect and understanding" (Damian).
>
> "We were put in small groups to share, and it let people open up in ways I don't think they would have been comfortable in the larger group" (Mitch).

These responses reflect various ways in which people can develop deeper relationships and gain trust so that sharing information can be an open, honest, and respectful process. One-on-one formal and informal meetings, small group breakout sessions, and large group personal reflections all have been used by professionals to creating effective partnerships. All of these practices emphasize face-to-face communication rather than mediated communication

The third category is *recognizing a common goal or shared purpose*. Common goals are widely understood as the basis of collaboration in the community development literature. Professionals reiterate the importance of shared purpose to building an effective and supportive working environment. Because professionals enter collaborative partnerships with diverse

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backgrounds and organizational cultures, establishing common ground precedes agreeing on common goals. This early stage is crucial since many different ideas are entertained in order to converge in a united view of how the collaboration will proceed. Sara, the director of a social service organization explains that "communication is so crucial. When you work in a collaboration, every organization has their own goals and that sometimes is a limitation but you need to be able to agree to move forward." Redirecting energy toward what members agree on can be effective for reaching common ground. Deidre describes an example where

> It was always about finger pointing. We had to say "Okay, what do we hope to accomplish here, and why aren't we together on this? We all wanted to prevent domestic violence homicides in our community, so that was a buy-in for all of us, no matter the discipline.

After a common ground is reached the group can begin to add more agreed-upon goals to the mix and eventually reach a shared purpose that all members are tied to strongly. Peter gives a useful metaphor saying, "You may or may not like your family all the time but you always have a common bond. In a family you call it love. In a community it's about shared purpose and that's what keeps you together."

Setting rules for engagement is the next category involved in building a sustainable collaboration. Rules of engagement are parameters that determine how people are to interact. Professionals suggest that rules for engagement encompass specific explicit communicative practices that structure their partnership. Melissa, a recently retired CEO of a non-profit organization states, "We had to set rules in the beginning so we all knew how we should be communicating." When deciding upon these rules it is important for everyone to be able to contribute and agree upon them. Jasmine spoke to this process:

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> I don't like to call them ground rules because then it's these rules that someone is trying to impose on you rather than we're all agreeing that we can hold space together if we all commit to these things we've all created and agreed to. That puts the responsibility on everyone to police each other, rather than it just being up to one person.

Professionals all had different rules they use in their collaborations and several they perceive to be effective in most settings. Not starting with solutions, being consensual, assuming best intentions, step-up-step-back, are all rules described by professionals. Being consensual refers to checking with people before taking charge of something like running a meeting or making a decision on behalf of the group. This is necessary for others to have a say in how activities are led and sharing power. Assuming best intentions involves giving people a chance to explain themselves before jumping to conclusions and getting upset. Deep relationship development helps avoid some of these situations. To avoid conflict "you have to trust other people, that their intentions are good. Certainly sometimes things when they are translated can be misinterpreted, so therefore it's very important that we are accurately understanding what someone is saying" (Mitch). Other professionals describe how it is easy to perceive a problem and then come to find there is really a miscommunication and misunderstanding of intentions. The step-up-step-back rule's purpose is to encourage members to monitor their own participation and acknowledge whether others in the group are speaking up. Jasmine explains:

> If you are talking all the time at meetings then you might check yourself and take a step back and make some space for other people to share what they are thinking. If a person is more introverted it's a challenge for them to step up and offer what they have to the room.

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Professionals share their experience with colleagues who jump in with a hyper-proactive approach to solving something without allowing others to contribute and reflect on the task at hand. There is consensus on it being important not to start a collaboration with solutions already set and decided. Paul states, "If at the first meeting you're already coming to the table with solutions, then that's a solution in need of a problem versus a problem in need of solutions." A collaboration is meant to give people a chance to look at something through several different lenses to provide a more holistic approach.

Professionals' perceptions vary on how formal or informal rules should be in the initial phases of a collaboration. Those in support of using a formal process share benefits such as having a clear understanding of what role an organization will play and holding them accountable to what they agree to. Sara is in support of using MOU's, or Memorandums of Understanding, which "make sure that agreements to providing partnership services to clients are held up." These agreements leave little room for error and are widely used by multi-party collaborations and single partnerships. Other professionals like Jasmine are not in favor of using such formal agreements because "it's impossible to predict right away all the ways the nature of that relationship is going to be. I think it's better for our agreements to be treated as living things that get amended as we go." She further explains that continuous evaluation of how activities are going and changing and addressing them as the project progresses is what she uses in place of a formal agreement.

Defining project commitment and success is the fifth and last category for building a sustainable collaboration reported by participants. Professionals express the importance of knowing how much time they will need to commit and what role they will fulfill. Providing an agreed-upon timeline, defining what success looks like, and creating evaluation tools early on

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will help to determine these expectations. Paul wonders, "When people get involved do they know the extent of their involvement and the duration? People who are collaborating need to decide the size of the task and level of commitment." By defining the time commitment for a project or a collaboration's purpose, professionals can better prepare themselves mentally for what's ahead. As mentioned previously, committing to a collaborative effort takes time and those working in hectic careers need to be realistic of what they can and can't accomplish within a certain time frame. Anna spoke to this saying "With some failed collaborations I've seen, there wasn't clarification on what success was going to look like so you just keep aimlessly going down a road that eventually falls apart because it wasn't well structured to begin with." Tools to evaluate achievement may be measured quantitatively, however, many times success has to do with improving lives and neighborhoods in ways that are sometimes difficult to quantitatively measure. Collecting success stories, personal testimonies, and images are a qualitative tool that some groups use.

Along with defining time expectations, individuals need to understand their role and prepare to articulate to the group what they can offer. "You have to communicate where you are coming from and what you are willing to invest" (Sara). Roles may change over time. If so, there must be some kind of conversation to acknowledge these changes to others in the group. One professional refers to this process as re-calibration.

> Life changes have a huge impact on how you sustain work. You have to be open enough to announce that openly with the groups and re-prioritize or re-calibrate your work practices. If you don't recalibrate and everyone assumes that life is still the same, people will expect you to continue what you have always done and that can cause problems. (Peter)

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Collaborations will be more effective in sustaining their work by defining expectations for commitment level and success, claiming roles and upholding responsibilities, and adapting to the changing needs of members in the group.

Maintaining Sustainable Collaborations

Building a strong foundation for a collaboration is only a piece of what lies ahead. Professionals describe collaborative work as a long-term commitment that yields achievements, failures, and growth. Rather than working toward one large solution, professionals advocate for a journey of incremental successes. Peter speaks to this: "Instead of pursuing a large solution we try to look for those smaller wins. Over a period of time when you add them all up they can make a huge difference." Working toward larger social issues involves accounting for many moving parts. To make progress in resolving community-wide issues, those participating in collaborative work must be patient and recognize the value in gradual improvement over time due to multiple efforts, rather than expecting one clearly defined solution to fix everything. Peter continues, "The process takes time. You may end up losing people because they are looking for an immediate solution versus others who are willing to take that time." Professionals in this line of work must develop an endurance to creating lasting change. In working toward these incremental successes, a group working together for a long period of time will need to develop habits that continue to solidify the unit. The theme that accounts for these habits is *Maintaining Sustainable Collaborations*. This theme includes four categories: communicating consistently, reflecting regularly, planning continually, and preventing and managing conflict.

Communicating consistently serves a number of maintenance purposes. Creating this habit in a group can help to reduce misunderstandings along the way and keep the agreed-upon goals in the forefront of members' minds. Anna states, "Having ongoing, regular, face-to-face

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conversations is really necessary for working out large-scale community level problems." Harris also adds to this: "Communication is essential for keeping the pact together. You must communicate in a timely manner, communicate early, and communicate often." Ongoing communication serves to hold people accountable and ensure everyone is on the same page.

At the beginning of any project there is a lot of excitement and people are motivated to get things done. As time goes on though, it can be trying to maintain that energy level. Paul asserts that "after the honeymoon phase, there has to be an increase in time commitment, not a decrease, to increase scalability and sustainability." Groups often will use electronic communication channels to replace regular meetings. This can have a disastrous effect and force members to make decisions without all the facts. Setting "regular meetings in advance are really valuable. I despise voting on things via email. I think we should commit that the process is as important as the outcome" (Diane). While electronic communication can help people to check-in with each other quickly it is not the best platform for decision-making. Jasmine explains, "I see the meetings as a place for us to ratify decisions, lay out what has to happen next, and then technology can help us to stay accountable but it's not the place for important decisions." Face-to-face communication is especially important when making decisions and professionals recommend avoiding mediated channels for group decision-making. Consistently communicating is necessary for maintaining a collaborative work group and demonstrates an ongoing commitment to the purpose.

The second category under maintaining a collaboration is *reflecting regularly*. Reflection encourages people to talk about their feelings and understand why they are having them. Alea says, "While we are working on projects sometimes we will check in and see how people think things are going and if they aren't going well, addressing why not." It also gets people to think

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more deeply on why a proposal or event went well or did not. This information can be useful moving forward in not making the same mistakes and identifying things that work well. One professional in particular gave specific examples of reflection that she uses in her collaborations. One technique is to:

> Start with everyone going around and sharing a feeling word. What's in your gut right now? How are you feeling? Then we talk about the roles that people took at the meeting for example if you were running the agenda, how do you think you did? So you evaluate yourself and then other people give you feedback. I also talk about tension because I think tension is how we grow-- I ask where was the tension in this room or in this meeting? If it's a meeting with another organization, I'll ask "How did we do and how did they do? What did we learn about them?" You want to leave that meeting feeling good but if not you want to know why we're not feeling good (Jasmine).

The description she outlines describes reflecting on: feelings about tasks, tension between people, personal evaluations, event and project outcomes, and interactions with people outside of the group.

The third category, *continually planning*, details a process in which professionals constantly improve a solution past the initial implementation phase. Mitch says, "The planning process has to be continual. That's why we need to revisit the strategic plan at minimum every year but optimally more frequently than that." Professionals spend time collecting research and ideas, getting feedback from stakeholders, implementing a solution, evaluating the intended outcomes versus the actual outcomes, and then returning to the need and repeating the cycle. Peter speaks of it as "a community-building process. You don't need to get it right the first time around. Let's get something right, learn from it, and go back and do it again." By spending more

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time on a solution and viewing it as a process versus a single step, professionals avoid more hiccups down the road. Anna says, “If you are not tweaking and reassessing as you go and are letting things fester, you’re going to have all kinds of problems.” As previously mentioned, viewing collaboration efforts as a journey rather than an outcome allows professionals to treat the process as something that is always improving.

Preventing and managing conflict, the fourth category of maintaining a collaboration, emphasizes taking precautionary steps to avoid unnecessary conflict and address built up conflict that hinders professionals’ efforts. Within this category there are three sub-categories that professionals note the most: sharing leadership, validating others, and moving beyond consensus. A collaboration does not have a hierarchical structure, and the purpose is for it to be a space where everyone carries equal value. Damian shares that “when you are a leader if you aren’t humble, you always think you have to be at the table leading.” This dominant behavior can squeeze the energy out of the room and take away from community and relationship building. In one highly effective collaboration Damian continues that, “everyone had to lay their ego aside. As you can imagine, you put that many leaders in a room who are used to taking charge, it can be a challenge, but we didn’t let it get in the way.” The goal is to reach a balance where everyone is contributing and taking lead on different components. Peter says, “It’s not one person coming up with the solution and everyone is marching to that drum. You, as a community, are trying to collectively solve those problems. Communication is central to that community building process.” Sharing leadership is a way for everyone to contribute and no one to feel like they are pulling too much of the weight.

The next sub-category for preventing and managing conflict is validating others. This includes actively listening and avoiding destructive communication. Damian shares:

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> I read somewhere a long time ago that Mother Theresa said there is one thing that everybody that she prayed for, talked to, and met with all had in common; it wasn't love, wasn't respect, wasn't health-- it was validation. People need to be heard. Even if they are wrong, because the whole aim is to help them grow along the way.

Other professionals share examples of how to validate others through listening and paraphrasing, working with someone rather than reacting to their frustration, and using positive communication. Destructive communication can ultimately hurt people and result in their disengagement from the collaboration. When you publicly embarrass someone by calling them out, "they are no longer looking at the situation like 'Oh you know I get it. It makes sense'. No they are thinking, 'You hurt me and I'm not going to let this go'" (Damian). Professionals advocate for open communication and bringing up issues when they arise rather than when it's too late to address. Diane suggests:

> People can handle more conflict than we realize and we should just say it rather than having hallway meetings to complain after the big meetings. That's a waste of time. We are grownups, we are being trusted with resources, we all have very important missions, and if something is not working we need to say it's not working.

It may be easier said than done, but once the group begins to manage conflict regularly they can get in a habit of openly talking about things as they come up. The group ultimately will become stronger as a result of working through tension and building stronger connections between people.

Moving beyond consensus is the third sub-category for preventing and managing conflict. Professionals explain that sometimes people may assume that everyone needs to agree before something can move forward but this is not necessary. Peter explains, "Consensus building can

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become this please-all, but collaboration is trying to find a solution that is good enough for the most people." Once everyone has committed to being a part of a collaboration, they have also committed to the process, which may not always work in their favor. Diane states:

> I don't think the goal of any coalition is to agree 100% of the time. Let's assume that we won't agree 100% of the time. Let's assume there is going to be a hard decision about resource allocation that may or may not work in favor of the organization I represent. When I don't agree on something I'm going to say no. It doesn't mean that I don't like you or that I quit or that I can't work on other pieces of the plan. I can vote no and still contribute.

There is a need for people to accept that not agreeing with everything should not be personal and that people need to speak openly and honestly even if it differs from the majority. The more open people are with decision-making the stronger a collaboration can become.

Incorporating Community Members

The third research question asks how professionals incorporate community members into the collaboration process. As chapter two discusses the importance of bringing community members into the planning and collaboration process, this section explores how professionals actually carry out engagement and incorporation. Three themes summarize these practices and perceptions*: Barriers to Participation and Incorporation, Traditional Practices of Incorporation,* and *Unique Practices of Participation.*

Barriers to Participation and Incorporation

Professionals express both personal barriers to incorporating community members as well as perceived barriers for community members that prevent participation. The theme that accounts for these barriers is *Barriers to Participation and Incorporation*. Two categories for this theme

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comprise barriers for community members to participate and professionals neglecting to incorporate. The specific obstacles and examples professionals report are below.

The first category, *barriers for community members*, are what professionals perceive to be limitations for community members and reasons for disengagement. They describe time, unmet primary needs, disenchantment, and a lack of opportunities. Mitch shares an example when interacting with people, "There's not always a lot of time for dialogue, they come in and they're in a hurry and they want to get what they need quickly." Other professionals express that most people they serve are working hard to make enough money to get by and don't have a lot of free time. They are trying to meet their primary needs of maintaining a home, paying rent, acquiring food, and providing for their families. Matt, a founder of a non-profit states "When the physical environment doesn't meet your primary needs, it's hard for people to contribute." Beyond time and primary needs, professionals indicate that community members seem disenchanted. Damian shares:

> It's difficult to get people to the table. What they can say is, "You're the 13th person who's come around here to say you want to help and then it never happens and you wonder why I don't show up." People are getting tired and some people lost faith and hope or they are afraid that if the pattern follows and nothing changes, "why am I going to show up in a public space, voicing my concerns when I know that there is no real recourse for me." But that doesn't mean that we stop. It means that you have to do it so damn much that people eventually say – "We believe in this person."

Community members may feel disenchanted by leaders always saying are going to make things better and then nothing happens or things become worse or they are not done in a way that people approve of.

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Several professionals describe that it is part of their jobs to find ways to engage people, but not as many share examples of how they actually follow through with this. Even if the previous barriers are not an issue, people may not know how they can participate in building their neighborhoods and community. Ken, the CEO of a non-profit organization explains, "People aren't always strongly against participating but they are either too busy or they just don't know how to get engaged." Professionals also do not share a lot of examples of the opportunities they provide to community members to become a part of projects and collaborations.

Professionals neglecting to incorporate community members into their work is the second category. Anna shares:

> We are still pretty surface level and we aren't engaging the people who we have identified have the problem. It's still very much let's sit in a room and talk about the people who have the problems and come up with a solution that we've created. Not necessarily something we've engaged them on and that they think is the right decision.

Professionals admit deficiencies in their approaches to developing communities with people. When asked if – or how much – they feel that beneficiaries of programs are incorporated in communication processes, different participants relate:

> "No community members are not incorporated into the process. Our organization tends to be more geared towards people of wealth rather than recipients of projects" (Melissa).
>
> "No. Former inmates are not a part of our coordinating council" (Fred).
>
> "I would say zero. There are some surveys for feedback but not on the side of creating solutions with us" (Mandy).

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Some of the reasons participants give for not incorporating community members include the barriers from the previous category, but some share other reasons such as they feel uncomfortable with the people they serve or it hasn't been a conversation in their working groups. Anna states, "There are some people, and I was with some of them a few weeks ago, who will still come up with every excuse under the sun of why it won't work to include people." Damian shares:

> Some of us don't really feel comfortable with the people we serve. We don't want to talk to someone who is not going to speak the same way we speak, dress same way we dress, or have the same values that we have. That is the problem. You have to have enough range as a leader and a person in the community to be able to go and yack it up with board members, have conversations with corporate people in the community, and then be able to talk to drug dealers, have conversations with so-called at-risk populations.

Even though professionals do not engage the people they serve, most people express a desire to and acknowledge room for improvement. They also perceive their colleagues to be open-minded to including community members into the process and think that "most people would welcome it but most people haven't experienced it and then they don't think to plan for it" (Paul). If people haven't been formally trained or it doesn't come naturally to them to incorporate community members, professionals may have trouble relating to them and their situations.

Traditional Practices of Incorporation

The second theme of incorporating community members is *Traditional Practices of Incorporation.* The ways in which professionals gather feedback from those they serve are widely used in community development. The label of traditional practices designates methods

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that professionals have used for a long time. There are two categories within this theme: collecting data and feedback and holding public meetings.

Collecting data and feedback, the first category, demonstrates the ways professionals engage with community members. Surveys, focus groups, and tracking service use are some of these methods. Survey use especially is dominant in the literature for community development and the purpose is to gauge the public's perceptions of different aspects in their community. Many survey projects also collect information pertaining to community needs and community satisfaction. Deirdre states, "Every three years we do a community impact measurement with door-to-door surveys that includes block observations, parcel observations, and how does the neighborhood look." On the opposite side, some professionals disagree with the use of surveys. Jasmine shares, "I don't like doing surveys because it feels like you are an intruder in a neighborhood who is just trying to mine information from people rather than building authentic relationships." Surveys can be used to collect certain information, but some argue that it should not replace interacting with people.

Focus groups are also often used to gather feedback. Mitch states, "Focus groups are another method of identifying community needs and engaging with residents." Many organizations track how often services are utilized and acknowledge those numbers as votes of what services people engage versus others that may not being utilized for a number of reasons such as awareness or access. Some professionals utilize action-based or community-based research that aims to engage people throughout the research process. Shelley asserts, "Community action research is about the community as a whole rather than someone coming in and studying but still having a distance from the community."

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The second category for traditional practices of incorporating community members is *holding public meetings*. Mitch states, "We realized that if we were going to be representative of the community's view, we had to have an open process. We always follow up one of our executive sessions with open meetings where the public is always welcome." Most public organizations and non-profit provide open meetings where people are allowed to join; however, some professionals disclose that many community members are not aware of when or where meetings are held and what the purpose is for attending. Diane speaks to this saying "I think most people aren't aware this is an opportunity. They don't know when the school meets or when the town meets. From what they've told us, they feel like their voice doesn't matter." When community members do attend public meetings they may not feel comfortable speaking up and not feel that they will be heard if they do share their opinions. There is a difference in opinion on whether public meetings are the right forum to engage community members.

Unique Practices of Participation

The third theme for incorporating community members is a collection of practices that connects community members and professionals to work on things together. The theme *Unique Practices of Participation* characterizes these practices. There are three categories within this theme: community conversations, responsiveness, and encouraging ownership. The first category, *community conversations* draws together practices that promote listening, understanding, and beginning a dialogue. Diane states, "People have to get in the communities they are serving and not just for special events or during elections." As mentioned above, professionals are not always comfortable with the people they serve. They don't always interact with community members and when they do, sometimes it is pretty limited to when large events are going on. Professionals share how they try to engage people. Jasmine explains "We try to go

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to most community events just to have people there to chat with folks and get their opinion on things." In addition to attending community events, Diane suggests hanging out in public spaces: "go run your ideas by other people and see if people like it. Go hang out at the tool library, go sit in barber shops, grocery stores, or go hang out in bars." Professionals have also been a part of organizing events to create longer lasting dialogue with larger meetings for brainstorming and idea exchanging. Mitch explains, "We held county conversations to share information about the effectiveness of programs and to engage the public in dialogue and exchange views on what's needed and how satisfied and dissatisfied people are." When there is a problem in the community and residents are frustrated, holding a listening session could be effective. In one case, "an incident between police and youth occurred and a volunteer suggested a listening session where youth could come in a neutral place and express their concerns" (Mitch).

The second category for unique practices of participation is *responsiveness,* which entails continuing dialogue through true listening, action and trust, and following-up. Shelley says we should try to "continually ask people for their feedback, ideas, and perspectives so that we can keep that dialogue going." Listening is partially how one keeps the dialogue open and is a common theme for sustainable community development. Some professionals share that listening and good intention is nothing without actual action. Diane states, "I don't believe in 'if you build it they will come.' You have to go to the community first and when someone says 'This is what I think will make my community stronger', you need to help them achieve it." She goes on to explain that it is easy for people to say they are listening, but then go and prioritize their own ideas of what they think should be done. She further states that when "you prove that I am hearing you and I am trying to deliver on the things you tell me, then you can build trust and get people to come to you for the next thing they need help with." This is challenging for

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professionals because they are labeled as the experts and sometimes that may cloud how they develop their strategic plans. Fred explains how it is common for community workers to assume others' needs: "they think they know what needs to happen in order to be successful. That makes it so some voices aren't valued because leaders already have a pre-set picture of where to go." Once a professional commits to implementing ideas and project community members want, there needs to be a continuation of communication in which professionals and community members update one another in the process. Mandy expresses this need "continue to communicate what you're doing along the way and let the community know how it will impact them." The best and most successful solutions may be at the intersection of community members and professionals' input and efforts.

The last category for unique ways of participation is *encouraging ownership*. This section emphasizes the need for community members to take ownership over their own lives, communities, and initiatives. After some professionals have been able to build trust and authentic relationships with people, they then have started to initiate steps to having community members be the leaders in their own community. Oliver warns, "We should be careful to make sure that the process is all the way bottom-up and not top-down. We should be letting them drive and shape the process while providing necessary support along the way." As mentioned in the articulating purpose section, professionals acknowledge the need for transferred leadership but few demonstrate real examples. Jasmine states:

> The most sustainable impact comes when we help them develop their leadership skills… I say, "No you are going to go up there and say it because you *can* do it." They'd always be like, "No not me. You can say it better." And I'd be firm and say, "No I'm not going to tell your story. This is your story." That empowerment and that capacity building in

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people is awesome and gives them something they can be proud of and take with them forever. Then they have that skillset to move forward and share it with others.

These sustained efforts can help create a ripple effect in action and motivate others to become engaged in improving their lives and communities.

Beyond the Research Questions: Encouraging Signs

Beyond the scope of the research questions, I asked professionals if there was anything going on in our community that made them feel hopeful for the future. The purpose in doing this was to end the interview on a positive note. It also allows participants to share what encourages them to push forward into the future. Everyone had something positive to reflect on. Professionals feel very encouraged by the great people in the community:

> "It's amazing to work with and see so many people that have a passion for serving others and making the world a better place" (Alea).
>
> "The best thing that Normington has going for it is the people. They really care" (Damian).

Professionals also share feelings of hope as they see a great increase in young leaders, women, and new faces becoming active and advocating for their passion:

> "It's encouraging to see more and more people participating in activism and social justice, especially younger people. Even people who were more passive before I've seen jump into action" (Jasmine).
>
> "Seeing people I had never seen before wanting to volunteer. Even some county employees" (Mitch).
>
> "The most encouraging thing is that women are getting more involved. Women are running for office and for boards and winning!" (Mandy).

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People working together and maximizing change through collective efforts to address social injustices and improving our community is another common theme. Professionals share:

> "The November 2016 election brought out a lot of freedom fighters, and people have not stopped. I don't anticipate anything stopping them because they are working in groups, not silos" (Ken).
>
> "When you need to galvanize and wrap around an issue it accelerates our ability to do good work because of the connections. The web is pretty tight here and it certainly works to the advantage for everyone who is trying to do stuff in our community" (Diane).
>
> "It's encouraging to see more service providers recognizing that we need to bring more non-traditional partners in. For the first time we have the healthcare system looking at how homelessness and social determinants impact health outcomes" (Anna).

Professionals find value and motivation in witnessing others become active and intentional citizens in their communities. The ripple effect of getting more people to care about their lives, their families, their communities, and their country is without a doubt something to feel hopeful about.

Summary

The descriptive findings gathered from this qualitative study provide insight into the connections between communication and sustainable community development. This chapter has organized the practices that aid successful community development into overarching themes and categories. The three themes of this study, articulating purpose, communication collaboratively, and incorporating community members all add to the understanding of successful community development. Although results are not generalizable outside the community where this study takes place, they still hold significant value. The findings also have theoretical implications that

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connect the second chapter's concepts and theories to current trends. The findings also have methodological implications that demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of using similar methods in future research. Finally, practical implications are greatly beneficial for professionals working in areas of community development. Even without generalizing, the themes in this study can have a transferring effect as they relate to similar community development efforts. The value of the findings and related implications are discussed in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of the findings from this study. Theoretical implications explore ties between the findings of this study and previous literature. Methodological implications examine the strengths and limitations of both qualitative research generally and specific idiosyncrasies of this study. Practical implications offer practices that may be valuable and applicable in sustainable community development projects. Before a discussion of the implications of this study, it is necessary to recap on the results from the previous chapter.

Summary of Results

This study answers three research questions exploring communication and sustainable community development as it relates to (a) articulating purpose, (b) communicating collaboratively, and (c) incorporating community members. The first research question asks how professionals working in areas of community development articulate the purpose of their work, and two themes summarize these findings. The first theme, *To Develop a Comprehensive Community View*, unpacks how professionals work toward developing a holistic understanding of the community that is comprehensive of the people they serve, the community and its resources, the problems and needs they identify, and the solutions they implement. Professionals also articulate their purpose, *To Act as Servant Leaders*. Five categories within this theme explore overlapping roles of building capacity and connection, engaging the people they serve, increasing public awareness, empowering people to do for themselves, and working themselves out of a job.

The second research question asks what communication practices professionals perceive to be effective in inter-organizational collaborations. Professionals report a variety of

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communication practices, encapsulated by two themes. The first theme, *Building Sustainable Collaborations,* explores five categories necessary for building a strong foundation. These categories comprise finding value and strength in diversity, developing deep relationships, recognizing a common purpose, setting rules for engagement, and defining project commitment and success. The second theme, *Maintaining Sustainable Collaborations*, includes four categories: communicating consistently, reflecting regularly, planning continually, and preventing conflict.

Lastly, the third research question asks how professionals incorporate community members into the collaboration process, and three themes summarize these practices and perceptions. The first theme, *Barriers to Participation,* comprises two categories: barriers for community members to participate and professionals neglecting to incorporate. *Traditional Practices of Incorporation* is the next theme and categorizes collecting data and feedback and holding public meetings. Community conversations, responsiveness, and encouraging ownership are the three categories within the third theme, *Unique Practices of Participation.* The next sections explore these findings as they relate to theoretical, methodological, and practical implications.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The results of this study hold value in advancing knowledge in both the field of communication and study of community development. These findings contribute insight into the practices relevant to promoting sustainable community development. Specifically, communication practices between organizational and community leaders, collaborative

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partnerships, and participatory community members. These findings provide opportunities to reflect on existing literature and the theoretical implications of this new knowledge.

Although organizational leaders in community development work in a wide range of professions, they articulate commonalities in the ultimate purpose of their work. The results demonstrate a shared aim in developing a community view that is comprehensive of the people, resources, and problems. This view allows professionals to implement appropriate and effective solutions that strive to provide the most good for the greatest number of people. The current literature emphasizes producing, promoting, and preserving community well-being as the overarching goal in community development work. Community well-being is the "state in which the needs and desires of the community are fulfilled… and the predominant focus and value of community development is to improve people's lives" (Lee, Kim, & Philips, 2015, p. 2). This study extends our understanding of community well-being in the field to a holistic level. Professionals share that, specifically in Normington, there has been a recent increase in the movement toward this ideal approach.

Another common articulation of purpose that professionals express is to act as servant leaders. This was not accounted for in the review of literature in chapter two of this study. Scholarship in other disciplines heavily supports models of servant leadership that inculcate positive individual values and personality traits such as empathy, integrity, competence, and agreeableness (Washington, Sutton, & Field, 2006), as well as develop an organizational culture that trains community members to become servant leaders themselves (Melchar & Bosco, 2010). The findings of this study assert a view of servant leadership that is community centric. All of a leader's responsibilities aim not only to serve the citizens of a community, but also to strengthen them to become leaders in their own neighborhoods and take ownership over their lives. By

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building capacity and opportunity, engaging and motivating those they serve, increasing public awareness, and empowering people to do for themselves, professionals are working themselves out of a job. Green and Tones (2010) echo this: "Community development workers may initially occupy a position of power" to influence policies and advocate for human rights; "however, exercising this power becomes transformative if the process enables community members to acquire power … and results in community workers working themselves out of a job" (p. 423). In this way they embrace the prospect of "unemployment" and adapt themselves to serve other community needs. Neubauer (2011) suggests using a "community-based capacity-building model…Our shared objective is long-term change; ultimately, our partners will continue to do this work in our absence. In the end, we hope to work ourselves out of a job" (p. 1). Approaching community development efforts as a servant leader with the intention of job obsoletion due to empowerment and locally fostered leadership is an ideal in reaching sustainable change. The findings of this study further connect leadership theory and practice with intended outcomes in community development work.

The previous literature introduces social capital as an important element to sustainable community development. Two main theoretical findings in this study expand the use of social capital in community work. First, social capital is enhanced through inter-organizational collaboration. This line of work requires leaders to have far-reaching networks in order to increase resource access and sharing of vital information (Hanifan, 1916; Potyeva, 2016). Professionals in this study emphasize the use of social capital at a stronger level. They express the importance of building deep, authentic relationships with their colleagues and the people they serve. This goes beyond surface relationships and simple means to an end networking. It is more than exchanging goods and services. Field (2017) connects the main contributions to social

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capital theory in politics, economics, health, history, education, and criminology, but does not suggest any deep, professional relationship building. This study finds a need for people to care about the people they are working with on a more personal level that increases understanding and reduces conflict. Communication is the key to building this deeper social capital. "It's all a matter of relationship building at the end of the day. Communication is a means through which you can keep that glue in the relationship together" (Peter). By using exercises such as the "one-on-one" discussed in chapter four, Jasmine suggests getting to know people, asking them what they care about, and learning to appreciate their values. These exercises and communication practices can extend the life of social capital long after a collaboration disbands. Future research should explore further communication and relational development practices that can enrich collaborations working for community change.

Secondly, a participatory approach to community development calls for community members also to build and possess social capital that allows them to better themselves and those around them. Although networking is important for community members, it is not enough. Building social capital "is not always sufficient to sustain and develop local community initiative, as infusions of economic and human capital are often necessary" (Dale & Newman, 2008). Professionals in this study perceive participation in the Normington community to be low when it comes to engaging and empowering community members. The combining of social capital with community engagement and participation may increase collective action. Attention should be paid in future research on how to increase social capital and community participation. The reader will find a more in-depth discussion of community participation in the *practical implications* section.

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As this study advocates for participatory approaches, it is worth noting that community members and professionals' choices and life approaches may be impacted by internal and external factors. Locus of control theory, developed my American psychologist, Julian Rotter in the 1950s, suggests that there are internal and external factors and beliefs that shape how one perceives control in their life. Someone possessing an internal locus control will believe that they have ultimate control over their actions and life projections. On the other hand, an individual with a mindset enacting an external locus of control will believe that their life is directly influenced by environmental factors and they have little to no control over their life. An individual experiencing feelings of isolation will many times feel "unable to control their own destiny. They are a small cog in a big machine and at the mercy of forces too strong or too vague to control" (Rotter, 1966, p. 3). Over the past few decades the theory has been applied to variety of contexts and fields. It has been noted as increasingly valued as heuristic and is useful in understanding human behavior and psychology, as well as its application to social issues and change (Rotter, 1990). Locus of control theory has been useful to a number of fields, and it is also useful in understanding community member participation and incorporation. Community members with a stronger external locus of control may perceive it to be the responsibility of organizations and professionals to take care of them. They may also feel disempowered and inadequate to take ownership over their own lives. This can impact community participation and motivation. Future research should explore these relationships between community participation and community members' perceptions of internal and external loci of control.

Methodological Implications

Limitations. Qualitative research can be heavily reliant on the skills a single researcher, who analyzes the data they have collected and then interprets and reports the results. It is

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important to acknowledge that personal bias may exist when one conducts research of this kind. For example, this study examines sustainable community development practices from a perspective wherein well-being is the ultimate purpose. Using a specific lens is necessary for understanding the data in some cohesive way, but it can also prevent other patterns and elements from being noticed. As mentioned in the theoretical implications, this study emphasizes participatory approaches, which demonstrates another bias. It assumes that people *should* take control over their lives. Although there is strong evidence to support community member engagement as an essential element to community sustainability, it is important to acknowledge that not every community member can or wants to participate.

The allowance for only a finite number of classifications in qualitative research is another limitation. Although there was great variation in questions and topics discussed during the in-depth interviews, it is necessary for the researcher to be selective when making sense of the data. To answer each of the three research questions, the results were organized into two to three themes. Reporting everything that was said in all twenty-five interviews would be, if not impossible, then impractical to say the least.

A third potential limitation relates to limited perceptual scope. This study sought to identify practices that are effective in bringing about positive and lasting change in communities and strongly advocates for participatory approaches. Seeing as this study collects the perceptions of professionals and not any general community members, a holistic view cannot be claimed. Future research should incorporate community members and collect, compare, and report their perceptions regarding sustainable community development and communication practices.

Strengths. Qualitative and interpretive research are forms of naturalistic inquiry in which meaning and sense-making are taken from the contexts in which they are embedded. Lincoln

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and Guba (1985) explain that "a contextual inquiry demands a human instrument, one fully adaptive to the indeterminate situation that will be encountered" (p. 187). There are many strengths in using the researcher as a human instrument to collect and interpret information during face-to-face interviews. Adaptability allows the human instrument to remain responsive to the needs of the moment. The interview space provides opportunities to clarify information during the conversation to ensure there is a clear understanding of the information being shared. There is also opportunity to explore idiosyncratic responses and achieve greater depth than is otherwise impossible (Lincoln & Guba). These strengths increase the trustworthiness of the method and findings of this study.

Another element that builds the trustworthiness of the method used in this study is prolonged exposure. Prolonged exposure and deep engagement with the participants and data increase the credibility of findings by reducing distortions and building trust (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In an interview setting where both the researcher and the participant have a limited knowledge of one another, there is room for mistrust and personal and perceptual distortions. Every interview began with introductions and personal questions regarding background. Participants were also asked about their passions for the field of community development. This introduction served to build a foundation of trust and credibility. In regard to information distortion, the researcher can have misunderstandings of responses due to personal values and prior constructed knowledge of topics in the study. There can also be distortion on the participants' side if questions are not interpreted in the same way the researcher intends. In this study, all 25 interviews lasted between 60 to a 120 minutes. The prolonged exposure to the interview topics and questions helped to reduce misunderstanding and promoted a common meaning of terms.

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It is worth noting that the accumulation of both breadth and depth in experience that professionals have in varying areas of community development demonstrates another strength of the method. This strength is due to the use of maximum variation sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which seeks to include a wide variety of professionals. The term 'professional' often replaces 'participant' in this study in order to demonstrate their expertise. All the participating professionals in this study are experts in the field with 10 to 40 years of experience. Individuals were purposively chosen based on their knowledge and leadership positions in this community.

Although the goal of qualitative research is not to reach generalizability, there is a possibility for transferability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that, although it is impossible for the researcher to know all the ways in which results can be transferred, professionals are intimately familiar with how to apply new and relevant knowledge to their work. This study accumulates a set of practices that, while not representative of the entire field, may transfer to similar community development projects, collaborations, and participation engagement efforts. Future research may use triangulation, combining qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection to recommend generalizable communication practices to achieving sustainable community development.

Practical Implications

The main contributions of this study are the communication practices gathered from the qualitative research, specifically the ideal and actual practices for participation and incorporation of community members. Professionals in Normington and communities with similar characteristics may find value in applying this information in their community development work. This study focuses on sustainable community development and offers practices that may be effective in facilitating efforts to reach sustainability. It is worth noting that effectiveness and

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sustainability are not used synonymously. Sustainability represents an overarching goal of community development to creating positive and lasting changes in communities. Effectiveness, however, refers to identifying specific practices that can contribute to this larger goal.

The list of communication practices perceived to be effective within inter-organizational collaborations both confirms current practices as well as makes some additions. There are several collaboration practices confirmed in both previous literature and in this study. Some of these include pooling resources and knowledge, maintaining open communication, building trust, and clarifying structure (Hardy, Philips, & Lauren, 2003; Keyton & Ford, 2008; Selsky, 1991; Vangen & Huxam, 2003). Professionals echo the need for communication practices that are open and consistent. They specifically recommend setting face-to-face meetings in advance and only using electronic forms of communication periodically for updates. Practices for building sustainable collaborations in this study comprise finding value and strength in diversity, developing deep relationships, recognizing a common purpose, setting rules for engagement, and defining commitment level and success. Other scholars also confirm these practices. Kaufman (2012) explains that, once a collaborative group identifies their shared objectives, "The new organization is ready to establish its rules of engagement and set off on a pathway to success by establishing roles and responsibilities, determining investments of time, energy, and money, and identifying measures of success." Another element in the literature, critical dialogue, refers to dialogue that creates mutuality in a common goal or vision (Garrison 2016; Mitra, 2013). The professionals in this study refer to critical dialogue as maintenance behavior for sustaining collaborations. They encourage conversations using candid language to address tension and prevent conflict. Communicating with mutual respect is another element widely recommended by scholars (Blunell, 2007). Similarly, this study suggests the need for communication practices

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that validate others by listening, paraphrasing, acknowledging, and avoiding reactive and destructive communication. Professionals in this study also advocate sharing leadership and encouraging more equal participation. Kinsley (1997) explains that sharing decision-making is a way to rebuild trust and respect "that may have been marred by years of wear and tear; it's a way to replace boring or painful meetings with fun and creative ones; it's a vehicle by which people who have been ignored can fully participate" (p. 40). Every new collaboration will have different and evolving needs. Future research should explore training opportunities for professionals to learn more about how to build and maintain sustainable collaborations.

This study finds a divide between theory and practice. Although professionals articulate the purpose of their work in terms of developing a comprehensive community view and acting as servant leaders, they fall short on some significant assertions. Community participation and incorporation repeatedly come up when professionals talk about how to create sustainable community development efforts. They recognize the importance of developing a comprehensive view of the people they serve and issues they face. There is even acknowledgement that the people know what they need and their role is to listen and respond in appropriate ways to fulfilling those needs. Part of a servant leader's role in this study is to engage and empower people to become leaders themselves in working toward job obsoletion. With all this in mind, most professionals in this study neglect to incorporate people into their collaborations, strategic planning, and development efforts. They openly admit that they do not engage those they serve at all or enough; however, they also express that this is something they need to do more and they are open to trying new things. Melkote (2002) notes that although the practice of participatory communication has stressed collaboration, "a co-equal knowledge sharing between the people and experts, and a local context and cultural proximity, the outcome in most cases has not been

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true empowerment of the people" (p. 429). Some professionals are just not aware of how to go about engaging people, especially if they are not in the habit of doing it.

It is also important to acknowledge that professionals working in areas of community development are already spent in terms of time and energy, and, although they may want to incorporate community members, it may be difficult for them to add something else to their workload. There are also structural and funding constraints that limit professionals' options. Grants and funding opportunities will often require recipients to conduct traditional methods of participation and incorporation, such as surveys, which restrict them from utilizing more active and unique practices.

The findings of this study suggest that professionals need help in terms of how to further motivate community members and incorporate them into their work. Unique methods for reaching these goals combine the findings from this study with practices from other literature. One method is to increase the opportunities for community conversations and professionals to create and attend local events that foster community relationship building. Leighninger (2006) shares the initiative taken by one non-profit organization such as small group "Dialogue Dinners" and large scale "Community Conversations," which are "meant to build social capital by fostering new relationships among different groups" (p. 57). The findings of this study also emphasize responsiveness. This entails listening to people and then enacting their ideas. This requires a leader to allow others to lead and not try to sell them on their own ideas. Providing a platform for people to speak for themselves also helps to encourage leadership growth. People taking ownership over their lives and communities will increase participation.

Kinsley (1997) suggests several recommendations to fostering participation. First, when recruiting people, use positive communication rather than framing things negatively. This can be

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done by celebrating "past local successes and acknowledging those who made those successes happen" (p. 105). Professionals also need to find ways to accommodate limited participation, acknowledge individual work preferences, and accept non-participation. These accommodations suggest that leaders must continue to invite people to participate, but not make them feel guilty if they cannot or do not want to, and leaders must remain positive and work together to find tasks and roles that are suitable to their strengths.

Professionals in this study embrace the importance of reaching people where they are, rather than where they want them to be. There are numerous ways in which professionals all over the country encourage participation and incorporate community members. This study names a few and leaves plenty of room for growth. Future research should look into how communication practices and other activities can help professionals engage and empower the communities they serve. Those responsible for dispersing funds and creating grant stipulations must also consider how these rules add more stress to professionals work lives and may take away from their actual community contributions. Future collaboration developers should find new ways to restructure their approaches to community work and incorporate and engage people along the way. If they are ever to work themselves out of a job, they must first prepare people to take their place to create sustaining change in our communities.

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Enlarging Possibilities

In many ways, this thesis replicates and extends communication theory and practice relevant to sustainable community development. By equipping professionals and community members with the tools and knowledge they need to be successful, our communities can continue to grow and serve all people in meaningful and impactful ways. Famous cultural anthropologist, Clifford Gertz (1988), once wrote:

> The next necessary thing is to enlarge the possibility of an intelligible discourse between people quite different from one another in interest, outlook, wealth, and power and yet contained in a world where, tumbled as they are into endless connection, it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other's way.

In order to produce, promote, and preserve the well-being for all, it is increasingly necessary, as Geertz suggests, for leaders and community members to purposefully get *in* each other's way, given the interconnected nature of community and the power of communication to establish and foster these interconnections. Ultimately, sustainable community development is about enlarging the possibilities of collaboration and participation, a discourse that incorporates everyone within a community no matter their differences. For the time being, the challenge for professionals is to figure out creative and innovative pathways to bring community members and community resources together in ways that renew community well-being.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROTOCOL

Introductory Questions

1. As professionals within the field of community development, how do you describe the general purpose of your profession? How do view your specific role in the field?
2. How do you define community well-being?
3. How do you identify, understand, and define a local problem or need?
4. What information do you reference to determine if a local issue is worth focusing on?
    a. Examples?

Collaboration

5. How do you connect with other professionals to deal with local problems or needs in the community? What is the collaboration process like?
    a. How about other organizations?
    b. Examples?
6. What is the process of developing a formal collaborative effort to address a local problem or need?
    a. Examples?
7. Do you first try to reach a common understanding of a local problem or need with other professionals and organizations who are ready or willing to collaborate? How do you reach a common understanding?
    a. Can you share an example of a time when you were not able to reach a common understanding?
    b. Can you share an example of when you were able to?
8. Do you feel that local problems are actually and appropriately being addressed in our community? Do you think community development goals are reached in a timely and thorough fashion?
    a. If not, how do you express or act on those feelings?
9. How do you view the function and value of communication in the area of community development and the collaboration process?
10. How can miscommunication impact the collaboration process?
    a) Examples?
    b) How is conflict of this kind addressed or resolved?
    c) Do you feel comfortable or productive when talking about it?
    d) Do conversations regarding miscommunication tend to enhance or detract from the collaboration process?
    e) Are there specific professional communication practices typically encouraged or required in the field?

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Participation

11. How are recipients of community aid incorporated into the collaboration process?
    a) What has the experience been like and what has it entailed? What have been the various successes and challenges?
    b) Do you think your colleagues (both within your organization and others you collaborate with) generally seek to include the feedback and participation of recipients?
    c) If recipients are not incorporated, is this something you have considered or would if prompted?
12. How are general public members incorporated into the collaboration process?
    a) What has the experience been like and what has it entailed? What have been the various successes and challenges?
    b) Do you think your colleagues generally seek to include the feedback and participation of community members?
    c) If community members are not incorporated, is this something you have considered or would if prompted?

Sustainability

13. How do you define sustainability in terms of community development?
14. When a certain approach or a specific program is considered outdated, unsustainable, or ineffective, how do you go about addressing this?
    a) Examples? Particularly those in which you have contributed time, money, energy, people, and/or partners.
    b) Do you feel comfortable or productive talking about it with the others involved?
    c) Do you have any examples of programs that have been dissolved because of inefficiency or unsustainability, and how that happened?
15. What sustainable solutions have you found to be most impactful or promising?
16. What has not been as impactful or promising?
17. How can community development be more efficient and sustainable, while still relying on collaboration?
    a. How can communication help facilitate this?
18. Are the short term goals created by the organization or within a collaborative relationship related to the long-term goals?
    a. Do you think this has any impact on success?

Conclusion

19. What improvements or encouraging signs have you seen during your time in this community?
20. Do you have any other comments regarding any of the topics covered in this conversation?

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