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Interagency Collaboration and Communication: Funders and Service Providers Working Together to Create a Management Service Organization

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Interagency Collaboration and Communication:
Funders and Service Providers Working Together to Create a Management
Service Organization

by

Beth E. Eschenfelder

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

Charitable nonprofit organizations are growing in number and scope, but the body of literature and knowledge about communication within these organizations is limited. Today, charitable organizations face a flurry of economic and environmental factors that challenge their continued survival: growing community needs, mounting funding cuts from all segments of government, increased competition for funding, a limited pool of dedicated community leaders to serve on boards, decreased charitable giving for some causes, and persistent calls for greater accountability. As nonprofits explore new ways of coping with these socioeconomic pressures—such as reorganization, consolidation, mergers, and management service organizations—there is a clear need for applied communication research on organizational change in nonprofit settings.

This research explores the unique issues nonprofit organizations face when considering a specific form of consolidation—a management service organization—focusing on interorganizational communication among nonprofits and funders and the challenges faced during reorganization planning and implementation. In particular, this research explores communication processes both within and among the Neighborhood

Family Center Coalition (NFCC) (a collaborative of nonprofit organizations), and the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County (JWB), a funder of these same organizations, as the members planned and developed a management service organization.

Action research was the chosen methodology for this study due to the strong desire of the research participants to engage fully in planning, executing and analyzing this research. Working together, we co-generated the research questions for this study. Agreed upon areas for research included *considerations and challenges* in implementing the management service organization, the *funder's role* in guiding and assisting in the integration process, *management and communication strategies* implemented to mitigate the negative effects of this type of organizational change and/or to contribute to successful implementation of this type of integration model, and *lessons learned* that may benefit future JWB efforts, as well as funders and service providers in communities throughout the United States. The research team worked together to identify and develop appropriate research methods and protocols that included interactive interviews and ethnographic observation. Interviews were conducted with all members of the NFCC and key management staff from the JWB.

The applicability of this research is of great importance to funding institutions, many which are taking on a more active role to stabilize or strengthen their funded programs, and more often today, through encouragement to consolidate. Results of this study also may lay the groundwork to support and engage nonprofit leaders considering consolidation as an option for their organizations.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION STUDY

Introduction

Like most scholars, my research interests are spawned from my personal experiences. “It is rare to find a productive scholar whose work is unconnected to his or her personal history” (Bochner, 1997, p. 433). I became interested in the topic of nonprofit mergers, consolidations and integrations when I was leading my own struggling nonprofit. This interest was heightened when I worked as a government funder, watching charitable nonprofits close their doors rather than explore partnership alternatives that could have continued their services to people in need. As a former nonprofit administrator and government funder, I am keenly aware of the economic and environmental pressures facing nonprofit organizations today.

In my discussions with other nonprofit leaders and funders, and as reflected in the literature in the field, it became evident that we are about to see a wave of merger and consolidation discussions among nonprofits—or, at least, we should. As will be demonstrated in the literature review in chapter 2, revenue sources are going to continue to decrease, and competition for funds will continue to increase. The alternative to consolidations is more nonprofits closing their doors. Most vulnerable are the small community-level organizations that struggle for meager donations (Somasundaram, 1999). The organization I managed was one such organization, and I became convinced

that our programs would be more stable if they were under the aegis of a larger agency. I started thinking about merger as a possible strategy to help ensure the long-term stability of our programs.

Because of my personal experiences, my initial research interests were on nonprofit mergers and consolidations and their impact on the nonprofit workforce. I was interested especially in this topic because of the unique characteristics of the nonprofit workforce as it pertained to emotions in the workplace and organizational culture, and the impact of merger and consolidation on these aspects of workers' lives. My research for this dissertation changed slightly to focus more specifically on nonprofit integration, and specifically on an effort by a funder and several nonprofits to form a new entity to help them cope with looming threats. The focus of my research, therefore, became interorganizational partnerships and communication during the integration effort among the managers involved.

Although emotions in the workplace and workforce culture are not a central focus of this research, these concerns are still relevant and will be touched on briefly in this introductory chapter. Every member of an organization experiences and is impacted by aspects of emotions and culture. Some research in these areas, therefore, is being shared to help better understand the environment and the phenomena being studied. I also will provide an overview of my experiences that led to my interest in nonprofit consolidations and my subsequent research to learn more about various consolidation models. This research led me to discover my dissertation topic, and I will end this chapter by introducing my research site and previewing the structure of this dissertation.

My Introduction to Nonprofit Administration—and Stress

I began my work as a nonprofit executive director in an organization that provided shelter and services to homeless men and women living with chronic alcoholism addiction. I was faced with an organization that was near closing, deeply in debt, and had no support base of volunteers or donors. As a unified and committed staff—through a lot of careful planning, hard work, and sacrifices made on the part of many people—we were able to pull the agency out of a deep hole. It was an education in nonprofit management—or the management of any business—that I will never forget. Despite the fact that we were finally operating in the black, there was always the knowledge that we were at risk. Along with that knowledge was the pit in my stomach that grew ever larger, reflecting our organization’s heavy dependence on government grants. The next election, the next budget cycle, the next executive director who draws community attention, the next big community crisis or cause, the next whim of a grant committee or government decision maker, the next *whatever* could change the future of our organization or lead us to close our doors. Despite the strong reputation we had built in the community, especially among those who made the funding decisions, we knew it was only a matter of time before an eventual downturn. An organization our size could be crippled by losing one large grant. We had no cushion to fall back on and hadn’t been able to build a safety net of private funding. Raising money for homeless alcoholics was not easy.

As our organization dealt with its financial battles, I began to see other organizations beginning to struggle and close. I cringed every time I heard about a new organization starting up. *They’ll never make it*, I would think to myself. When I had the opportunity, I told these budding nonprofit leaders the same thing: “The environment

can't bear more organizations right now, and this is a bad time to start a new nonprofit. Please, please, partner with another organization that shares your passion." But people drawn to nonprofit work have big hearts and strong will, and these aspiring leaders proceeded to open new organizations, many which floundered and closed in their first years of operation. In my frustration and disappointment I wondered, *How many public and private resources were poured into starting those new organizations that later closed? What a waste. Why do funders continue to support and even encourage new organizations?*

I was also frustrated by funders whose grant applications said, "Tell us how you will decrease your dependency on these grant funds." — *Well you know what? I can't! And you better think twice before you scale back support from agencies that are operating well and support new little ventures, just so you can put a feather in your cap, only to be able say during your next election, "See what I helped create." Get over it!* — At least, those were the internal conversations I had every time I completed one of these grants and spewed what they want to hear about diversifying our board of directors, planning more fundraisers, exploring entrepreneurial ventures, and cutting costs.

We serve homeless alcoholics! Get with the program. This is your job, government funder: to help care for the people whom the rest of society won't. — These thoughts often came to mind, and I shared them often with elected officials and others within funding organizations. But who was I to them? Just another small agency executive trying to keep my organization afloat.

Introduction to Nonprofit Consolidation

My organization's leadership decided to pursue merger and consolidation to prepare for imminent changes in the funding environment, strengthen our organizational capacity, and protect our programs and services. It became my primary responsibility to research and learn all that I could about nonprofit mergers to help move this effort forward. By that time, I had returned to school to pursue my Ph.D. with a focus in organizational communication, along with a second master's in public administration. Every class research project became a quest to find the perfect dissertation topic, and despite the fact that I wanted to find some sexy topic, most of my research focused on nonprofit mergers. This became a way to kill two birds with one stone, and it became an increasing focus of my academic research, in addition to my job. I found it difficult to find research literature specifically on nonprofit mergers. There was ample literature on for-profit mergers, but this was mostly focused on the nuts and bolts of due diligence. There also was research on corporate culture in business mergers, with cultural incompatibilities cited as the main reason why corporate mergers fail (see Bramson, 2000; DeVoge, 1999; Feldman & Spratt, 1999; Marks & Mirvis, 1998).

Mergers, consolidations and integrations among nonprofit organizations, however, are different from those in the for-profit sector for many reasons. For example, the terminology of mergers is problematic for nonprofits. As McLaughlin (1998) questions, "Exactly how does one go about acquiring a nonprofit entity which, by definition, no one owns?" (p. 53). Translating merger techniques and strategies from the for-profit world to the nonprofit sector can be frustrating. Nonprofit mergers call for different expectations, processes and techniques (McLaughlin, 1998).

Operationally, nonprofits may be more difficult to merge because of the multiple systems involved. Most nonprofits, explains Arsenault (1998, p. 148), operate two separate systems simultaneously: the system to obtain resources and the system to serve consumers. For-profits operate under one system, whereby the consumer purchases products and services, and revenue generation and service delivery are simultaneous. Nonprofits that use volunteers are also managing two separate human resource systems: one for paid staff and another for volunteers. Planning a nonprofit merger, therefore, is more complex for nonprofits because all these components must be addressed and planned for at the same time.

Research and literature on nonprofit mergers has started to increase, but consistent with for-profit mergers, most of the attention has been given to the pragmatics of how to make a merger happen. An area that receives less attention in the literature is the impact that nonprofit consolidations have on employees—especially on employee emotions and organizational culture.

Looking for Lessons on Nonprofit Consolidation

Because literature on nonprofit mergers and consolidations was limited, I began to conduct my own research in this area. The issue of emotions in the nonprofit workforce will be explored through a brief review of the literature and a look at one organizational merger and the emotional toll it took on one of the leaders. I also will provide an introduction to organizational culture through a review of the literature and an overview of my research conducted with one nonprofit consolidation that sought to blend organizational cultures.

While exploring merger as an option for my own organization, I interviewed executive directors who had recently undergone or who were about to undergo a merger. I also assisted boards of directors that were exploring formal partnership opportunities. This research helped me share in the experiences of these organizational leaders and to better understand the issues they faced during their consolidation efforts: the intensity of nonprofit organizational culture, the impact on organizational mission and identity, people's resistance to change, and the strategies effective managers use to help their agencies move through difficult stages of change. I also saw the devastating emotional impact such change can have on the people involved.

Employee Emotions in the Nonprofit Sector

I became interested in workplace emotions and emotional labor because I could see the toll that direct service work took on workers at my agency and in other social service programs. Their work is difficult and emotional. Workers deal with people who are sick, abusive or abused, down on their luck, without homes, and or dealing with life histories beyond most people's imagination. Because of their tough situations, they may not be pleasant to work with, can be overly demanding, and sometimes lie and disobey rules. Staff members often have to choke back their own feelings in order to deal with difficult situations and to help their clients as best they can. This expectation or self-imposed suppression of their feelings is called "feeling rules" (Hochschild, 1983)—governing the expression of emotions, especially in service-based occupations.

Work that requires the production of certain feelings in the worker and work that entails the production of feelings in others is what Hochschild describes as emotional labor. Such emotional labor, however, must not show. It is what workers do with their

feelings to comply with organizational role requirements (Yanay & Shahar, 1998).

Emotional labor refers to the effort, planning and control required to express an organization's desired emotions (Karabanow, 1999). Put another way, emotional labor involves the efforts made to understand others, have empathy with their situation, and internalize their feelings (England & Farkas, 1986, in Steinberg & Figart, 1999).

Emotional labor is not unique to the human service industry, but it can be found in any industry that involves providing service to others. Emotional labor within caring and service professions has captured attention of researchers who have studied the impact of emotional labor on flight attendants (Hochschild, 1983), 911 dispatch workers (Shuler & Sypher, 2000), employees of The Body Shop (Martin, Knoppoff & Beckman, 1998), and various frontline customer service agents (Ashforth & Tomuik, 2000). Workers in the nonprofit sector have also been featured in this area of research, including social workers (Fineman, 1985; Meyerson, 2000), youth shelter workers (Karabanow, 1999), and retirement center workers (Miller, Zook & Ellis, 1989).

Some researchers, however, have shown that there are characteristics unique to health care, social service work, teaching and other caring professions that make workers more likely to perform emotional labor and to experience burnout. A research study conducted by Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) demonstrated that, among various professions, human service professionals reported the highest level of interpersonal demands, such as the frequency, variety, intensity, duration of emotional display and expectations for control over emotional expressions (p. 31). Human service workers are unique in that their career choices are motivated by concerns such as working with people, helping to meet people's needs, and making the world a better place in which to

live. Staff who work in nonprofit organizations are often value-driven individuals who have made the choice to work in this sector because of their serious commitment to a cause. They often have strong professional standards and loyalties and well-articulated opinions about the right way to serve consumers. These are workers who likely “self-select occupations that require particular types of emotional labor” (Shuler and Sypher, 2000, p. 75).

Sometimes such workers go above and beyond the call of duty, even if it means increasing their own emotional labor. As a result of performing emotional labor, these employees give something of themselves to their clients with whom they have no ongoing personal relationship (Steinberg, 1999). They work hard to understand their clients and to have empathy with their situation—to feel their feelings as a part of their own (Steinberg & Figart, 1999). It is their tendency toward emotional labor that makes them passionate about their work. Brotheridge and Grandey (2002, p. 31) suggest that employees caring for others may be intrinsically motivated to care about their patients/clients. It also causes concern, because it impacts their own mental health and well being, as they care for the mental health and well being of others.

Due to these admirable qualities, issues of merger and consolidations become more relevant and more problematic. Employees’ emotional response and emotional labor can be complicated by organizational changes brought about by nonprofit consolidations, but often little attention is paid to emotional issues in the nonprofit workplace. Because the average nonprofit budget is 60 to 80% personnel-related expenses, resolving personnel issues during a nonprofit merger is critical to its success (McLaughlin, 1998, p. 210). “It is always a challenge,” says Arsenault (1998, p. 134), “to

lead a group of nonprofit staff members through a process of reconsideration and change, particularly if the planned change implies the need to reconsider current practices.”

In addition to observing these behaviors in my own workplace and learning through my review of the literature, I had an opportunity to explore employee emotions and emotional labor during a nonprofit merger. I interviewed the outgoing executive director of a local AIDS service organization that was preparing to merge with a large multi-service organization. These are two organizations that previously competed for grants, clients and donations, but their merger was amicable and well structured. The emotional toll the merger took on the staff of the smaller organization was significant but not considered as part of the due diligence. The emotional toll it took on the departing executive director was intense.

The executive director described the merger experience as the most difficult professional experience she ever had. The work required to execute the merger “felt very unreal” and resulted in physical exhaustion for those workers most central to the process. At the same time that she was devoting 60 to 80 hours a week to prepare for the merger, she was resigned to the fact that she likely would not have a job when it was completed. She was “grief stricken” that she may no longer be with the organization, but also because she likely wouldn’t be working in the field of HIV/AIDS services, a cause close to her heart.

The merger was also difficult for her because she took it personally and struggled with feelings of failure. She cared about and felt responsible for the people working for her and for the programs that served the community. In every sense, she performed emotional labor, controlling her own emotions while caring for the wellbeing and

emotions of others. One of her final tasks was helping to prepare her employees to be immersed into a new organizational culture, which contributed greatly to the level of fear and uncertainty among employees of the merging organization. “They signed on for one job,” and they poured their emotions into their organization and their work. Then they were asked to transition that commitment to a new company, a task that was extremely difficult, especially with disparate organizational cultures. In addition to dealing with the emotional labor these workers engaged in every day as part of their work with people living with AIDS, they had to deal with a new range of feelings and emotions that resulted from the merger. The employees’ feelings ranged from “sort of a ‘wait and see’ attitude, to sort of an open hostility.”

Addressed in the literature are strategies that workers use to mitigate the negative effects of emotional labor, including job involvement and control over one’s work (see Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Bulan, 1997; Erickson & Wharton, 1997; Hochschild, 1983); solidarity and cohesion among workers and feeling that one is doing something good (Karabanow, 1999; Shuler & Sypher, 2000); the inherent nature of emotional labor itself, for certain types of workers (Shuler & Sypher, 2000); and enjoying the act of performance (Martin, Knoppoff & Beckman, 1998).

Several researchers have also focused on certain forms of communication that managers can foster to offset the stress and burnout caused by emotional labor (Fineman, 1985 & 2000; Mattson, Clair, Sanger & Kunkel, 2000; Putnam & Mumby, 1993; Rafaeli & Worline, 2001). Although mitigating strategies are not specifically addressed in this dissertation research, such strategies may be observed in the behaviors of the research participants when dealing with the integration effort. Some management and

communication strategies will be explored further in the literature review and through the actions of the research participants as they implemented the required changes for their new organizational model.

Employee emotions and workplace culture are intertwined. Emotions in the nonprofit workforce strongly contribute to the development of an organization's culture. Care and attention to the workforce culture during a merger or consolidation is critically important because it is the employees, their feelings, emotions, values and interactions that comprise an organization's culture and identity (Domagalski, 1999; Rafaeli & Worline, 2001; Shuler & Sypher, 2000). Their feelings are determined not only by the internal characteristics that make them who they are, "but by things such as organizational structure, hierarchy and status, organizational design, organizational leadership, and organizational culture" (Rafaeli and Worline, 2001, p. 105).

Organizational culture has been explored extensively in the literature, but views on what culture is, how it forms, and the functions it serves vary from mechanistic and rational approaches to humanistic and emotional perspectives. A great deal of the literature on corporate culture addresses rational perspectives that stress the importance of recognizing culture and addressing integration issues for the purpose of corporate gain. Even within many basic definitions of culture, this rational approach can be identified. Feldman and Spratt (1999) define corporate culture as the set of entrenched behaviors that characterize "how a company gets things done" (p. 141). Culture is the "compromise" that exists between the competing aims and styles in an organization. "It is a product of conflict" (McCann & Gilkey, 1988, p.165). Culture is an organizational ideology that provides an important organizing theme for behavior (Beer, 1980, p. 96-

97). “Culture tells people what is sacred, what is sanctioned, and what is taboo” (Deal & Kennedy, 1999, p. 192).

Organizational culture, in particular, matters because cultural elements determine strategy, goals and modes of operating. “Culture matters because it is a powerful, latent and often unconscious set of forces that determine both our individual and collective behavior, ways of perceiving, thought patterns and values” (Schein, 1999, p. 14).

Other perspectives of organizational culture are more humanistic and emotional in nature. Rather than focusing on how management can utilize awareness of culture as a means to corporate ends, emotional perspectives focus on how culture forms as a natural result of employee interaction and informal aspects of organizational history. “Culture is not something that can be imposed on a social setting. Rather, it develops during the course of social interaction,” says Morgan (1998, p. 130). “In any organization there may be different and competing value systems that create a mosaic of organizational realities rather than a uniform corporate culture.”

Culture is important to any research on organizational change, because culture within the nonprofit work environment supersedes traditional hierarchical structure as a primary means of organizing, motivating, and monitoring workers’ attitudes and behaviors (Karabanow, 1999). “Rather than creating a mechanistic, rule-oriented and bureaucratic environment for control purposes, culture plays the same role within a more organic structure” (pp. 351-352).

Organizational culture is also important because it is commonly cited as the reason why mergers fail, in particular because of clashing organizational cultures and the

lack of attention paid to this issue when planning and executing a merger (see Bramson, 2000; DeVoge, 1999; Feldman & Spratt, 1999; Marks & Mirvis, 1998).

Blending Organizational Cultures

I had an opportunity to further explore issues of organizational culture during a nonprofit consolidation when I visited a former boss and mentor in Seattle whose organization was undergoing a consolidation. A consolidation differs from a merger, because in a consolidation, the companies join to form an entirely new entity, the combining companies are dissolved, and only the new entity continues to operate. In a merger, one corporation survives and the merged corporation goes out of existence. The acquiring company assumes the assets and liabilities of the merged company (Gaughan, 1996). In the Seattle consolidation, blending the two organizational cultures was a central concern because of obvious differences between the two organizations: the way employees dressed, their meeting rituals, and the way they spoke to clients and treated donors. Culture is defined and strengthened through such rituals, ceremonies, the use of jargon, as well as the communication of organizational myths and stories (Gregory, 1983). Culture is reproduced and strengthened through formal rituals and ceremonies (team meetings).

The management of the two Seattle AIDS service organizations spent extensive time and effort considering how the two organizational cultures would fit together, and they followed suggestions provided in the literature on corporate mergers. They established task forces to combine the best practices of both companies (Greengard, 2001) and held many joint planning retreats where the staff of both organizations got to meet and learn about each other. Deal and Kennedy (1999) call these “gloves-off events,”

and they recommend holding a series of such meetings that should be attended by “a variety of subcultural voices, and preferably led by an experienced facilitator” (p. 224). Such culture-building exercises can help employees learn and understand each other’s cultures (Marks & Mirvis, 1998). For the merging AIDS service organizations, activities such as developing new policies and procedures and selecting a name for the new organization were meaningful opportunities for the two staffs to get to know each other and to find a happy medium to form their new organizational culture. “The more beliefs and values are shared about how to do things, the stronger the culture of the organization and the more influence it exerts on individuals and group behavior” (Beer, 1980, pp. 96-97).

Although there has been ample research on organizational culture over the past two decades, the majority of studies has focused on organizations in the private sector. Being able to learn about the blending of organizational cultures by the AIDS service organizations helped me make connections between their experiences and the literature on corporate organizational culture. Because of the uniqueness and depth of organizational culture in the nonprofit workforce, this is an important area for further research.

Introduction to My Research

My research experiences with the merging and consolidating AIDS service organizations and other nonprofits helped me better understand nonprofit mergers and consolidations and to prepare my own organization for a merger. I became convinced of the importance of this area of research and decided to make this my research focus. As nonprofits explore new ways of coping with socioeconomic pressures—through

reorganization, mergers, consolidation, and integrations—there is a pronounced need for applied communication research on organizational change in nonprofit settings to help us better understand and assist organizations in transition.

As I was preparing to begin my dissertation research, I heard about one funder and the work it was doing to help its agencies explore new models of consolidation and integration. This seemed like a perfect site for my research work. Within the organizational communication literature, nonprofit integrations have not been addressed, nor have funder-initiated integration efforts. Through this integration effort, I could explore the reasons why nonprofits enter into integration models, the challenges they experience during this process, and the communication and management strategies used to achieve successful integration. My research site was the Neighborhood Family Center Coalition (NFCC), a collaborative of nonprofit organizations, and the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County (JWB), a funder of these same organizations, as the members planned and developed a management service organization (MSO). This research focuses on interorganizational communication among managers of these partner organizations and the challenges they faced during planning and implementation of this MSO. How this research relationship was established and how the research process was negotiated will be explained in detail in chapter 4.

This chapter has provided a brief look inside nonprofit organizations and explored the impact of consolidation on employee emotions and organizational culture. Although my dissertation research will not focus on employees, per se, these concerns are ever present within and among the organizational partners involved in this effort. Conducting research on nonprofit consolidations and integrations also requires an understanding of

partnerships that are becoming more prominent in the nonprofit sector. Before exploring the challenges and strategies pertaining to the specific integration effort included in this research, it is helpful to first understand more about the environment impacting nonprofits, and the forms, benefits and challenges of partnerships among nonprofits and with funders. These areas will be explored in chapter 2 through a comprehensive review of the literature that also will provide an overview of various collaboration and integration models. The third chapter of my dissertation will provide a review of literature that addresses the more specific organizational communication challenges that these partnerships cause and the management and communication strategies used to mitigate them. After my research questions are introduced in the next two chapters, I will introduce my research relationship with the partner organizations and provide an overview of my co-generated research methodology. Data will be shared through the words and experiences of the research participants. I will explore the findings that emerged from this research and provide a review of key insights for practitioners and scholars.

The immediate applicability of this research is of great importance to funding institutions, many of which are taking on more active roles to stabilize or strengthen the programs they fund, and more often today, by encouraging consolidation. From a personal and professional perspective, my hope is that nonprofit organizations will be open to considering consolidation and other strategic restructuring as options that can prevent needed programs from closing, as well as to maximize the dwindling base of financial support available to nonprofit organizations today.

CHAPTER 2

THE NONPROFIT ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

This dissertation research focuses on strategic partnerships among nonprofits and between nonprofits and funders. Specifically, it is about funder-initiated nonprofit integration and about how the entities involved manage this type of arrangement. Strategic partnership is not new to nonprofits. In fact, it is part of the very nature of why and how nonprofit organizations are formed: through citizens coming together to address a pressing social need. The types of partnerships in which nonprofits have been involved, however, has changed throughout the history of these organizations. Along with these developing relationships have come a host of management and organizational communication challenges.

This literature review will explore the varied strategic partnerships that nonprofits engage in, including community-based partnerships that result in the formation of nonprofit organizations, the evolution of government-nonprofit partnerships, strategic partnerships with for-profit entities for the development of commercial ventures, strategic partnerships with other nonprofits to maximize resources and competencies, and funder-initiated nonprofit partnerships intended to streamline the provision of services and maximize funding resources. While all of these will be explored in this literature review to some degree, the focus will be on government-nonprofit relationships and nonprofit

consolidations, including funder-initiated integrations. Relationships with all stakeholders are important for the survival of nonprofits, and the challenges involved in managing these relationships are complex and pervasive, but community and business relationships are not the focus of this dissertation research. These relationships are included for the purpose of providing context to understand the evolution of nonprofit partnerships and the challenges being faced today as nonprofits and funders try to maneuver an ever changing system of service delivery. The next chapter will review literature that addresses the more specific organizational communication challenges that these partnerships cause and the management and communication strategies used to mitigate them.

Definition and Scope of Nonprofits

Before exploring the literature on nonprofit partnerships, it is important to understand the scope of nonprofit organizations and to understand some terminology. Nonprofits go by many different names, including not-for-profits, associations, foundations, tax-exempts, community service (or community-based) organizations, charitable organizations, third sector or independent sector, nongovernmental organizations, and other names specific to more defined service arenas. For the purpose of this research, the term “nonprofit” or “nonprofit organization” will be used when reviewing the literature in order to maintain a consistent use of terminology. These terms will also be used to refer to the site organizations participating in this study. It’s important to clarify that the scope of the nonprofit sector is broad, but the scope of this research is more narrowly focused on public charities (of one specific type), as will be identified in the methodology chapter.

Nonprofit is a legal term used by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to refer to organizations that may only use revenues to further their charitable or educational mission, rather than distribute profits to owners or shareholders. They are classified as tax exempt, meaning should they make a “profit,” they do not have to pay taxes. Only one type of nonprofit, “public charities” that are classified as 501(c)(3), is tax deductible, meaning those who donate to the public charity can claim a tax deduction (Berry, 2005). Unlike governments, these agencies have no taxing authority and, hence, rely heavily on charitable donations, volunteerism, and grants from private foundations and government.

There are 27 types of nonprofits defined in the Internal Revenue Code (Berry, 2005), and these organizations fulfill many different roles in society. Salamon (2002) identified five roles that nonprofits play in American society: a) direct service providers (e.g., of health care, education); b) issue advocacy (e.g., civil rights, the environment); c) expression (e.g., art, worship, recreation); d) community-building (e.g., creating networks of like-minded citizens); and e) guardian of values (e.g., individualism and solidarity). While all nonprofits play each of these roles to some degree, they vary in emphasis. For example, some agencies see their primary mission as direct service to clients, while others have more to do with advocacy to politicians and the public.

The impact, as well as the scope, of the nonprofit sector is great in the United States and in Florida, where this research takes place. The table that follows (Table 2.1) provides a snapshot of the size of the nonprofit sector in the United States and Florida, as well as some relevant statistics that represent the impact of the sector.

Table 2.1

Impact of the Nonprofit Sector in the United States and Florida

Nonprofit Sector in the United States	Nonprofit Sector in Florida
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In 2005, there were 845,233 public charities in the United States. ➤ Almost 6% of all organizations in the United States are in the nonprofit sector. ➤ 42% of reporting public charities are located in seven states—California, Florida, Illinois, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In 2006, there were 67,935 nonprofits located in the state of Florida, 67% of which were public charities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The number of public charities in the United States grew 64.7% from 1994 to 2004. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The number of Florida public charities grew 115% from 1996 to 2006.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In 2004, public charities reported annual revenues of more than \$1.8 trillion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Florida public charities reported \$65 billion in assets in 2006. ➤ They received more than \$45 billion in annual revenue.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Nonprofit employment represents 9.5% of total employment in the United States, and 8.3% of wages and salaries paid in the United States. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In 2000, Florida nonprofits directly employed more than 430,000 people. ➤ Nonprofits represent the state’s sixth largest source of employment among all industries.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In 2005, approximately 29% of Americans volunteered through a nonprofit organization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In Florida, nonprofit charities attracted 88 million hours of volunteer time in 2001, equal to a work of more than 42,000 full-time employees.

Sources: (The Urban Institute, 2007; Philanthropy & Nonprofit Leadership Center, 2002)

Many of the defining characteristics of nonprofits can also be applied to public and private sector organizations. There are, for example, publicly run and privately run hospitals, counseling centers, membership organizations, social and recreational clubs, and the like. In my introductory chapter, I referenced the unique nature of the nonprofit workforce and organizational culture. Certainly, organizations in the public and private sector share some of the same qualities, in addition to having their own unique qualities in this regard. There are, in fact, many ways in which nonprofits are both similar to and different from their for-profit and government counterparts, and many such comparisons of these sectors in whole or part have been made, such as comparisons of managerial style, resources or employees (c.f. Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2002; Lyons, Duxbury & Higgins, 2006; Moore, 2000; Rothschild & Milofsky, 2006; Saxon-Harrold & Heffron, 2000; Steiner & Steiner 2000; Steuerle & Hodgkinson, 1999; Townsend, 2000; Van Der Wal, Huberts, Van Den Heuvel & Kolthoff, 2006). Some researchers identify clear distinctions among the sectors, while “others denounce these as crude stereotypes” (Rainey & Bozeman, pp. 448-449). Some researchers say the sectors are identical in various dimensions, while others say they are dissimilar. Because of the extensive debate among the similarities and differences among the three sectors, these will not be presented here. Understanding the key distinguishing features, however, may be helpful, and these are presented in Table 2.2.

[See Table 2.2 on the next page.]

Table 2.2

Distinguishing Characteristics among the Corporations, Government and

Nonprofits

	Corporation	Government	Nonprofit
Purpose	Created for the purpose of producing goods or services for the market that may be a source of profit or other financial gain to its owner(s).	Assumes responsibility for the provision of goods and services to the community or to individual households for free or at prices that are not economically significant.	<p>Principally engaged in the production of non-market goods and services for households.</p> <p>Most are non-market producers that provide most of their output to others free or at prices which are not economically significant.</p> <p>Although they may earn profits, nonprofits are not organized for profit and cannot distribute any profits earned to their directors or managers; such profits are retained within the nonprofit.</p> <p>May be created:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to provide services for the benefit of the persons or corporations who control or finance them • to provide goods or services to other persons in need • to provide health or education services for a fee, but not for profit • to promote the interests of pressure groups in business or politics

Oversight	Collectively owned by shareholders who have the authority to appoint directors responsible for its general management.	Established by political processes that have legislative, judicial or executive authority over other institutional units within a given area.	Governed by a self-perpetuating board of directors who are not publicly elected and are rarely paid.
Funding	Provide products and services to individuals based on their needs or wants, in exchange for a direct payment	Collect taxes or compulsory transfers from other institutional units. May own and operate unincorporated enterprises engaged in the production of goods or services.	Main resources may include fees paid by the members or voluntary donations of time and money by households. Rely principally on funds other than receipts from sales.

Source: (United Nations, 2001, ¶¶ 2.20, 4.23, 4.24, 4.47, 4.54 & 4.104).

The primary challenge facing nonprofits today is not that different from those facing all organizations—to secure sufficient resources to cover (and ideally exceed) the cost of pursuing their mission. The basic recipe for success in today’s environment is similar for all organizations—competent leadership, collaborative partnerships, and the flexibility to cope with environmental shifts. Some of these are more difficult to achieve in the nonprofit environment.

In addition to producing new revenue sources, nonprofit managers must also demonstrate competent leadership, including being more strategic and skilled at maximizing existing resources and being skilled at long-term strategic planning to anticipate and plan for large organizational changes. Bryson says that nonprofit

organizations must be effective strategists “if their organizations are to fulfill their missions, meet their mandates, and satisfy their constituents in years ahead” (1995, p. ix). “They need to develop effective strategies to cope with changing circumstances.” This sentiment is emphasized throughout the literature. Organizations that want to survive and prosper must embrace change. This can be done by continuing to provide the same services but in a manner that is better and more competitive, or it may involve planning for important shifts in the organizational focus and structure. According to McLaughlin (1998), the bulk of innovation in nonprofits today will take place not in services but in management. This includes keeping an open mind to the possibility of consolidations and other formal partnerships with other entities.

Much of the literature focused on external communication addresses this aspect—the organization’s drive to survive that requires various external relationships which are necessary for nonprofits to financially and strategically thrive.¹ Nonprofit leaders and board members have *always* known that they cannot fulfill their mission by “going it alone”; to succeed, they must “build alliances, networks, partnerships, and other types of collaborative relationships” (Waide, 1999, p. 244). Partnering effectively with stakeholders is the most significant communication challenge facing leaders of nonprofit organizations. Identifying stakeholders and building relationships with them is a primary role of nonprofit organizational leadership and is a strategy studied by several researchers (see Eadie, 1997; Garner, 1989; M. Shaw, 2003). Eadie (1997) recommends that nonprofit leaders perform an environmental scan to “identify external conditions and

¹ Some of the information on nonprofit partnerships contained here and throughout the literature review chapters also has been included in a book chapter (Eisenberg & Eschenfelder, in press) that will appear in the *Handbook of Applied Communication* (Frey & Cissna, Eds., in press).

trends that are pertinent to a nonprofit organization's vision and mission," followed by an analysis that identifies potential stakeholders with related interests (p. 154). This is a challenge for nonprofit leaders, however, because of the large number and varied types of stakeholders involved.

Historically, the number and importance of stakeholder relations has been the key qualitative difference between nonprofit organizations and for-profit businesses (Drucker, 1990). Within for profit entities, lines can usually be drawn between consumers (external publics) and organizational members (internal publics), although the private sector has expanded its view to look beyond stockholders to other publics (Deetz, 1992). While nonprofit organizations share some of these types of relationships, the lines blur when attempting to identify external and internal publics. Nonprofits are created by a broader section of community representatives who strive to meet some form of community need. In order to accomplish this, relationships with various publics become critical for the cultivation and maintenance of broad community support. This blurring of boundaries is relevant to the role of nonprofits in forming social capital.

These characteristics—the considerable number and types of stakeholders who are committed to and involved in the organizations' public purpose, and nonprofit's explicit social agenda and their commitment to the social good—are precisely the elements that symbolize nonprofit organizations and make them unique. These characteristics are relevant to this research and are examined further in the literature that follows, starting with the founding of nonprofits and the formation of social capital.

Community-Nonprofit Partnerships

Many writers have addressed the unique characteristics of nonprofit organizations by exploring the origins and operations of nonprofits as they are aligned with the core dimensions of social capital, such as establishing networks, relationships and trust, and creating shared vision and norms (see Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler & Tipton, 1996; Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh & Vidal, 2001; King, 2004; Smith & Lipsky, 1993). Social capital is created when nonprofit organizations are formed by members of a community who come together to focus on a social need not addressed by existing organizations (Chambre & Fatt, 2002). Thus, nonprofit organizations exist both to serve and create change in society, and they exist because of the community and become extensions of the community.

According to Bellah et al. (in Smith & Lipsky, 1993, p. 22), “a community is a group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision making, and who share certain practices that both define the community and are nurtured by it.” In this definition, nonprofit service organizations “are tangible, significant manifestations of community” (Smith & Lipsky, 1993, p. 22). This is evident when examining the many roles individuals play in the organizations. The board of directors is drawn from prominent people in the community who support the organization’s objectives and who provide leadership. Nonprofits make extensive use of volunteers to help carry out the organizational mission and raise a significant portion of their funding from individuals. Nonprofits also deal with numerous internal and external networks, and through these develop relationships, build trust, and help develop community capacity. Without these core components of social capital, nonprofits cannot

achieve their missions (King, 2004). According to Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh and Vidal (2001), organizations are the key vehicles through which community capacity is built. Nonprofit organizations often work best by promoting systematic change in their own community, and collaboration is key to this effort. “By sharing information, ensuring that the necessary processes are available for community change, and making good decisions,” nonprofit organizations advance the welfare of the areas they serve (Van Til & Ross, 2001, p. 70).

Government-Nonprofit Partnerships

As shown in Table 2.2, nonprofits perform the kinds of functions typically identified with government, such as helping the disadvantaged, providing social services, supporting collective services such as museums and schools, preserving the environment, and funding medical research. When government directly provides these services in forms and amounts that voters want, the role of nonprofits is limited. “However, when populations are very diverse, services that satisfy the majority may leave many people severely undersatisfied; nonprofits are thus understandable as an alternative mechanism for providing collective services” (Weisbrod, 1997, p. 542).

Government-nonprofit relations and government’s growing reliance on nonprofits can be better understood by looking at the history of nonprofits that is intertwined with government relationships. Following is a brief overview of this government-nonprofit relationship, as shared in the literature. For a thorough history of nonprofit organizations in the United States from the 1600’s to 2000, see Hall (2006). This review focuses on the 20th century.

The relationship between government and nonprofits can be traced back to the founding of the United States, although “nonprofits” had not been defined as such at that time. Government contracting was also in practice at that time, as described by Hall (2006):

Although colonial governments and municipalities collected taxes and enacted laws, they usually entrusted the actual tasks of caring for the poor, healing the sick, and educating the ignorant to families who could provide these services at the lowest cost. In New England villages, for example, the poor and dependent were often auctioned off to the lowest bidder. (pp. 33-34)

The lowest bidders included churches, private managers, or institutions that we would be recognized today as charitable nonprofits. The common terminology we use today—*nonprofit*, *public charities*, and *tax deductible*—did not become formalized until the development of section 501(c) of the 1954 Internal Revenue Code. From that time forward, research on the history of nonprofit-government activity became more plentiful and the relations between nonprofits and government became more vibrant.

Government’s reliance on nonprofit organizations grew substantially after World War II and into the 1960s. Government depended heavily on nonprofit organizations “to stimulate scientific advances and overcome poverty and ill health” (Salamon, 2002, p. 12). As government grew in the 1960s and 1970s, it turned extensively to nonprofit organizations for help. As a result, elaborate partnerships came into existence between these two sets of institutions. “Big infusions of cash” were poured into social services, and, as a result, many new agencies were created to receive and administer the spending of these funds (Bernstein, 1991, p. vii). According to Salamon (2002), by the late 1970s

nonprofit organizations were receiving twice as much of their support from government as they were from private charitable contributions, and nonprofit organizations were delivering a larger share of government-funded services than government agencies themselves (Drucker Foundation, 1996).

This relationship between government and nonprofits for the delivery of contracted services continued to grow in the 1970s and 80s. Government contracting increased dramatically during the Reagan era due to budget cutbacks that were designed to dismantle inefficient and ineffective government social programs. “Charities were promoted as the nongovernmental saviors of the poor, the children, the elderly, and the disabled,” says Boris (1998). The Republican Congress’ “Contract with America” also “attempted to scale back the size of the federal government and its involvement in the lives of Americans” (Pynes, 1997, p. 6-7). This resulted in the distribution of funds to state governments, which in turn disseminate it to local governments and nonprofit organizations based on each state’s assessment of need. This “devolution” of federal government responsibilities to the state and local level created significant opportunities for nonprofit organizations to play larger roles in community planning and decision making. Nonprofit organizations were awarded government contracts because they were seen as “reputable, committed, like-minded community institutions” that could help governments come closer to achieving their mandates (Ryan 1999, pp. 128-29). Nonprofits also offered government cost-effective and innovative ways of implementing public programs through collaborative arrangements involving contracts (Werther & Berman, 2001). Public funding helps nonprofits advance their missions and increase innovation in service delivery through funding that supports emerging best practices.

The notion of an independent charitable social safety net that could offset decreasing government support for social services persisted through the 1990s, but the inadequacy of this arrangement soon became clear. An estimated two-fifths of public charities suffered a decline in inflation-adjusted dollars between 1989 and 1995, and a similar number operated on a very slim margin, with cash on hand less than or equal to 3 months of expenses (Boris, 1998). This situation has not improved over the past decade.

Effective devolution of social services is easier said than done. As the demand for community-based planning has proliferated, the relationships between nonprofits and government have become more varied and complex (Werther & Berman, 2001). The need for services has continued to grow, accountability requirements have tightened, expenses have increased, and the contracting relationship has become more cumbersome.

A smaller federal government is appealing in principle, but nonprofit organizations rarely are prepared to accept the added responsibility. The nonprofit sector is composed overwhelmingly of small, community-based entities with meager resources. As reported to the IRS in 2004 (The Urban Institute, 2007), fewer than 42% of public charities had revenues of less than \$100,000, and these accounted for less than 2% of the sector's total assets and less than 1% (.6%) of its total revenue. Fewer than 4% had expenses greater than \$10 million, but were responsible for 79% of the sector's assets. Fewer than 1% had revenues greater than \$100,000 million, and these organizations accounted for more than 56% of the sector's assets and revenue.

Following the retrenchment of government funding in the 1980s, many government and private sector funders began to think that the nonprofit sector had become too large and ineffective. "Public trust in the nonprofit sector was shaken in the

1990s by several well-publicized scandals that raised questions about performance and ethical conduct” (Boris, 2001, p. 86). Increased competition with for-profit businesses also contributed to a growing pressure for nonprofits to demonstrate their effectiveness. Government and private funders began demanding improved efficiency and accountability through proven and measurable outcomes (Boris, 2001; Salamon, 2003). The contracting process is where this impact on the government-nonprofit relationship has been felt most heavily by nonprofits.

Government-Nonprofit Partnerships and Contracting Problems

States and local communities must still adhere to stringent parameters from the federal government, despite decreased funding allocations (De Vita, 1999). This has resulted in government contracts being awarded below reasonable costs for quality services, and payment schemes that put providers and clients at a disadvantage (Smith & Lipsky, 2001). It is common for government funders to increase demands for services or accountability without increasing funding to support these efforts. In some cases, no funding is provided, but there are still requirements to maintain a license to operate within many states and some localities, as well as extensive data tracking requirements.

Other partnership challenges between government and nonprofits are inherent in the government contracting process, such as short submission times for proposals, inadequately trained government staff and their frequent turnover, time lags between contract renewals, award approval delays, and long turnaround for contract payments (Bernstein, 1991). All of these present major difficulties for both nonprofits and government funding organizations. Other demands that government places on nonprofits include a host of rules and policies that may frustrate and even impair a nonprofit’s

ability to function effectively. The magnitude and complex timing of tasks involved in managing restricted funding sources creates problems of task coordination. The restricted grants and contracts system “contributes to cash-flow problems, personnel turnover, and management uncertainty,” explained Grønbjerg (1993, p. 236). “Strict limitations on line-item expenditures and program requirements about staff qualifications or eligible clients impose additional management challenges” (p. 233).

As will be explored in chapter 3, the demands of government can also impact the core of a nonprofit’s reason for existing. Decreased funding, increased expectations, and impossible contract funding practices leave nonprofits vulnerable to criticism and a questioning public. In order to meet government contract demands, nonprofits may make substantive shifts in service delivery, advocacy efforts, and even staffing, and as a result alter their organizational identity in ways that have detrimental impacts on the organization and the clients whom they exist to serve.

Despite these challenges, the relationship between government and the nonprofit sector has been characterized more by cooperation than conflict, as government has increasingly depended upon the nonprofit sector to assist in meeting human needs. At the same time, scholars and practitioners are mixed about the impact of government involvement in nonprofit governance and management. As will be explored in upcoming sections, funders are taking on more active roles in dictating the operating structure of the agencies they fund, including explicitly recommending consolidation efforts.

Business-Nonprofit Partnerships

In addition to decreased government funding, private charitable support of nonprofit organizations is withering². Nonprofits are faced with the choice of either reducing their activities (at the very time that social need is growing because of government retrenchment) or finding ways to increase revenues from nongovernmental sources including formal partnerships with for-profit businesses. To survive in this climate, nonprofits are increasingly turning to new strategies for long-term financial support, such as endowments, client fees, and commercial approaches. “Self-funding is the new mantra,” says Dees (1999, p. 140). New commercial activities are one major path open to nonprofits to generate additional revenue. Commercial activity by nonprofit organizations has evolved over time to become accepted as a viable strategy (Saxon-Harrold & Heffron, 2000). As nonprofits have increased their interaction with for-profit businesses, nonprofits are professionalizing and becoming more businesslike to emulate private sector organizational structures and practices (Smith & Lipsky, 1993; Alexander, 1999).

As an added benefit, creating commercial ventures helps soften old suspicions between nonprofits and businesses and opens the way “for nonprofit acceptance of the business community not simply as a source of charitable support but as a legitimate partner for a wide range of nonprofit endeavors,” says Salamon (2003, pp. 64-65).

Salamon points to a notable upsurge in these strategic partnerships, including cause-

² Overall charitable giving in the United States has increased in the past 5 years, but some reports attribute increases to extraordinary levels of giving for disaster relief in 2005 (Giving, 2007). Regardless of this fluctuation, certain types of giving have decreased, such as corporate donations (7.6% decrease in 2006), and giving to certain nonprofit industries has decreased. Donations to human services decreased 9.2% in 2006.

related marketing, joint efforts between for-profit and nonprofit organization with mutual benefit. Examples of cause-related marketing include nonprofits lending their name to American Express in exchange for a share of proceeds, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving benefiting from the sale of cases of Coca Cola (Salamon, 2003, p. 65). For nonprofits, cause-related marketing relationships can foster greater involvement from corporate personnel and increase financial support. For businesses, these relationships can generate valuable “reputational capital” (p. 65).

In addition to business partnerships that generate new revenue sources, nonprofits are being forced to become more strategic in maximizing existing resources, including consideration of mergers and consolidations. The current thrust of innovation is “toward greater collaboration between nonprofit organizations and all others carrying out similar missions,” says McLaughlin (1998, p. xxii). More nonprofits are beginning to look toward partnerships with other nonprofits to maximize services and resources.

Nonprofit-Nonprofit Partnerships

Within the nonprofit sector, opportunities for nonprofits to partner with one another are abundant. Nonprofit-nonprofit partnerships can take on many forms, falling anywhere along a continuum from joint planning and fundraising to complete consolidation and mergers. In this section, the focus is on nonprofit-nonprofit relationships; the next section will address the pressures from external partners for nonprofits to enter into these formal partnerships; and the final section of this chapter will address consolidation efforts in more detail.

Given the potential for overlapping missions, it is common for nonprofit organizations to partner with each other. While nonprofit-nonprofit partnerships have

many benefits, these partnerships are not always considered or welcomed because of the long history of competition that has existed between organizations. Histories of competition for resources, political maneuvering and suspicion of one another's past motives do not engender the type of open communication required for strong collaborative relationships (Gray, 1989). One reason for increased competitive behavior among nonprofit organizations is that they must battle for their share of limited resources, which includes clients, board members, volunteers, employees, donations, contracts, grants, and political power (Brody, as cited in Tuckman, 1998; Garner, 1989). Nonprofits may also compete for plum alliances with for-profit and government entities (Tuckman, 1998; Weisbrod, 1997). Other obstacles to collaboration uncovered in the research literature include behaviors such as turf protection, "hogging the glory" when collaboration succeeds, violating trust, adopting an "I" instead of a "we" attitude, and not living up to their communicative obligations (Snaveley & Tracy, 2000, p. 161).

For most nonprofit organizations, cooperation and competition coexist. Oster (1995) cited Greenpeace and The Nature Conservancy as examples of organizations that act as partners in program and advocacy efforts and compete for donations. Oster described the competitive/cooperative position of nonprofit organizations as being similar to that of a tennis player "engaged in a somewhat quirky tournament," stating: "At times, in this tournament, individuals face each other as single opponents. At other times, they are doubles partners, and, at still other times they switch partners and become doubles opponents" (p. 48). Furthermore, "just as in the tennis game, anticipating what the other players are likely to do is important whether they are your partners or your rivals" (p. 48).

Researchers have identified several reasons for the prevalence of these partnerships (see Alexander, 2000; Rein, 1983; Snavely & Tracy, 2000; Werther & Berman, 2001). Some alliances grow out of concern for administrative efficiency and the avoidance of redundant effort. Others are formed to prevent costly competition for resources or clients, or they may be used to pursue collaborative funding applications, joint fundraisers, or the sharing of human and financial resources with other organizations. A related trend is toward more joint planning among partners to develop approaches to fill service gaps, better meet client needs, and provide a fuller range of services. Collaborations may also be entered into to increase the impact of advocacy efforts to be more likely to bring about political reform. “Coordination is an urgent need,” say Werther and Berman (2001, p. 169), “especially the need to avoid overlap and duplication of services that causes ruinous competition.” Werther and Berman provide examples of organizations that suffered due to lack of coordination, as well as others that prospered as a result of cooperative efforts to enhance service delivery.

“Collaboration” has long been a buzzword within government and funding organizations, as a more efficient and effective way to provide services, but exactly what “collaboration” means is difficult to say. As previously mentioned, the partnership continuum is vast. The term “collaboration” is often used as the overarching category under which many other models fall.

Collaboration can be seen as occupying a continuum, from loosely formed partnerships with a narrow focus and great independence (such as a contractual relationship or a task force) to more structured and interdependent collaboration

encompassing broad systems change to accomplish a common policy goal (as with a network structure). (Mandell, 2001, p. 280)

Some authors distinguish between informal and formal types of collaboration. Guo and Acar (2005) review eight types of collaboration and classify them into two major categories: informal collaboration, which includes information sharing, referral of clients, sharing of office space, and management service organizations (MSOs); and formal collaboration, such as joint programs, parent subsidiaries, joint ventures, and mergers. As will be shown later, the definition of these various forms are also varied in the research literature. Kohm, La Piana and Gowdy (2000), also use terminology of “informal” and “formal” collaboration. In informal collaborations, organizations do not make an ongoing commitment to the partnership, and decision-making power remains with the individual organizations. By contrast, in formal collaborations organizations establish ongoing relationship through shared, transferred, or combined services, resources, or programs. Kohm and La Piana (2003) categorized these partnerships into two main types: (a) alliances, which involve the sharing of programs, staff, facilities, and/or equipment but require no change in organizational structure; and (b) integrations, which involve some change in corporate structure.

Because the focus of this research is on MSOs, it’s important to note that in Kohm and La Piana’s (2003) categorization, MSOs are identified as a kind of integration, i.e., a formal collaboration. In contrast, Guo and Acar (2005) identify MSOs as a type of informal collaboration. The collaborative model included in this research resembles the MSO as a type of formal integration identified by Kohm and La Piana (2003). These conflicting categorizations will be explored further in the next section.

Integration and Other Collaborative Models

Up until now, I have reviewed literature focusing broadly on partnerships between and among government, business and other nonprofits. Here I will review the literature focusing more specifically on the “formal” types of partnerships defined in the previous section. The type of formal partnerships most often referred to in the literature are consolidations and mergers, although, as previously explained, formal partnerships can take on a number of forms. In particular, the MSO will be explored because it most closely resembles the organizational model included in the study. Other formal partnerships that closely resemble the site organization collaboration model are public management networks and lead entities. Here, I will review the literature that defines the various forms of partnerships, including integrations, MSOs and networks. Then I will explore these various reasons cited in the literature for why nonprofits enter into these relationships, including pressure from funders, which will be explored in the next section.

The organizations involved in an integration work together to form a new structure, such as a management or administrative service entity, and the original organizations remain in existence. Following is a more detailed overview of nonprofit MSOs. Because the research literature on nonprofit MSOs is limited, it is helpful to review research on public management networks, which is also discussed below.

MSOs have been defined differently by researchers. Kohm and La Piana (1998, 2003, 2006) define an MSO as an integration that includes the creation of a new organization in order to integrate administrative functions and, thus, to increase the administrative efficiency of participating organizations. Arsenault (1998) says that MSOs can take two forms. As in the definition by Kohm and La Piana, one model involves the

creation of a freestanding entity by two or more nonprofits to provide specific administrative services on a contractual basis. The other model is established within a single nonprofit that has a large enough administrative capacity to share with others.

Other researchers define MSOs as something quite different—more like a nonprofit resource center. Connor, Kadel-Taras and Vinokur-Kaplan (1999) describe MSOs as “local nonprofits that provide support to other nonprofits through training and consulting on such issues as leadership, planning, fundraising, marketing, and human resource development” (p. 128). Connor et al. refer to MSOs as something external to its member organizations. For example, they state that MSOs work with governmental agencies, in either a management-support capacity or a partnership, to help other nonprofits. They further describe MSOs as entities that can help nonprofits “adopt best business practices and maintain good relationships with the business community” (p. 128). Guo and Acar (2005) share a similar approach to defining an MSO and further identify it as a form of “informal collaboration.” In a sense, these definitions sound like a nonprofit resources center, which is much different from the type of organization created in this study.

Isett and Provan (2005) suggest changing the terminology to “network administrative organization (NAO).” They claim that in such networks, “NAOs perform facilitative and intermediary roles to organize services in a way that contributes to the effectiveness and sustainability of the system as a whole” (p. 161). They describe NAOs as existing in order to facilitate relationships among agencies. This most closely matches the integration models featured in this research.

In the public administration literature there is an increasing amount of research on public management networks. A public management network is a diverse group of stakeholders focused on a particular public policy issue, usually referred to in the literature as complex or “wicked” social problems. The participating entities are impacted by a shared problem that they are unable to solve alone and, therefore, they engage in some collective effort, such as a network. Literature by Heath and Frey (2004) on community collaboration and Bennis’s (1999) work on effective groups can also be applied here. Heath and Frey (2004) agree that in most communities today, “it is a necessity for groups, organizations, and institutions to work together collaboratively to confront complex issues” (p. 189). Complex social problems cannot be solved by any one person or any one discipline. “Our only chance,” says Bennis (1999, ¶3), “is to bring people together from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines who can refract a problem through the prism of complementary minds allied in common purpose.” Bennis calls such collections of talent *Great Groups*. “They get remarkable people—strong individual achievers—to work together to get results” (¶3).

In public management networks, the members are independent but choose to work together for a shared purpose. “A network structure forms when these people realize they (and the organizations they represent) are only one small piece of the total picture. It is a recognition that only by coming together to actively work on accomplishing a broad, common mission will goals be accomplished” (Keast, Mandell, Brown & Woolcock, 2004, p. 364).

Networks bring together nonprofit, for-profit, and government sectors to address social problems in a number of policy arenas, including economic development, health

care, criminal justice, human services, information systems, rural development, environmental protection, biotechnology, transportation, and education (Agranoff, 2003). They bring many organizations to the table for resource pooling, mutual exploration, and knowledge creation. And, “most importantly, networks open up new possibilities that would be hard for one, two, or even three organizations working together to achieve” (Agranoff, 2006, p. 57). In fact, “network structures are established when all other options have failed” (Keast, Mandell, Brown & Woolcock, 2004, p. 365). Members recognize the need to work together because traditional methods have not been successful. As members take on broad tasks that reach beyond the actions of independently operating organizations, “the participants are transformed into a new whole” (p. 364).

These networks could be classified as informal or formal collaboration, although most references in the public administration literature represent formal integration models. Networks can be organized by some formal mechanism, such as an intergovernmental agreement or by statutory action, or they can be informal in legal status but equally permanent, organized, and mission oriented (Agranoff, 2006). Some researchers claim that few networks have a pre-existing mandate to operate; however, by examining networks developing today, mandates often appear to be part of the reason for formation. Regardless of the motivation, their formation and continuation depends on self-generated actions. They have to be held together, explains Agranoff (2003). “This requires a heavy dose of developmental activity on the part of some partners who are champions and promoters as well as partners” (p. 18). Although a network structure is distinguished from traditional organizational structures because there is no one “in

charge,” sometimes the promoter is a government agency or designated public manager assigned to provide the needed support. Government agencies are almost always among the key partners in these networks.

There are many benefits to networks, including pooling talents, expanding the resource base, fostering synergy, and more rational approaches to decision making. Milward and Provan (2006) say that networks are a valuable public management tool because “they are the only organizational forms that can operate horizontally, across a range of organizations, and integrate the strengths and talents of a variety of organizations in the public, nonprofit, and for-profit sectors to effectively address critical public problems” (p. 7). Because of the interdependent relationships in networks, accomplishing systems change is complex. From this perspective, “realistic change often means transformation which restructures intergroup relations and total systems into new and balanced configurations” (Felkins, 1995, p. 261). Changing a system can be costly and disruptive. The focus is not on individual attributes of the organization, but on a holistic approach that integrates both social and technical components.

Despite their strengths, networks are not “the be-all and end-all of collaborative management,” says Agranoff (2006, p. 57). They share a place alongside many other forms of interagency collaboration, such as agreements, contracts, and informal relationships that involve joint efforts to seek information, improve services, or create new policy.

Public administration networks can further be compared to the research done by Heath and Frey (2004) on community collaborations. As in networks, individual

participants may participate in a community collaboration “as a collateral duty to their job in the stakeholder organization they are representing” (p. 200):

Their participation involves a commitment to attend meetings, participate on committees, and assist on projects that will further the goals of the collaborative group, as well as to act as the primary liaison for their stakeholder organization. They are thus responsible for both furthering the goals of their stakeholder organization and the goals of the collaborative group. (p. 200)

Another form of integration similar to networks is that of a lead entity or lead agency. Lead entities can be formed directly by a public agency or through a contract with a lead organization that creates a “voluntary, community-based network” (Graddy & Chen, 2006, p. 534). These lead-agency networks are often a hybrid of mandated network arrangements and self-organizing networks. One benefit of a lead agency approach is lower transaction costs for the public agency that would otherwise be responsible for identifying, negotiating, monitoring, and managing the multiple partnerships involved in a network. Many public organizations, therefore, have turned to a lead agency approach.

The primary site organization included in this study represents many of the characteristics of MSOs, networks, community collaborations, and lead entities. One or more motivations may drive nonprofits to pursue these types of integrative partnership. While the advantages of integrations are numerous, ultimately the integration provides a means for an organization to achieve a number of strategic objectives. The lists vary by researcher, but they all share some elements related to secure continued funding, protecting the mission, and tapping into complementary strengths. Jenkins (2001) identifies three strategic objectives, including mission survival, the desire for growth, or

improvement in service delivery or operations (p. 1105). In a study conducted by Kohm and La Piana (2003), staff members, board members, and funders identified four primary motivations for formal collaboration: (a) maintaining funding support, (b) saving money, (c) capitalizing on a partner organization's leadership, and (d) preserving or enhancing their organization's reputation.

McLaughlin (1998) identifies the single most compelling reason to merge nonprofits as the ability to tap into complementary strengths. Similarly, Arsenault (1998) identifies three scenarios that seem to be the most common to inspire organizations to consider some form of consolidation: a) Survival as an autonomous unit is in doubt, and an organization's leadership desires to ensure survival of all or part of its activities; b) The organization's leadership sees an opportunity to build dominance or leadership in a particular service arena or market; and c) The organization needs additional resources to pursue an opportunity, or to maintain or increase a commitment to mission-driven programming (pp. 3-4).

Commonly cited reasons for nonprofit consolidation and integration are out of concern for administrative efficiency and the avoidance of redundant effort, and to develop approaches to fill service gaps, better meet client needs, and provide a fuller range of services (Alexander, 2000; McLaughlin, 1998; Rein, 1983; Snavely & Tracy, 2000; Werther & Berman, 2001). Some motivations may be more personal in nature. These relationships sometimes are sought primarily for individual gain that inevitably causes conflict in the collaboration process (Rein, 1983; Snavely & Tracy, 2000). Ideally, nonprofit organizations partner with one another "not because collective effort

necessarily helps each individual operation, but because collective action serves a greater good” (Oster, 1995, p. 57).

More often today, however, nonprofit leaders cite external pressures to merge and integrate, and such pressures are often created by funders. The site for this dissertation research is an example of a funder-initiated integration. As will be reflected in this review of literature, this type of relationship is becoming more common.

Funder-Initiated Nonprofit Integration

There are increasing pressures put on nonprofits by funders that are pushing their grantees to consolidate to be more efficient in service delivery efforts and to be cost-effective (Kohm & La Piana, 2003). In their research with nonprofit organizations engaged in restructuring and consolidation efforts, La Piana and Kohm (2003) found that interest in maintaining funders’ support is a primary reason organizations pursue strategic restructuring, such as mergers, consolidation, integrations and networks. Funders interviewed as part of the same study agreed that “funder perspectives are at the root of strategic restructuring prevalence” (p. 65).

There are several motivations cited in the literature for why this is becoming a growing trend. “The expression of pro-coordination sentiment by political officials may be motivated by no more than a play for political advantage” (Rein, 1983, p. 67). Promoting coordination often has symbolic political implications that are as important as, if not more important than, the content of the coordination initiative. “Collaboration also can become a tool in power struggles over control, priorities, or resources within the social service system” (Rein, 1983, p. 66). Coordination is often called for to reduce duplication and overlap:

The staggering number of agencies, the multiple sources of funding, the elaborate division of labor among agencies and among professions, the overlapping lines of authority deriving from local, regional, and national administration of policy, all contribute to a felt need for order and rationality. (p. 60)

Private foundations even support nonprofits that have a mission of helping to foster alliances with other nonprofits (Werther & Berman, 2001). This may be done by sponsoring innovative demonstration programs or through more forceful means that require collaboration in order to be eligible for funding.

Concern for administrative efficiency also is a growing concern for funders for their own operations, as well as for their contracted agencies. Public agencies are looking for ways to reduce the cost of contracting by reducing the number of contracts they manage. It's often in the best interest of funders for small nonprofits to consolidate, in order to reduce the workload of managing funding contracts and to maximize the impact of limited resources.

But governments are doing more than encouraging others to collaborate; they are becoming active leaders and participants in such processes. Throughout recent decades, an "engagement philosophy" for government has unfolded, giving the idea that "government should not only operate programs but, also, should take on more of a developmental or steering role, promoting, regulating, and encouraging various types of nongovernmental activity and operations" (Agranoff, 2003, p. 8). Some of the ways government is becoming more engaged in this manner is by mandating partner nonprofits to consolidate, to form MSOs, and through the formation of public management networks.

Despite the fact that maintaining funders' support is a primary reason organizations pursue strategic restructuring, few funders offer help in planning and implementing formal integrations. Perspectives of funders interviewed in research by La Piana and Kohm (2003) ranged from a belief that "funders could encourage with resources and information while not forcing consolidation, to a belief that only a completely hands-off stance is appropriate" (p. 21). Half said funders should be careful not to pressure nonprofits to try strategic restructuring. Because of the pressure felt by nonprofits, "it may not be realistic for funders to believe they can suggest and educate without their grantees feeling some pressure" (La Piana & Kohm, 2003, p. 21).

As funders encourage or mandate such formal partnerships, they may be seen as both contributing to the challenges nonprofits face, as well as being essential supporters and advisors to organizations dealing with these changes. In La Piana's earlier research (1998), findings encouraged funders to take a broad view of what nonprofits need and to look at strategic restructuring among a range of options. They recommend that funders consider supporting related research, provide direct assistance in the area of strategic restructuring, and take an active role in helping organizations improve their capacities (1998). La Piana and Kohm's more recent research (2003) has confirmed the importance of these suggestions and added several more to the list: encourage grantees to investigate the potential for cost savings or other benefits before embarking on such a partnership, fund long-term evaluations that focus on costs and benefits, and support research and education focused on post-restructuring challenges (p. 25). Funders can play an instrumental role in helping nonprofits explore restructuring options, as well as providing assistance in reorganization.

As has been demonstrated, nonprofit partnerships are complex and present daunting challenges. Consolidations, integrations and formal networks are even more complex, and the barriers for their successful execution and maintenance can jeopardize the partnership, as well as the delivery of needed services. Some of these challenges will be explored in the next section.

Partnership and Integration Challenges

Much of the literature cited in this section uses the term “networks,” staying true to the original sources, but the partnerships challenges covered here are universal among a variety of collaboration efforts, including integrations. Because of their complexity and the shared oversight by multiple parties, integrations and networks are difficult to establish and sustain. Although they are largely self-organizing, they require structure and need to be managed—but in collaborative, nonhierarchical ways. Many of these management and communication strategies will be addressed in chapter 3.

Even when there is a spirit of cooperation and accommodation in collaborative efforts, barriers are created due to conflicts among partners and other power issues. Much of the difficulty can be attributed to internal causes that are related to the network members themselves (Provan, Veazie, Staten & Teufel-Shone, 2005). Examples of such internal strife include members being more concerned about their own organization than the network’s goals, fear or unwillingness to share already scarce resources, concern about diminished managerial autonomy, power battles, and conflict among members. Conflicts also can occur throughout the network process regarding the contribution of resources, staff time devoted to network functioning, the location of meetings, and threats

of withdrawal because of frustration over the time and effort expended to achieve result (Agranoff, 2006).

Some challenges are due to the lack of adequate funding to provide administrative support for the network. Another factor involves issues of accountability within the networks. Issues of power also need to be confronted as real problems in network management. “Typical forms of authority and power generally do not work in a network structure,” says Mandell (2001, p. 281). Although some participants may have more formal power than others, in terms of resources or political clout, this power cannot be used to benefit a single entity because members have equal authority. However, as Agranoff (2003) points out, “Beyond the façade of consensus and collaborative management, stronger partners may be able to take advantage of weaker partners” (p. 22). Informal power based on interpersonal relations can be an important factor in effective network function and may be more important than formal power.

Related to the issue of power, O’Toole and Meier (2004) address another “dark side” of public management networks. Their research on school system networks found that networking actions generated greater inequalities than would have resulted without network activity. O’Toole and Meier contend that “managers who expend greater effort in working the network will improve educational performance more for goals that benefit their relatively advantaged clientele than for goals that benefit their disadvantaged clientele” (p. 685).

Another challenge is that participants tend to view networks from the perspective of their own organization and how it affects or is affected by the network. “The problem is that each participant will have his or her own view of what the network looks like and

how it operates, limiting an objective understanding of the network as a whole” (Provan et al., 2005, p. 604). Because members of individual organizations fear their managerial autonomy may be diminished and scarce resources must be shared, they may not believe that cooperation is in their organization’s best interest. “Thus, despite good intentions, community networks often struggle to survive and grow” (Provan et al., 2005, p. 604).

The “everyone for themselves” mentality compounds the already difficult task of determining accountability within formal networks. Accountability within network settings is a challenge because it is difficult to identify who is ultimately responsible. Agranoff and McGuire (2001) explain that in networks there is no obvious principal or agent, therefore the issue of accountability can be miscast. “With no single authority, everyone is somewhat in charge, thus everyone is somewhat responsible; all network participants appear to be accountable, but none is absolutely accountable” (p. 309).

These and other challenges result in real costs associated with network participation. In Agranoff’s (2006) research, he identifies six general “cost” categories, including:

- a) time and opportunity costs lost to the home agency as a result of network involvement;
- b) time and energy costs resulting from the protracted decision-making process, based on nonhierarchical, multiorganizational, multicultural human relations processes;
- c) agreements not reached because of the exertion of organizational power or the withholding of power;
- d) network gravitation toward consensus-based, risk-averse decision agendas;
- e) resource “hoarding,” or agencies’ failure or unwillingness to contribute needed resources; and
- f) public policy barriers embedded in legislation, coupled with legislators’ or other policy

makers' unwillingness to make needed changes, which, in turn, frustrated collaborative decisions. (p. 62)

Of course, the greatest cost is when needed services are lost as a result of consolidation efforts.

One concern expressed by nonprofit leaders (Kohm & La Piana, 2003) was that the trend toward strategic restructuring might reduce the number of organizations that focus on underserved communities. For example, consolidation can lead to centralizing operations and closing community-based facilities. In particular, some leaders worried that strategic restructuring would reduce the number of minority-focused organizations. "When small community groups partner with larger organizations they may lose their individual character and mission focus" (pp. 66-67). Furthermore, many organizations most in need of restructuring or consolidation are small organizations that don't have the resources needed to carry out such activities, but which provide much-needed services not offered by larger organizations.

All of these challenges can undermine the true value and importance of formal collaborative efforts. Dealing with and overcoming these challenges to help networks reap the potential benefits of their collaborative efforts requires expertise, leadership, and dedication among the members involved, especially the managers charged with ultimate oversight of the collaborative effort. This is one reason why funders need to help such organizations collaborate. Graddy and Chen (2006) suggest that the creation of effective service delivery networks may require more, not less, involvement by the funding public agency. "Agencies may need to take a more active role in their formation and administration" (p. 549).

Summary

Nonprofit organizations both depend on and at times compete with the other sectors (public and private). The potential payoff is a more significant impact on the quality of public life. There is little indication that the pace and complexity of change in the human service field will diminish in the near future. Surviving in today's uncertain economy will depend on the nonprofit sector's ability to adapt. As nonprofits continue to face government funding cutbacks and increased competition, new management strategies are emerging that warrant further study, including the increased use of formal partnerships such as consolidations and integrations. Without a doubt, it seems that the practice of establishing formal collaboratives and the corresponding MSOs, networks, lead entities, and the like, will continue.

Important to consider in any integration effort is the specific role relationships among nonprofits and their funders when exploring strategic restructuring and consolidation. The active role of funders in organizational restructuring and integration efforts is becoming a more common area of study because more funders are moving in the direction of encouraging grantees to explore these strategies. What role the funder should play, and what level of involvement they should have, however, is debatable.

This literature review demonstrates the increasing prevalence of nonprofit restructuring due to funder mandates and strategic initiatives for long-term survival. It also identifies various subtypes of formal integration that are less common in the literature, namely MSOs, and identifies the unique challenges that such integrations pose for nonprofit leaders and for funders. Limited information is available, however, regarding how communication is impacted within these organizational settings and how

organizational communication strategies may be used to mitigate problems and to facilitate the change process.

The literature review in this chapter lays the foundation for further inquiry that supports two of my research questions.³

RQ#1. What considerations do nonprofit service providers and funders confront when beginning the implementation of a new collaborative model? (i.e. Within the selected research sites, what were the concerns, issues, challenges and problems faced before and during the implementation of a management service organization? And how were these challenges addressed by participants throughout the process?)

RQ#2. What role do funders play to guide and assist nonprofit service providers in this process, both during the research, consideration and implementation stages?

In chapter 3, I will review literature that identifies some of the areas that are lacking in literature, such as the critical occurrences or situations that affect nonprofit partnerships, especially MSOs, and the management and community strategies utilized to mitigate these barriers and to foster stronger collaboration efforts. This will lay the foundation for my remaining research questions and support the importance and contribution of this research.

³ The research questions included here and at the end of chapter 3 are in their final form. However, these questions were developed collaboratively with the research participants as part of the action research process that will be described in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3

INTERORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I addressed the varied forms of partnerships that nonprofit organizations enter into seeking to ensure their survival. I also touched on some of the challenges inherent in these partnerships, especially formalized partnerships such as nonprofit consolidations, MSOs, and other management networks. I ended by introducing two of my research questions: one pertaining to considerations when beginning the implementation of a new integration model and the challenges faced by participants; and a second addressing the role of funders in guiding nonprofits to enter formal collaborations.

In this chapter, I will review strategies identified in the literature on how to overcome the challenges inherent in nonprofit partnership. Before doing this, however, there are other impacts on the internal functioning of organizations that result from formal partnerships that need to be explored. Some of these have been alluded to in the previous chapter but warrant closer examination. These include the impact on organizational mission and identity and the impact on organizational members and their level of resistance or commitment to change efforts. After exploring these organizational challenges, I will review the literature that identifies management and communication

strategies that can mitigate these negative effects, including change leadership and supportive communication strategies.

The literature within this chapter was drawn from a variety of disciplines, to be consistent with the wide boundaries spanned in this dissertation research. Included are literature from the disciplines of organizational communication, small group communication, management, leadership, and public administration. Because of this diversity, the literature reviewed covers organizational settings and communication challenges within all three sectors: for-profit corporations, government, and nonprofits. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, these three sectors share similar organizational characteristics, and research on certain organizational or communication phenomenon within nonprofit settings is limited. Thus, where applicable, crossovers in the literature are being made from for-profit or government settings to nonprofit settings. It is important to note that while the literature is written from a scholarly perspective, in some cases the literature reviewed was written by practitioners for practitioners. This type of work has been selected and included when it addresses issues not thoroughly covered in the academic literature, and often this is the only literature that reaches nonprofit managers and leaders.

Organizational Mission and Identity

As discussed in the previous chapter, funding restrictions and other government requirements can significantly reduce the activities of nonprofit organizations and simultaneously require other activities that may not be part of the organization's mission. For example, the financial requirements for operating in a contract environment often discourage nonprofit organizations from serving populations with the greatest needs or

from providing services to these communities when outcomes are often difficult to measure. This can cause both greater uncertainty and loss of the guiding vision. Ryan (1999) says that “nonprofits can win and lose simultaneously” (p. 136), in this regard. “Because their government partners have changed the rules of the game so dramatically, nonprofits may be retreating from their missions in order to gain market share” (p. 136). They may win funding contracts but be unable to fulfill their mission or meet community needs. From a communication perspective, these pressures can result in an even greater problem that is the steady pressure on agencies to dilute or abandon their founding missions—a critical area for further research and understanding.

As touched on in the previous chapter, the proliferation of government-nonprofit partnerships seems inevitable, and there are reasons to be concerned about the potentially negative effects of this shift on the ability of nonprofits to focus on their core mission. The source of this concern is the observation that as nonprofit organizations enter into relationships with government, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to remain programmatically independent (Ott, 2001), and they increasingly organize themselves to mirror and imitate their public sector counterparts (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2002). As Alexander (1999) explains, “Government contracting may undermine a nonprofit’s financial stability, while at the same time encouraging nonprofit organizations to move away from their own distinctive mission and reflect more closely the priorities of government administrators” (p. 328). These pressures pose threats to the continued pursuit of the mission of nonprofit organizations, leaving many nonprofits to confront an “identity crisis” (Salamon, 2003, pp. 76-77).

Scott and Lane (2000) argue that organizational identity is best understood as “contested and negotiated” through interactions between managers and stakeholders, and they include power in this conceptualization of organizational identity (p. 44). An unclear identity leads to uncertainty over strategy and organizational structure; as a result, decisions on staffing, governance, and grant-making policies may be made without a clear rationale or driven by external factors, such as environmental pressures (Young, 2001). Overall, these pressures impact organizational mission and identity in a number of critical areas: service delivery, advocacy and personnel. These three areas, especially, are featured in the literature and are reviewed here.

Impact on Services

Funding cuts and significant financial pressures leave agencies struggling to sustain survival of their programs and services. As government funding is reduced, services are often cut from those most in need due to the extensive nature of the services required to assist the most troubled clients. “Contracting results in the poorest being the least served,” says Bernstein (1991, p. 4). These excessive contract requirements often result in distressing outcomes for those who the system is intended to help—usually indigent clients needing basic, sometimes life-supporting services. In addition, many government funders do not pay for outreach, screening or advocacy, although client casework requires these types of effort, sometimes to a significant degree. If a contract only pays for certain services, that is all the client will likely receive, even if it’s not what they really need, explains Bernstein (1991).

In research conducted by Alexander (1999, 2000) on nonprofit organizations serving children and youth in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, nonprofit representatives

indicated that their ability to fulfill traditional public service responsibilities, such as serving the most needy, research, teaching, and advocacy, was negatively affected due to difficulty in adapting to financial challenges, such as reduced reimbursement rates and a limited capacity to generate revenue.

Some organizations, however, hold commitment to their mission in the highest regard, to the point where some actually turn down funding awards due to unrealistic requirements, even to the point of closing programs because they perceived the price of doing business to be too high (Bernstein, 1991). The ones who lose in this event are the clients who no longer have access to those services and the broader community who must now bear the brunt of this gap in service delivery.

Impact on Advocacy

Over time, effective advocacy can be equally important to the provision of needed services. Nonprofits historically have provided an independent voice and an important linkage between governments, communities, and citizens in need, not only through the provision of services but also through their political capacity as advocates for (sometimes unpopular) social causes (Alexander, 1999). Among other things, nonprofits organize communities, respond to community needs, and articulate these needs through advocacy (e.g., via public service announcements, press releases, and community demonstrations). As nonprofits are pushed to become more business-oriented and to alter their structure to mirror government and other funders, their political character and efficacy is often imperiled.

The impact of government funding on the advocacy function performed by many nonprofit organizations is one primary way their ability to fulfill their service mission

may be jeopardized. One example of the loss of political agency by nonprofit organizations is captured in research by Lune (2002) on syringe exchange programs (SEPs) in New York City, where nonprofits found themselves operating in a political environment that increasingly ran contrary to their missions. Like most nonprofits today, SEPs depend on ongoing government support for their survival, but the controversial nature of their services can cause them to be isolated from much of the public health services and the drug treatment field. To become an “authorized” part of the healthcare delivery system, the relationship between SEPs and government seemingly had to shift. Increased access to government support came at the cost of abandoning direct political challenges to government policies in this arena.

Impact on Personnel

In addition to influencing the types of services delivered by nonprofit organizations and curbing advocacy efforts, government also impacts organizational mission by regulating the structure and qualifications of nonprofit personnel. New forms of government funding have significantly affected the staffing practices of nonprofit organizations, mainly by encouraging the “professional” delivery of the services the agency provides (Akingbola, 2004; Salamon, 1995). This includes implementing minimum standards of care to ensure quality service delivery (e.g., acceptable client-provider ratios) that contribute to existing tendencies among nonprofit organizations toward professionalization and specialization (Smith & Lipsky, 1993).

Cheney and Ashcraft (2007) took a critical look at the term “professional,” which is used both to “suppress individuals and groups (e.g., ‘You’re not professional enough’) and to elevate them (‘We are now among the professionals of our field’)” (p. 158). The

term “‘professionalism’ has been almost universally valenced as positive, without recognition of its blind spots and associated forms of suppression” (p. 169). According to Salamon (1995), “Poverty and distress have come to be seen as requiring more than amateur approaches and volunteer activity” (p. 138). Although volunteers remain an integral part of service delivery, agencies increasingly are replacing volunteers with professional staff, especially in front-line service delivery (Akingbola, 2004).

This movement toward professionalization of staff presents unique challenges for nonprofit organizations. In Lune’s (2002) research, syringe exchange programs that once were managed by recovering addicts are now often run by professional managers with no prior experience working in drug issues. As Lune explains, “The conditions for aboveground work require a degree of professionalism and accountability in accordance with the interests of those outside of the affected communities rather than those within” (p. 470).

Services funded through government contracts also may require nonprofits to hire full-time professional staff as a means of complying with stringent reporting and accountability requirements. Other funder-imposed shifts in personnel restrictions may result in having less professional staff. Such a trend is visible in research conducted within the Canadian Red Cross-Toronto Region (CRC-TR) (Akingbola, 2004).

Interviewees agreed that government funding affects staffing, explaining that (contrary to the agency’s previous practices) external financial pressures led the CRC-TR to hire more staff on contract (on a temporary basis without benefits) for the delivery of services. The increased use of temporary staffing was a direct result of the uncertainty surrounding continued government funding. The impact of government funding on staffing had

multiple ramifications for the quality of services the agency provides, including stagnated or diminished quality of services, the inability to retain acquired program competencies, program instability, inevitable employee turnover, employee distraction, and low employee morale.

As nonprofit executives respond to challenges of leading nonprofit organizations in changing times, they must manage the core tension that exists between one's social mission, on the one hand, and financial and governmental pressures, on the other. Effective navigation of this tension requires a talent in forging and maintaining strategic partnerships. Agency leaders have little choice but to adjust their vision to maintain their funding, but in so doing, they risk losing the heart of the organization—their founding mission. Strategic management in the nonprofit arena involves maintaining “a distinctive sense of organizational mission” that binds diverse stakeholders together (Austin, 2003, p. 107). “Internal and external tensions must be successfully managed to ensure that new government resources and contracts do not distort the historical values and priorities of the organization” (p. 107). Partnerships will not attain their desired efficiency and effectiveness, if the identities of all of the partners are not maintained (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2002).

Stakeholder Relations

In the literature reviewed in the previous chapter, it was demonstrated that nonprofit organizations are created by community members coming together to address some unmet social need. As long as this remains the focus, nonprofits have relatively straightforward accountability and responsiveness requirements, centering primarily on beneficiaries, members, and individual donors. These stakeholders seek not only tangible

benefits, such as particular services, but values-based ones as well. “For individual donors, for example, supporting a nonprofit represents an expression of their values and priorities, whether these be of a religious, humanitarian or political nature” (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2002, p. 8).

Accountability requirements now compete with several others as the range of nonprofit stakeholders has significantly expanded, especially in light of changing government–nonprofit relations. The value and contribution of nonprofits are now assessed not only by beneficiaries, members and individual donors, but by government, the media and the general public as well.

In fact, publics that would normally be considered external—such as other nonprofits (including competitors), government and other funders, businesses, and the general community—often become part of the “internal” nonprofit family, helping to direct strategic planning, sustain operations, and the like. A nonprofit becomes responsible to all of its involved publics; likewise, these publics become responsible to the nonprofit, to ensure its continued ability to achieve some specific mission. When we talk about external stakeholders, it even may be considered that the boundaries of the organization are fluid, reaching out to and among these other entities to ensure their continued existence and to help fulfill their mission. In some cases, the boundaries are blurred for the stakeholders who may perceive “an overlap between their self-identity and the cognitive image they construct of an organization” (Scott & Lane, 2000, p. 48). They identify with the organization to varying degrees and among various dimensions. “Increased interaction among stakeholders and the organization serves to increase the accessibility and salience of stakeholders’ organizational social identity” (p. 52)

In most cases, securing buy-in from all these stakeholders can be difficult when nonprofit organizations are dealing with continuous change. Responsiveness to the needs of their stakeholders perhaps is the most important indicator of success (Lewis, Hamel & Richardson, 2001). “To some extent,” says Lewis (2005), “nonprofits have an expectation of being good at communicating with multiple constituencies, incorporating multiple viewpoints into decision making, and providing voice from many perspectives” (p. 258). Success in nonprofit organizations is measured largely in relation to the achievement of their mission or the effective provision of services, but consensus about the quality of nonprofit services is more difficult to obtain.

Herman and Renz (1999) clarified the role of stakeholders in measuring the effectiveness of nonprofit organizations. In their view, evaluations of effectiveness most often come down to stakeholder judgments, which are formed and changed in an ongoing process of sense making and negotiation. Perceptions of nonprofit organizational effectiveness are neither stable nor fixed; instead, effectiveness is socially constructed through stakeholder interaction. As Herman and Renz (1999) explained, in nonprofit organizations:

There are activities, but there is no effectiveness until someone calls it. . . . All stakeholders are permitted to determine effectiveness, although some stakeholders may be considered more credible than others, and there is no regular procedure for determining effectiveness. (p. 118)

The priorities of constituent groups, thus, affect goal setting and attainment in nonprofit organizations (DiMaggio, cited in Lewis, Hamel & Richardson, 2001). Effective leadership involves understanding the criteria of effectiveness that various

stakeholders apply and managing those expectations. But not all stakeholders hold the same level of importance and, therefore, may not receive the same level of communicative attention from organizations. Scott and Lane's (2000) research suggests that managers may be "more attentive to stakeholders whom they perceive to be powerful and have legitimate and urgent claims" (p. 55). Research by Lewis, Richardson and Hamel (2003) observed a similar practice, whereby those initiating some change initiative generally followed "a quid pro quo 'matching rule'" (p. 422) wherein the level of stakeholder resources served as the basis for determining the level of dedicated communicative attention. These types of practices may result in less attention to other stakeholders who are not perceived to wield power over the organization. In a sense, the organization may sacrifice "the consensus-building required for success" (p. 422).

Stakeholders can also provide an impetus for change and serve an important role in implementing management or change strategies (Eadie, 1997), thus nonprofit-stakeholder alliances are an important resource when planning agency strategy. As Garner (1989) explained, "A wise leader will recognize such alliances at the outset of planning, consider how to use them for future advantage, and avoid damaging them" (p. 119).

Shaw's (2003) research highlighted the importance of leaders developing personal relationships with stakeholders. Shaw's research included a case study of relationships between land trusts (nonprofit organizations that protect a natural resource or preserve historically or archeologically important sites) and local governments to identify conditions that foster successful collaboration. The successful partnerships that Shaw studied were not built on negotiated agreements but on years of experience with partner

agencies on the part of the individuals who worked together and had developed genuine affection for one another. In fact, partner agencies often implemented large-scale collaborative projects with no memorandum of understanding or contract, only a handshake and trust. Shaw concluded that social factors, such as experience on the part of key personnel in working with the opposite entity and sincere affection for each other, were more fundamental to successful collaboration than perceived economic benefits.

With such a heavy focus on stakeholder relations and the need for equal partnership in making collaborations work, it is helpful to focus on communication dynamics within group settings that can make or break a successful collaborative effort.

Groups, Conflict and Resistance

Reviewed here is research that addresses resistance and conflict in various group and organizational communication contexts, including small groups (such as employee groups or work teams) as well as public management networks and interorganizational models. Both of these contexts fit the communication setting and challenges within the Neighborhood Family Center Coalition (NFCC) integration model the site organization for this research. The organizational structure of the NFCC, itself, fits the collaborative model of a network (i.e., multiple organizations coming together to address a complex social issue). When representatives from the involved organizations come together to carry out the necessary planning and work effort, they represent and function as a small group of closely tied colleagues, dealing with the communication challenges similar to those faced by employee workgroups. For these reasons, the literature reviewed here covers the gamut of these group and organizational communication contexts, where relevant research can be applied to settings similar to the NFCC.

Group structure refers to the patterns of interaction that occur over time and are that expected by group members (Crosbie, 1975). Frey (1995) says, “Every segment of society relies on groups to make important decisions, to socialize members, to satisfy emotional needs and the like” (p. 3). Overall, successful group process can result in better decision making. As Frey (1995) explains, group decision making can result in 40 to 50% increases in productivity over individual decision making, for a number of reasons:

Groups generally have greater knowledge than any individual; they have a diversity of perspectives that results in better thinking; group members can check each other’s ideas; members are psychologically aroused being in the presence of others; and participation in group discussions often increases members commitment to the decision. (p. 4)

The assets of group functioning may not always be realized, however. Kayser (1990) explains that a “group may realize its full potential and produce superior output which propels everyone’s commitment and feelings of satisfaction to their zenith” (p. 4), or the group may fall into so much dysfunctional conflict that it cannot operate. Similarly, Hirokawa and Poole (1986) explain:

The unique chemistry of social interaction can distill the best that each member has to offer, creating a resonance of ideas and a synthesis of viewpoints. A different chemistry can stop the reaction and contaminate the product with erratic reasoning or low commitment. (p. 15)

There are many reasons why groups fail to make decisions or to achieve their ultimate purpose for existing. Without clear direction or leadership, groups left on their own often flounder and perform less effectively. Such ineffectiveness can have

devastating consequences. Group dynamic problems include issues pertaining to communication, conflict, group size, and group cohesiveness. In addition, groups must consider issues of “groupthink” (Janis, 1983).

Finding ways to bring all parties to the table so everyone buys into a common vision is a critical factor for success of any initiative. “Diverse organizational cultures must find ways to communicate despite vast differences in assumptions about basic values, morals, and beliefs about people, organizations, and community,” says Lewis (2005, p. 248). “Within heterogeneous groups, the level of conflict is likely to be high,” according to Brightman (1988, p. 14). Bringing people with different points of view into contact will often surface conflicts that must be resolved for an effective and practical decisions to emerge (Frey, 1995). “Groups may experience one of two extremes with regard to conflict,” explains Frey (1995, p. 75): “avoiding conflict altogether, or engaging in far too much conflict. Both result in the inability to reach a collective decision” (p. 75). Competition and avoidance are two other factors that contribute to group conflict issues. Seaman (1981) further identifies four primary reasons for conflict, including:

- a) The groups has been given a task which seems impossible, and members are frustrated, because they feel unable to meet the demands made of them;
- b) The main concern of members is to attain status in the group;
- c) Members are loyal to outside groups of conflicting interests; and
- d) Members feel involved and are working too hard on a problem. (pp. 55-56)

While conflict is not inherently bad, when not managed it can be destructive to the group process. Groups need to deal constructively with conflict. Putnam (1986) concurs: “To avoid strained interpersonal relationship, members often foster harmony by

taking flight from controversial topics, placating or smoothing over difficult issues, or compromising to get disputes settled in a hurry” (p. 175). “The greatest threat to genuine participation,” say Eisenberg, Andrews, Murphy and Laine-Timmerman (1999), “comes in subtle control or consent, rather than in lack of opportunity for involvement which would most likely be resisted. To counteract the forces of consent, organizations must be open to a discourse of resistance” (p. 146)

Some individuals or groups will overtly or covertly oppose a transition when a solution produces major changes in an organization. Some reasons for resistance to change may be more personal in nature. “The dislocations caused by organizational change are painful,” says Pietersen (2002, p. 32). He describes a response to change called the “FUD Factor,” which includes fear, uncertainty and doubt (pp. 33-34). Members may be uneasy about the change, or they may believe that they will lose power or resources (Brightman, 1988). The failure of the group to make a decision can often be traced to fear of the consequences of that action (Seaman, 1981). “Decisions often threaten a group and its members. Decisions involve taking responsibility and risking error. They may disrupt cherished programs or create problems with outside forces or other groups” (Seaman, 1981 p. 80).

Cohesiveness is another factor that impacts group effectiveness. Cohesiveness refers to the extent to which members are attracted to one another in the group. This may not necessarily include liking individual members, but members’ desires to remain members, for whatever the reason. “Cohesiveness increases as members become ‘attracted’ to the group, view the groups as ‘we,’ and begin to take a more active role in the process” (Brightman, 1988, p. 46). Conversely, groups that are too cohesive may

suffer from the problem of groupthink that produces a “consensus-at-any-cost mentality” resulting in a deterioration of a team’s problem solving capabilities.

The literature reviewed thus far has addressed the organizational challenges resulting from formal collaborative efforts, such as their impact on organizational mission and identity, and issues of group communication, conflict and resistance to change efforts. Strategies to mitigate these challenges are also covered in the communication literature and are reviewed in the next section.

The Challenges of Change Management

During an organizational consolidation, communication issues are often ignored in the pre-consolidation phase and then under-managed during the consolidation process. Marks and Mirvis (1998) stress that it is important to honestly assess problems that may confront an impending consolidation. They provide a list of “show stoppers” for mergers and consolidation efforts, including: a) distrust and incompatibility between management groups, b) difficulties working out governance arrangements, c) lack of talent to manage both the transition and ongoing operations, d) significant coordination costs required to obtain synergies, e) disruption associated with the consolidation, f) threats to customer relationships as a result of the combination, g) incompatible values and culture, h) negative impact on the workforce and communities, and i) post-deal hangover.

Rarely does a “perfect” scenario exist for all members during a consolidation effort. The best course of action, suggests McLaughlin (1998), is to recognize the uncomfortable aspects of consolidation and to set up a process that will achieve the most reasonable outcome possible. There are many strategies reviewed in the communication literature that managers can incorporate to support their employees and organizational

members through this change process. Some successful leadership strategies facilitate organizational change by developing a common culture through the use of supportive communication.

Improving Group Communication

In order for a collaborative group to function successfully, say Heath and Frey (2004), it should have the following: “a flat hierarchy, a nonhierarchical convener or facilitator, the ability to meet face-to-face, physical structures that reflect an egalitarian environment, and appropriate time for communication processes to emerge as central features that prepare a group for collaboration” (p. 207). “These features do not belong to any one individual of the collaboration, but instead are characteristics of the group as a collective” (p. 207).

An equally important function of groups, says Bennis (1999), is that “they provide psychic support and personal fellowship. They help generate courage. Without a sounding board for outrageous ideas, without personal encouragement and perspective when we hit a roadblock, we’d all lose our way” (¶3). Heath and Frey (2004) concur, that “the informal network of communication outside the formal meeting context cannot be underestimated” (p. 208).

“Great groups” also require strong leaders, says Bennis (1999). “You cannot have a great leader without a great group—and vice versa” (¶13). Leaders studied by Bennis “were seldom the brightest or best in the group, but neither were they passive players. They were connoisseurs of talent, more like curators than creators” (¶13). Bennis identifies four behavioral traits shared by leaders of great groups, including: providing

direction and meaning; generating and sustaining trust; displaying a bias toward action, risk taking and curiosity; and serving as purveyors of hope.

Change as Seen From Leader and Member Standpoints

Effective change leadership during organizational transition entails facing many communication issues, such as trust, organizational culture, and dealing with member concerns. Nonprofits come together and are held together by a shared purpose, social capital, mutual respect and trust (Agranoff, 2003; Agranoff & McGuire, 2001). “Rather than relying on contractual arrangements (although contracts may be a part of the collaboration), network structures rely on exchanges based on interpersonal relations. To be effective, participants must be able to trust each other to work to their mutual benefit” (Keast et al., 2004, p. 365). Establishing trust and developing a deeper understanding of how other agencies operate takes time. When there is a pre-existing history of trust and understanding, the collaborative effort can focus on achieving project goals. In addition to personal relationships, the importance of establishing open communication and dialogue in nonprofit partnerships has been studied. “Dialogic inquiry can lead to transformation,” explain Eisenberg et al. (1999, p. 143). “Generally speaking, the process leads from impersonal fellowship to friendship. Our emotions are integral. We change the nature of consciousness as we share content and think together” (p. 143).

Leadership ability is also important to achieve network cohesion. Agranoff and McGuire (2001) describe the role of “the leader as craftsman” who “elicits common goals, creates an atmosphere of trust, brokers organizational and individual contributions, and deploys energies in accord with some strategic plan” (p. 314). Assembling and leading a heterogeneous group of people who typically do not work together can be

daunting. Diverse groups, however, create potential for sharing important information and helping to achieve mutual goals. Eisenberg et al. (1999) suggest, “Because complex issues require the combined intelligence of multiple individuals, dialogue is essential to the survival of today’s organizations” (p. 143). The communication processes practiced by collaborative groups, such as through dialogue and consensus decision making, “attempt to honor the viewpoints of their members’ various constituencies,” (Heath & Frey, 2004, p. 208). Leaders and group facilitators who stress inclusion in dialogue can heighten the odds of creative problem solving and system change (Medved et al., 2001).

As discussed in the introductory chapter, culture within nonprofit organizations is important because it serves as a primary means of organizing, motivating and monitoring members’ attitudes and behaviors. Organizational culture determines strategy, goals and modes of operating. Culture is especially important in consolidation efforts because culture is the biggest stumbling block organizations face when they decide to join forces. “It’s important to identify cultural areas of dissonance so that people can dispel misconceptions and begin creating a culture that’s right for the new organization,” says Bramson (2000, p. 62). Changing a culture is an enormous task “because it involves the creation of shared systems of meaning that are accepted, internalized and acted on at every level of the organization” (Morgan, 1998, p. 136).

Much has been written about “managing employees” during a merger. Although “employees” are not a focus of this study, the research on this issue can be applied to this study as it pertains to interaction between the funder and the partner agencies. For this reason, research on “managing employees” during a merger is included and adapted. Where appropriate in reviewing the literature without changing the meaning or intent, the

word “member” may be used in place of the word “employee” to communicate the broader representation of stakeholders involved in nonprofits integration efforts. Additionally, “formal collaboration” and “consolidation” may be used in place of “merger” to communicate the potential broader applicability of this literature to multiple restructuring forms.

Members’ attitudes toward consolidations are often a function of their perception of how the consolidation will impact or benefit them personally. Change has different implications for different parties involved. Research by Wanberg and Banas (2000; in Axtel et al., 2002) revealed that managers may have more positive attitudes towards change than operational employees due to having more access to information and greater opportunity to participate in decisions regarding the change. Before members effectively engage in the merged company, they want to know their roles in it. They need to know, “What’s in it for me?” Troiano (1999) explains that until they have that information and are secure in their new roles, there will be a reluctance to work together.

Organizational members are also concerned for the well being of their organizations. Members will not make sacrifices, even if they are unhappy with the status quo, unless they believe that useful change is possible. Typically, one of the deepest concerns among organizational members is whether a change is consistent with the organization’s values. The one constant in change should be sustaining an organization’s value system (Kramlinger, 1998). Support for change needs to be cultivated before, during and after a consolidation effort takes place. “For change to occur in an organization, every member must think, feel or do something differently” (Duck, 1998, p.

56). “Behavioral change cannot occur without an explicit effort to reeducate people who adopt new values and norms,” explains Beer (1980, p. 99).

Specifically pertaining to employees, researchers suggest two important approaches to encourage employee support of a consolidation effort: exposure to information and frequent and open communication. This would seem to be good advice and good practice in any organizational context, but during merger and consolidation efforts, secrecy is often the norm, especially in for-profit mergers where merger announcements can sway the stock market and send employees into a frenzy, due to fear of losing their jobs. Some reasons for consolidation in both for-profit and nonprofit organizations alike pertain to cost savings and staff reductions. Thus, sharing information too early in consolidation planning is avoided in order to prevent negative reactions from employees and organizational partners that could threaten the success of the venture.

From a member’s perspective, consolidations are stressful for other obvious reasons (Marks & Mirvis, 1998): There’s more work to do and less time to do it; the future is highly uncertain; it is a time of insecurity; and people feel they’ve lost control of their situation and fate (pp. 92-94). Workers are often terrified of losing their jobs and being left unable to support their families. Employment concerns are compounded by the personal concerns at home, such as telling a spouse about a layoff, paying a mortgage, or taking children out of private school (Deal & Kennedy, 1999, p. 197).

Personal stress and self-doubt result, even for employees whose jobs are not on the cutting block. Working through a consolidation process may be like working through any other loss. Employees will exhibit feelings of denial, anger and eventually acceptance (Buono & Bowditch, 1998). As part of this reaction, employees may display signs of

depression and express both direct and displaced anger. Management often wants to avoid bringing on these stresses early in consolidation planning; thus, open communication is also avoided.

Sometimes communication comes after the consolidation announcement, but too often communication about a consolidation doesn't focus on employees' issues and fails to enlist their support. "Deal makers spend far more energy hyping their brainchild to the outside world than providing rationale to the people charged with carrying it out," say Feldman and Spratt (1999, p. 25). This leaves employees with more questions than answers. "Confused about today's priorities and tomorrow's direction, anxious employees spend inordinate amounts of time speculating with peers about the murky future" (Feldman & Spratt, 1999, p. 25).

Reducing uncertainty is essential for organizations to keep good people. "The longer it takes to reduce ambiguity and position the company for growth, the greater the likelihood of diminished employee support, increased confusion, extensive alienation, and widespread resistance" (Feldman & Spratt, 1999, p. 33). When there is communication, the flow often is one-way and can become information overload. It involves management sending out information and memos based on what it thinks is important. Unfortunately, "the standard top-down mode of communication doesn't work. During a merger, a bottom-up communication system is essential" says Greengard (1997, p. 53). The best communication strategies involve a constantly widening array of people, says McLaughlin (1998), because nonprofit consolidations "are best planned from the top down and implemented from the bottom up" (p. 207).

“Without credible communication, and lots of it, the hearts and minds of the troops are never captured,” says Kotter (1998, p. 12). Companies fail to integrate their work forces or have a difficult time doing so because they don’t have a strong communication program in place (Troiano, 1999). Sharing information with employees early in the consolidation process can stabilize levels of job satisfaction and reduce uncertainty experienced by employees. It, also, can have a number of potential benefits for the organization, according to Schraeder (2001), including increasing employee commitment to the organization and, as a result, reducing their resistance to the merger.

“A good rule of thumb,” recommends Arsenault (1998, p. 134), is to include all individuals who will be affected in planning process and the transition. This will take more time but will prevent problems in the transition and save time and energy later. “As their knowledge of what will occur increases and their sense of being listened to increases, anxiety and stress will decrease,” says Arsenault (p. 136). Arsenault and McLaughlin also stress communication throughout the course of a merger to ease fears, to make things go more smoothly, and to increase the chance of lasting success. Clear and consistent communication was found to be an integral part of successful change efforts, along with communicating early, frequently and honestly. The goal of communication should be not only to inform but also to engage members in the vision and process. “By presenting a clear vision of the future and gaining commitment to it, the new company begins to build the loyalty that’s crucial to survival,” says Bramson (2000, p. 64).

In addition to communication during the consolidation effort about the process, it’s also important to tend to employees’ feelings and emotions. Patterns of employee

stress and diminished commitment are inevitable during a transition. Strategies can be implemented to reduce resistance to consolidation and, more important, to diminish the detrimental impact on employees and other organizational members (Schraeder, 2001). Through open and honest communication, it's possible to increase commitment and decrease stress, resulting in improved productivity, quality and employee well-being. Marks and Mirvis (1998) identify two basic reasons to manage employee uncertainty and insecurity during a consolidation. One aim is to minimize the stress experienced by employees and to help them cope with its effects. The second is to maximize the upside by building understanding of and commitment to the consolidation and the opportunities it offers. Through supportive communication, managers can help reduce uncertainty and help develop a sense of perceived control over stressful situations (cf. Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001).

In addition to supportive communication with members, researchers identify several other actions that are beneficial during a consolidation effort, such as having open conversations where employees can have opportunity to vent their concerns and fears; giving praise and feedback to help employees feel more confident in the work they are performing; and providing incentives and rewards that will indicate to employees that they are doing a good job and are valued. Newstrom and Davis (1993) suggest the following activities to build support for needed change: using group forces (peer pressure), providing rationale for change, encouraging employee participation in the change process, sharing rewards (both economic and psychological), ensuring employee security, communicating openly and often, and “working with the total system” (pp. 283-286).

Strebel (1998) suggests that senior managers put themselves in their employees' shoes to understand how change looks from that perspective and to examine the reciprocal obligations and relationships that exist between employees and the organization. This includes looking at the formal business components of employee concerns, such as raises and performance expectations; psychological concerns, such as recognition and personal rewards that employees receive from the work; and social dimensions that pertain to the employees relationships with others in the organization. Understanding all dimensions of employee concern and addressing all these factors in the organizational change process, will help create an environment that fosters employee commitment to the transformation.

Other research specific to partnership strategies during a consolidation can be drawn from the research literature on public management networks, whereby multiple parties from public, private and nonprofit sectors come together to address complex social issues. The processes experienced within these collaborative efforts are unique because network management is considered to be a different type of nonhierarchical management. Networks are often formed through self-organizing process, blending knowledge bases from different organizational arenas (Agranoff, 2003). They are held together by mutual obligation that develops over time, and information and expertise is substituted for authority structure.

In a network, "the goals and success of organizational members become secondary to the network as a whole" (Milward & Provan, 2006, p. 18). It is still important and necessary, however, to satisfy the needs and interests of the individual network members, while at the same time, "building a cooperative network of

interorganizational relationships that collectively provides services more effectively and efficiently than a system based on fragmented funding and services” (Provan & Milward, 2001, p. 422). “It is not enough to get those around a table to agree and take action,” says Lewis (2005), “organizations must then become engaged at a broader level. Collaborative structures need to be created and maintained” (p. 248).

In addition to strong leaders, several researchers suggest that networks should have a network manager or some coordinating entity to facilitate the work of the network. These coordinating entities may be called operations networks (Marlowe, 2005b), lead entities (Graddy & Chen, 2006) or MSOs (Kohm & La Piana, 2003). These formal models for network coordination are featured less in the literature and with less clarity. The collaborative organization included in this study is a network, but it also is an MSO. It is in this arena where there is a great need for further research to clarify the structure of these models and to examine their reasons for forming and their methods of operating. Also, due to the critical importance of successful network management, further research is warranted that explores how network members and managers deal with issues such as decision making, a lack of trust among members, conflicting goals, the need to increase productivity and other challenges. As Agranoff and McGuire (2001) question, “What are the critical occurrences or situations that affect network operations, and what are the preferred responses to these situations?” (p. 300). They suggest that “extensive observation and in-depth interviewing are required to answer these critical questions” (p. 300). They also suggest that we need to know more about how critical processes within networks unfold, such as common network management sequences like activation, framing, mobilizing, and synthesizing.

Another consideration for future research is the effectiveness of networks, including effectiveness of service delivery, as well as cost effectiveness, and the negative consequences of networks. “We tend to see the positive side of network structures without examining the possible negative side,” say Berry et al. (2004, p. 550). Examples of the negative side include “convergence toward groupthink, dependence on effective leaders and collaboration skills, and possible inefficiencies due to participant turnover and communication and meeting costs” (550).

Another question that remains largely unanswered pertains to how network relationships change over time. Isett and Provan (2005) suggests that “as policy makers continue to encourage the formation of service provision networks among private and nonprofit organizations, it is important to understand how networks work” (p. 149). Isett and Provan also suggest the need for empirical work that systematically tracks partnership evolution. Berry et al. (2004) suggest that future qualitative research address the complexities of networks and the members’ circumstances and perceptions. “Through thick, rich descriptive accounts, we can more fully illuminate the contextual side of the dilemma” (p. 549).

Research should look into the pragmatics of moving nonprofits to engage in a wider variety of strategic partnerships as a means of responding to environmental change. In this regard, research into organizational change and consolidations within human service nonprofit organizations is limited. As nonprofit organizations explore new coping strategies, such as reorganization, consolidation, mergers and integration, there is an increased need for applied communication research and practice. These trends create the need to expand researcher and practitioner knowledge of organizational change in

nonprofit settings, thus setting the stage for important applied communication research agendas within these organizations.

Summary

This review of the literature on stakeholder relations, organizational mission and identity, and change leadership strategies, provides a good opportunity to introduce my two remaining research questions.⁴

RQ#3. What management and communication strategies are implemented to mitigate the negative effects of this type of organizational change and/or to contribute to successful implementation of this type of integration model?

RQ#4. What lessons can be learned from the Juvenile Welfare Board and the Neighborhood Family Centers Coalition experience that may benefit future Juvenile Welfare Board efforts, as well as funders and service providers in communities throughout the United States?

With these final two research questions introduced, what follows in the next chapter is a detailed description of my research methodology and an overview of all the research questions to be addressed in this study.

⁴ The research questions included here and at the end of chapter 2 are in their final form. However, these questions were developed collaboratively with the research participants as part of the action research process that will be described in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

A COGENERATED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

I didn't plan to conduct an action research (AR) dissertation, but my initial contacts with a potential site organization led me in that direction. Due to having some familiarity with AR, I was open to this approach. I also saw this methodology as less threatening when approaching the site organizations. Engaging in AR, however, took me away from the linear approach of more traditional methods of research. Thus, to be true to the AR methodology, this chapter will not follow a linear description of my research methodology, but rather, it will chronicle the AR process as it was co-generated by me and the research participants. For example, this chapter would normally start with a review of my research questions, but these questions were shaped as part of the AR process, and in fact developed collaboratively with the research participants. These questions will be presented after describing the AR process used to cultivate them.

Before beginning my description of my AR methodology, it is helpful to have a better understanding of AR before proceeding. Because the validity of AR is still questioned in some arenas and often misunderstood, AR methodology warrants additional justification to support and clarify its use. I will start this chapter by providing an overview of the basic approaches and phases most commonly identified as part of AR. To help provide context for this research, I will reflect on my own research interests and

provide a brief overview of the research environment. With that groundwork laid, I will then share my AR journey, beginning at the point of my introduction to the research site. I will describe the process of entry into the organization that set the stage for the collaborative research process. I will describe how the research relationship took shape, along with the process of cogenerating the research questions and protocols with the research participants. I will state the final research questions and describe the research approach adopted by the research team (me and the research participants).

Defining Characteristics of Action Research

The distinguishing difference between AR and other forms of applied communication research is the level of involvement of the research participants. In AR, the participants are co-creators of the research. Greenwood and Levin (2006) describe action research as “a cogenerative process through which professional researchers and interested members of a local organization, community, or a specially created organization collaborate to research, understand, and resolve problems of mutual interest” (p. 115). The research is carried out by a team that encompasses a professional action researcher and the members of the organization.

AR involves groups in gathering and analyzing data, providing feedback, planning for action, and collecting more data to monitor the results of change. In any organizational context, AR attempts to understand and change organizational culture by looking at problems and challenges as they are defined by organizational members, encouraging those members to take an active role in collecting and analyzing data, and planning for action to solve the problems to meet the challenges they have identified (Felkins, 1995). The process of an AR inquiry aims to be constructive rather than

invisible, explain Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001). In many ways, this is “a more plausible ambition, (because) no social research process can actually avoid changing the situation it investigates: human beings will always respond (in one way or another) when research in any form appears on their scene” (Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001, pp. 18-19). In applied communication research, the researcher begins by identifying some communication phenomenon that occurs in naturalistic environments (Frey, 1990). This includes the identification of a real social problem. Cissna (in Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000) elaborates on this focus of applied communication research:

Applied research sets out to contribute to knowledge by answering a real, pragmatic social question or by solving a real, pragmatic, social problem. Applied communication research involves such a question or problem of human communication or examines human communication in order to provide an answer or solution to the question or problem. (p. 33)

In the next section, I provide a more detailed description of the AR phases and how this methodology was incorporated for this study. Various researchers identify different phases and processes of AR. In a broad view of AR, Greenwood and Levin (2006) describe AR as a process consisting of at least two distinct phases: The first involves the clarification of the initial research question; the second involves the “initiation and continuation of social change and meaning construction process” (p. 93). The components of AR most often identified in the research literature include participation, qualitative methods, reflection, and cyclical process (Dick, 2000). Following are more detailed explanations of these phases. Descriptions of how these

phases were applied in my research methodology will be provided later in the chapter as the action research process unfolds.

Participation

Participation refers to clients and informants being involved as partners in the research process. In AR, those who are affected most by the research outcomes join those who carry out research. “Together, the professional researcher and the stakeholders define the problems to be examined, cogenerate relevant knowledge about them, learn and execute social research techniques, take actions, and interpret the results of actions based on what they have learned” (Greenwood & Levin, 2006, p. 3). This participation generates commitment (Dick, 2002). “Action outcomes can usually be achieved only with some commitment from those most affected, and one of the most important ways of securing that commitment is by involving those affected” (§ 33). Another reason cited in the literature for including participants is that it is more ethical to use participative methods. Greenwood and Levin (1998) argue that the research process must be democratic in the sense that it is open, participatory and fair to the participants (p. 113). The extent of participation in AR may vary. In some instances, there may be a genuine partnership between researcher and participants. “The distinction between researcher and others may disappear” (Dick, 2000, § 20).

Qualitative Method

Qualitative method pertains to the fact that AR methods focus more often on language and interaction rather than quantifiable metrics, and these are best studied through qualitative methods that reach the more personal levels of experience, thoughts and feelings. Most accounts of AR are rendered in narrative form. “AR needs a genre for

writing that faithfully reflects the dynamic and developmental nature of AR that recreates for the reader key elements in the experiential learning cycles” (Greenwood & Levin, 1998, p. 109). The challenge in presenting accounts of AR, explain Greenwood and Levin, (1998) “is to create a persuasive connectedness between theory and practice” (p. 110). Narratives provide a solution to this challenge by creating “text that has meaning both for practitioners and for scientists” (p. 110), such as case studies that include detailed discussions of the processes a group went through in generating the knowledge that is being communicated and acted upon.

The narrative turn (Bochner, 2001) in combination with AR has two important effects, explains Reason and Bradbury (2001). “First, it helps to legitimate practitioners as producers of valid knowledge, and second, it helps to open a two-way street so that both practitioners and researchers have their interests addressed through scholarship” (p. 152). It is “a process of interpretation in which the teller and listener collaborate in sensemaking” (Bochner, 2002, p. 81). These characteristics help to bring practitioners and academicians closer together. As Bochner explains, “Narrative inquiry dissolves traditional boundaries between researcher and subjects, between theories and stories, and between author and reader” (p. 77). It can elicit information that rings true to practitioners’ experiences, making them more likely to consume it. Along the same lines, Greenwood and Levin (2006) say that writing up AR in narrative form can be a “process through which both insiders and outsiders cogenerate knowledge that leads to actions” (p. 111). This occurs by writing up AR that captures the sequences of learning, such as conducting the research, learning from outcomes, and creating new insights that lead to new actions.

Reflection and Cyclical Process

Reflection pertains to practices during data analysis that include critical reflection by the participants. *Cyclical* indicates that the research process does not end with the findings and that similar research activities recur. Action research is critically reflective. “The researchers (and probably clients acting as co-researchers) regularly and systematically critique what they are doing. They refine the questions they are asking and the methods they are using and the understanding and subsequent action plans they are developing” (Dick & Swepson, 1997, ¶ 6). Action research should involve all participants in self-questioning and self-evaluation (Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001, pp. 18-19). This part of the process exemplifies the critical reflection step involved in action research. An overall goal of this analysis will be to provide a holistic analysis of the data and to provide a rich description of the experiences encountered during the creation and implementation of this particular organizational model.

Data analysis is usually the end result of the research process, but staying true to applied communication research, it is important to provide suggested strategies to help solve the practical social problem being studied. Action research closely adheres to this approach, because the purpose is to work towards change, “not merely to describe a current situation ‘as it is’” (Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001, pp. 18-19). “Good action research is empirical: responsive to the evidence,” says Dick (2000, ¶ 35). It is important that the evidence is used critically rather than uncritically. To achieve both research outcomes and action the researcher needs to be responsive—to the situation, the people, and to fostering understanding on the part of those involved. Using a cyclic process enhances responsiveness, explains Dick (2000). “It makes sense to design the later stages

of an action research activity in such a way that you capitalize on the understanding developed in the early stages” (§ 28). Action is followed by critical reflection: What worked? What didn’t? What have we learned? How might we do it differently next time? (§ 15).

Research Environment and Context

The literature review contained in the previous two chapters demonstrates the increasing prevalence of nonprofit restructuring and the unique challenges that consolidations pose for nonprofit leaders, as well as for funders. Limited information is available, however, regarding the communication challenges and strategies utilized by entities engaging in the development of new integrative organizational models, such as management services organizations. This study explores the unique issues that one group of nonprofit organizations faced when considering integration, especially pertaining to the interorganizational communication among the nonprofits and their funder and the challenges they faced during reorganization planning and implementation.

Before I begin the introduction to my research site, I am providing some context about the environment of the research setting. Some characteristics of the environment may be related to the phenomenon being studied. I will also discuss my situation within this setting, my research interests, and my search for and discovery of my research site.

Research Environment – Pinellas County, Florida

My study is set in Pinellas County, Florida, a small county located in west central Florida along the Gulf of Mexico. Out of 67 counties in Florida, Pinellas has the fifth highest population with 921,482 people (U.S. Census, 2006), and the fifth highest level of per capita personal income (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2005). More relevant to this

research is data pertaining to public charities within the county. This information is reflected in Table 4.1 that contains data on Florida counties with the greatest number of registered public charities. Within the state of Florida, Pinellas County ranks seventh, with more than 2,400 public charities, equal to more than 5% of the state’s total.

Table 4.1

Data on Public Charities in Florida Counties

Data is shown for Florida counties with the greatest number of registered public charities. Data included is from 2007 and 2006, except for poverty rate, which is based on data available for 2003.

Table 4.1

Florida Counties ↓	# of registered public charities (PCs)*	% of Florida PCs	county population (in thousands)	# of PCs per person	% of population at poverty	# PCs per person at poverty	county land area (in miles)	# PCs per sq. mile
Miami/ Dade	5,817	12.9%	2,402	0.0024	18.9%	0.013	1,946	3.0
Broward	4,145	9.0%	1,274	0.0033	12.5%	0.019	1,205	3.4
Palm Beach	3,627	9.3%	1,788	0.002	10.9%	0.027	1,974	1.8
Orange	3,148	7.1%	1,158	0.0027	13.2%	0.025	907	3.5
Hillsborough	2,975	6.2%	1,044	0.0029	13.0%	0.021	1,051	2.8
Duval	2,462	5.5%	838	0.0029	12.8%	0.024	774	3.2
Pinellas	2,439	5.2%	924	0.0026	12.0%	0.022	280	8.7

*There were 45,698 public charities registered in Florida, as of January 2007.

Sources: U.S. Census (2007, 2006 & 2003), and The Urban Institute (2007 & 2006)

Where Pinellas County clearly stands out and draws attention in many regards is its density. Pinellas County is the most densely populated county in the state of Florida, with 3,291 people per square mile, compared to an average 296 across the state of Florida (The Urban Institute, 2000). When factoring in the small geographic size of the county, the number of registered public charities stands out strongly, with 8.7 public charities per square mile, compared to an average of less than 3 for the other top counties. Certainly, there's no way to draw clear conclusions about the adequacy, inadequacy or excess of these charities, without knowing more about the size and scope of each organization. Still, this small piece of data is significant because it creates a perception among Pinellas County residents, policy makers, and funders that there are too many public charities in the county and that consolidation is in order.

One of my job duties, while working at one of the local governments in Pinellas County, was dealing with resident complaints about social service agencies. These complaints often arose when a charity was relocating to or starting a new office or service location within a neighborhood or business district. "We already have our fair share of social services," was often the complaint I received. "We don't need anymore." I would love to have said, "I'm sorry, but you haven't yet met your quota of 8.7." In fact, even look at these numbers, but the belief that we have too many social service agencies is ever on people's minds.

For years, funders and policy makers have directed the undertaking of numerous research studies to explore the possible duplication of social services in Pinellas County (see Giard & Gamache, 2005; Interagency Committee, 1992; Marlowe, 2005a; Stiles & Haynes, 2002). This particular concern is usually lumped under a broader rubric of

human service needs assessment, but duplication of services is often a key focus area. Repeatedly, these studies have found no evidence of duplication: “There is very little overlap in users between the systems that were looked at” (Stiles & Haynes, 2002, ¶ 14). “Duplication of services is reported as far less of an issue. Instead, similar services are said to be supplemental with respect to the needs that exist” (Giard & Gamache, 2005, p. 42). This last study, however, also reports the following: “Fragmentation and uncoordinated services remain as constants, and the responsibility for changing them is reported as belonging to the funding sources, in large part” (p. 42).

This type of concern, combined with the perception that there may be too many public charities in Pinellas County, has led to practices consistent with trends identified in the literature review, whereby policy makers and funders step in to encourage public charities to consolidate or to explore new ways of operating, such as through collaborative networks. Recognizing these concerns helps in understanding the environment within which the site organizations are placed. Before exploring the discovery of my research site, I will further explain my situation within this research environment and my research interests.

Reflection on My Research Interests

“To assist a group of collaborators in resolving some kind of important social problem, the action researcher must have some kind of substantive appreciation of the particular issues involved” (Greenwood & Levin, 2006, p. 119). As described in chapter 1, my situation within the research environment was multifaceted, having worked both in nonprofit management and in the role of being a government funder. When I began my doctoral studies I was executive director of one of the 2,439 public charities in Pinellas

County, and I always felt the pressures of maintaining funding support for our programs. When I began searching for a research site, I was working as a government funder, helping to support and coordinate social services throughout the largest municipality in the county.

In chapter 1, I described my interests from the perspective of a nonprofit executive, namely having to deal with the stress and frustration of growing needs, limited funding, and increasing competition from new nonprofits. As a government funder, my frustrations were much the same: too much need and too much competition, and not enough funding and not enough true collaboration. This could be said both about the public charities I worked with as well as the other funders in the county that work under fiscal constraints and political pressures. From the perspective of both positions I held, I started to see where funders were putting more responsibility on their contracted service providers to manage community planning, contracts, and everything that goes with contract management, such as processing reimbursements, data reporting, analyzing outcome measures, and program monitoring. My desire to pursue this research increased.

Through my contacts in the community, I was able to identify nonprofit organizations beginning the research stages of a merger or consolidation, and I was granted permission to conduct research with these organizations. Some of these research studies were referenced in my introductory chapter. For a number of reasons⁵, these initial research sites fell short as a prospective site for my dissertation research, although

⁵ Several of the organizations with which I conducted research provided worthy sites for continued study, but finding one in the midst of an integration process was difficult to do. I worked with one organization during its stages of researching and considering merger options, but it ultimately decided against a consolidation. Another organization engaged in a merger process that was completed in less than a month. While these organizations presented their own intriguing issues to study, the focus of my research is communication processes during organizational transition, and these sites did not meet the scope of my research needs.

I was able to engage in AR that benefited their organizations, as well as me as a researcher. As word about my research interests spread among nonprofits and funders in Pinellas County, people started to strike up conversations with me. Others started to call me for help with their organizations. Eventually, I came across the ideal research site for my research.

Where Does Action Research Begin?

I met Paul Lackey when I was a nonprofit executive director serving on a local board of directors for a new African-American history museum. Paul is a Program Planner for the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County (JWB), the largest countywide funder of social services, specializing in children and family services. Our professional relationship strengthened when I moved into my government funding role.⁶ Paul's planning area included the jurisdiction that I was then responsible for, and our interactions around social services needs, issues and planning increased. During one of our history museum board meetings, Paul talked about work he was doing with several agencies to form a new management service organization. This immediately caught my attention. I told Paul about my research interests and asked to learn more. We scheduled to meet over coffee to talk about the prospect of me conducting research on this collaborative project.

I learned early on that Paul moves quickly. With only a vague sense of my research interests, Paul had already started to lay some groundwork to pave my way into the research sites. By the time we had coffee, Paul had already shared my research

⁶ When I found my research site, I had just begun working at the City of St. Petersburg, Florida, as the manager of social services. One of my responsibilities involved managing city funding contracts awarded to public charities that provided human services to city residents. This involved forging partnerships with other local funders, government groups, nonprofits, and community and business organizations.

interests with his superiors at JWB. When we met, he conveyed that not only was JWB willing to allow me to conduct this research, but they wanted to be actively involved in creating and participating in this research. The JWB was curious about many aspects of the model they helped to create and wanted to know more about the strengths and weakness of the approach taken, in order to guide their planning for future efforts and to educate other funders and nonprofits around the state and country. Paul had also talked with leaders of the Neighborhood Family Center Coalition (NFCC), the group of providers who were working together and with JWB to form the new management service organization. The NFCC leaders whom Paul talked to, thought my proposed research would fit nicely with their plans to learn more about the consolidation process and strategies, in order to improve their practices and to share the experience with others. The members of both organizations expressed great interest in my work, not only in allowing me to conduct research but in wanting to be active participants in the research. They wanted to be actively involved in structuring, reviewing and responding to the research, in addition to sharing their lessons learned.

These motivations of the JWB and NFCC are consistent with the central focus of AR, which is to improve practice (McBride & Schostak, 1995). The participative process of AR is intended to increase individual and group learning, build commitment to action, and help organizational members make informed conscious decisions. The outcome of AR should support the participants' interests so that the knowledge produced increases their ability to control their own situation, in addition to generating valid knowledge and effective social action.

Introduction to the Site Organizations

Before continuing my indoctrination into this AR process, a little more context is needed to gain a better understanding of these two organizations. Learning about the two organizations took up the bulk of my time with Paul during our first meeting. He provided an overview of the two organizations and of what had transpired in recent months and years that led to the current intent to form a management service organization. Even though my research sites hadn't officially signed on to participate, this first meeting with Paul and my initial learning about the history of the organizations was part of our AR process. The organizational overviews provided here are general introductions. More context will be provided in chapter 5. Where helpful, however, I have included a few interview quotes from participant interviews to describe the organizations and the context.

About the Juvenile Welfare Board and the Neighborhood Family Centers

Established in 1946, the JWB was the first countywide agency in the nation using dedicated property taxes to better the lives of children and families. JWB is one of the largest funding sources for human services in Pinellas County, Florida. In 2007, JWB award about \$53 million to approximately 45 local agencies and more than 100 programs serving children (JWB website, 2007). The JWB is overseen by a board of directors composed of designated elected officials and governor appointees. The agency has a strong research and community planning division, and it is known as being cutting-edge in its research and practices.

Included within the JWB-funded organizations are the neighborhood family centers (NFCs). These are grassroots, community-driven groups that specialize in

meeting the unique needs of their surrounding neighborhoods. The board of directors for these organizations usually comprises many members from the immediate neighborhood that the organizations exist to serve. Lounell Britt, president of the NFCC and executive director of the James B. Sanderlin Neighborhood Family Center, describes her NFC and the NFC model as being like the old settlement house concept. Settlement houses were a movement started in 19th century London where universities settled students in impoverished areas to live and work alongside local people. More broadly, settlement houses are characterized “not by a set of services but by an approach: that initiatives to correct social ills should come from indigenous neighborhood leaders or organizations” (Blank, 1998, ¶7). As Lounell described her center: “We’re about family. Everybody is kin to everybody. It’s amazing to watch everyone come in here and be a part of what goes on here...because they want to be here.”

The JWB-defined purpose of NFCs is to provide a network of support for young families and families with young children, especially children ages 0 to 6 who have little or no local support systems (Rowlette, 2001). JWB’s NFC program model resulted from a change in funding philosophy, to shift from funding services based on categorical needs of children and families to a comprehensive, strength-based approach with emphasis on neighborhood self-development. The NFCs resulted as part of JWB initiatives “to establish organizations with strong neighborhood connections and organizational capacity” (Rowlette, 2001, p. 33). The first eight NFCs were established in response to requests for funding proposals released by JWB, between 1993 and 1995. Because of this, some refer to the NFCs as having been “birthed” by the JWB.

About the NFCC

Soon after the creation of the NFCs, the leadership of the individual centers formed a networking collaborative to share experiences, ideas and resources; this was also a recommendation from the JWB. The NFC members called this informal collaborative the Neighborhood Families Centers Coalition (NFCC), and this organization represented the original NFCs located throughout the county. The mission of the NFCC “is to strengthen and enhance the effectiveness of member centers by advocating for common concerns, providing mutual support, developing shared resources, and collectively promoting the Neighborhood Family Center concept” (NFCC website, 2004). The NFCC eventually secured a 501(C)(3) nonprofit status for the purpose of exploring joint fundraising efforts, group purchasing, and the like.

A Shift in Funding Philosophy

The individual NFCs, like many other small organizations in Pinellas County, experienced broad support during their first years of operation. By 2003, however, these organizations had come under scrutiny by the publicly appointed board of directors of the JWB that questioned the possible duplication of effort and potential waste of taxpayer dollars. Contributing to this sentiment were problems that occurred within two NFCs that eventually closed. Another closed when its “neighborhood” was dispersed as a result of closing one of the county’s public housing complexes. By 2003, there were nine NFCs participating in the coalition, representing a broad spectrum of communities located throughout Pinellas County. For a map of the NFCs in Pinellas County, see Figure A1, located in Appendix A.

A shift in JWB operating procedures occurred in April 2003, when the JWB board of directors set forth a directive to reduce its overall number of funding contracts and to consolidate funding awards toward larger agencies. For the NFCs, this would have meant a loss of funding for six of the NFCs that were located in some of the most challenged geographic areas of the county. These six agencies depended mostly on JWB funding, and the shift would likely have resulted in the closure of these organizations.

The staff of the JWB, as well as the leadership of the NFCC, was committed to finding some way to get around the board's directive to allow them to continue serving the communities with the greatest needs. After a lot of quick research and planning on the part of the JWB staff, a proposal was put forth to consolidate the nine NFC funding contracts into one, a proposal that would have to be agreed to by the JWB board and accepted by the NFCC board.

The process utilized to consolidate these contracts was through the development of a management service organization. This process is the primary focus of this dissertation research, as it pertains to the relationship and interactions between the JWB and the NFCs. The following portrayal is a simplistic representation of the resulting process, provided only for the purpose of background and introduction. This description, itself, raises several questions that will be explored as part of this research. Richer descriptions of this process will be provided in chapter 5, in my review and analysis of the interview data.

It is important, at this point, to clarify a term that will be repeatedly used though the remainder of this dissertation: administrative service entity (ASE). The formal integration effort included in this study most closely resembles a management service

organization (MSO), defined as “an integration that includes the creation of a new organization in order to integrate administrative functions, and thus to increase the administrative efficiency of participating organizations” (La Piana Associates, 2006). This term, however, was rejected by the members of the NFCC. They chose, instead, to call their network an *administrative service entity*. Although no clear explanation was provided by the NFCC members regarding this terminology, through my interviews it became clear that the members objected to the terms “management” and “organization,” in management service organization. Most NFCC members were strong and accomplished executive directors of their own organizations, and at the start, they rejected the perception of a new level of management—and a new organization—above them and between them and their funder. Members seemed to view “administrative” as representing clerical and business functions (such as data reporting and billing) rather than managerial functions, and an “entity” seemed less threatening than an “organization.” “ASE,” therefore, became the term of choice, and this term shall be the ongoing reference from here forward, as it pertains to the specific form of a nonprofit integration focused on for this research.

The JWB staff proposed the consolidated contracting model to the JWB board, describing the intent of this consolidation as a way to increase the efficiency of contract administration for the JWB, as well as to reduce administrative costs for the NFCs and increase the quality services. The creation of this new model was a strategy for the JWB and the NFCs to deal with this mandated funding shift. The directors of the JWB voted to approve consolidation of the nine funding contracts previously allocated to individual NFCs into one contract. To assist in this transition and development of the new entity, the

board also approved 14 months of funding support that would pay an executive director's salary and operating costs.

After the decision of the JWB board, the directors of the NFCs accepted the recommendation and voted to turn their informal networking collaborative into an ASE charged with managing the single contract. As a result of this action, the previously informal NFCC network became the nonprofit organization that would represent all the centers located throughout the county. This action necessitated the creation of systems, supports, and procedures to manage approximately \$2.7 million in JWB funds. The planning of this process began in August 2003. On October 1, 2003, the NFCC began a one-year practice run at managing the consolidated JWB contract, and the board continued to develop and implement other operational aspects of the new ASE. The JWB staff shadow-managed the funding contract and subcontracting process to ensure that all contracting procedures and quality controls were adhered to. After the 1-year trial system and continued implementation of the integration effort, NFCC began serving as the fiscal and administrative agent for the centers, coordinating the distribution of funds provided by the JWB.

Unique to this organization is the dual relationship that exists between the NFCC and its member organizations, the neighborhood family centers. Included in Figure 4.1 is a diagram that attempts to show the complexities of this relationship. The neighborhood family centers are now funded by the NFCC, and the executive director of the NFCC serves as their contract manager. The directors of the neighborhood family centers serve as the NFCC's board of directors, and thus serve as the supervisor of the NFCC's executive director. This model would normally be prohibited in most nonprofit funding

structures, due to conflict of interest, but this became the structure that the NFCC determined necessary for this integration effort.

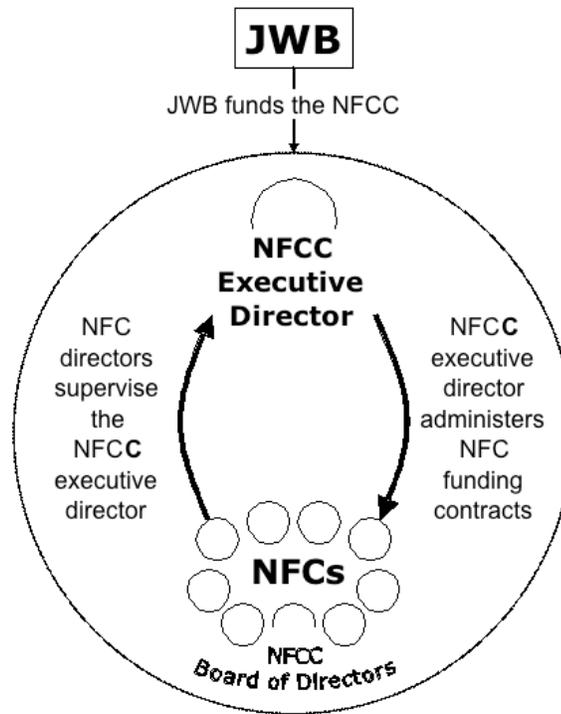


Figure 4.1. Diagram reflecting JWB-NFC-NFCC relationship complexity.

Also unique to this organization is the interorganizational relationship between the NFCC and its members, and the JWB, whereby JWB became an active partner in initiating and supporting the development of the ASE. It is because of these unique characteristics and the communication challenges involved that this particular organizational model caught my attention. After learning about these organizations, I decided to make these my site organizations for my dissertation study.

The Co-research Relationship

The strong interests of the research participants to be involved in cogenerating and analyzing the research altered my research plan. This type of research was not what I

had originally planned, but I was enthused to try it. Over time, the AR took on a life of its own, with some orchestrating from me as the principal researcher.

The first steps of my new methodology were to gain entry into the site organizations—to obtain permission and some kind of formal approval from the organizations to conduct my research with them. As is customary with many researchers trying to secure site access, I had to meet with representatives from the site organizations and propose my research to them. Even this became a collaborative process. After all, how could I propose research that was yet to be designed? I met with the JWB management staff to propose my research interests and some rough research questions. This meeting became a brainstorming session, with back and forth discussion about their desires and needs, and an exploration of how these fit with my interests. Together, we started to develop a rough list of research questions, timelines, and outputs, such as a preliminary report that they wanted to share with their board of directors. This made my visit with the NFCC board of directors a little easier. From my notes with JWB staff, I had a starting point. I shared some of these ideas with the NFCC board of directors and explored what their needs and desires were. Although a main element of the AR process is the cogeneration of ideas and research processes, I recognized that lengthy group sessions where we could co-generate the key elements of the research process would not be possible, due to the time constraints of the research participants. The flow of collaborative process for this research would also include repeated back and forth among research participants, in a way that would be as seamless as possible.

This initial collaboration, through group discussion and virtual feedback, was consistent with other defining characteristics of AR. Greenwood and Levin (2006)

explain that “communication procedures must permit the development of a mutually agreed-on problem focus. These procedures include rules of democratic dialogue, which involve openness, mutual support and shared ‘air time’” (p. 94). Through our discourse, a working definition of the problem was developed, and through our communication, we began to develop a “mutual understanding (p. 94).

Cogenerative Research Process

As previously explained, the distinguishing difference between AR and other forms of applied communication is the level of active involvement by the research participants. In AR, the participants also become co-creators of the research. The members of the NFCC and JWB were actively involved in all steps of this research. In this section I will describe how the JWB and NFCC members served as co-researchers to help plan what information we needed, what outcomes to pursue, and what research methods to use. This was followed by more detailed planning about the topics and types of questions to be asked in the first interviews. After participating in the research interviews, members were involved in critical reflection of the outcome data and involved in identifying common themes and findings. The collaborative processes will be described in more detail here.

Developing the Research Questions

“A major challenge in AR is to find a good first question that is at least partly shared among the involved parties, particularly at the outset” (Greenwood & Levin, 2006, p. 97). This became the first official collaborative process of the research team. Even as NFCC and JWB members were being introduced to my research study, they were actively involved in the co-generation of the research questions. This involved some

group discussions as well as some conversations between me and the research participants until consensus was achieved. The research participants also reviewed these questions and provided final approval before the research study began. Based on agreement from all of the participants, this research was proposed to address the following questions:

RQ#1. What considerations do nonprofit service providers and funders confront when beginning the implementation of a new collaborative model? (i.e. Within the selected research sites, what were the concerns, issues, challenges and problems faced before and during the implementation of a management service organization? And how were these challenges addressed by participants throughout the process?)

RQ#2. What role do funders play to guide and assist nonprofit service providers in this process, both during the research, consideration and implementation stages?

RQ#3. What management and communication strategies are implemented to mitigate the negative effects of this type of organizational change and/or to contribute to successful implementation of this type of integration model?

RQ#4. What lessons can be learned from the Juvenile Welfare Board and the Neighborhood Family Centers Coalition experience that may benefit future Juvenile Welfare Board efforts, as well as funders and service providers in communities throughout the United States?

Consistent with the definition of applied communication research, the primary communication concepts examined in this research include the quality and forms of group planning processes and all the challenges and strategies involved in that process, and the ability of the group to achieve its identified outcomes, namely the development of

an ASE. Factors that affected these group communication processes included resistance to change, organizational identity, group conflict, group facilitation, and community planning issues such as funder-initiated integration. This research will, therefore, benefit communication research greatly by studying this communication phenomenon. This research will also identify solutions to the problems that may be faced by other groups of organizations facing a similar situation. The next task of the research team was to identify research methods that would help us uncover these challenges, strategies and outcomes.

Qualitative Methods

Within the overarching AR methodology, it was agreed by the research team that qualitative methods used to explore these research questions would include interviewing, ethnography and document analysis. Because the primary focus of this research pertains to relationships, management strategies, and communication between and among the participant organizations, it was agreed that qualitative methods would be used. This is consistent with guidelines previously discussed about the best way to study communication in organizational settings, which is through qualitative methods that can better capture the personal experiences and feelings of participants, as well as elicit personal narratives that could be woven into the research project and dissertation. Following is a description of the process used to develop the interview protocol, an overview of the style of interview utilized, and a description of research methods used, including ethnography and document analysis.

Developing the Research Protocol

After the research questions were finalized, a list of key topic areas to be explored during interviews was developed in conjunction with the NFCC members and JWB staff.

This was done both in meetings and through electronic communication. Some of the topics they expressed interest in included the process of planning and developing the ASE, and identifying lessons learned from the process that could be shared with other organizations and funders. Inquiry into the process of developing the ASE would address issues such as decision making, conflict, successes, and reactions. It would also address the role of the JWB as it pertains to ways of communicating, planning and assisting; the resulting challenges; and possible alternative outcomes (i.e. without JWB support). The topic of identifying lessons learned involved looking back, as well as looking forward to uncover members' overall thoughts about the process, changes that could have been made, responses to decisions made, projections and hopes for the future, and lessons learned.

For the most part, the members' ideas and research interests mirrored mine. I added a few other topics necessary to round out my study to provide history and context about the phenomena being studied. From this collaboratively developed list of interview topics, I proposed a final interview protocol with sample questions. The list of interview questions was presented to the NFCC and JWB research participants for feedback and approval. The approved list of questions became the research protocol for this study (see Appendix B).

The initial list of topics and interview questions, while carefully thought out, were not intended to be fixed. As explained by Greenwood and Levin (1998), the problem definition process is never final; "in fact, a good sign of the learning taking place in an AR project is when the initial questions are reshaped to include newly discovered dimensions" (p. 115). An AR study can begin with quite imprecise research questions,

says Dick (2002). “Imprecise questions and methods can be expected to yield imprecise answers initially. Those imprecise answers can help to refine questions and methods. Each cycle can be a step in the direction of better action and better research” (§ 21). Research conducted with the NFCC and the JWB followed a similar cycle of progressive steps: initial interviews, review and reflection, and follow-up interviews, as needed. The approved list of interview questions was intended to be a first step in the research process.

I carried out the research activity as agreed upon. Designated members of NFCC board met on occasion to review and critique the research. The need for follow-up research was considered upon review of findings from the first set of interviews, but additional research was not determined to be necessary at the time. If additional research was needed, I would have followed up with additional research and reflection, thus demonstrating the cyclical nature of AR (Dick & Swepson, 1997).

A list of all research interviews conducted and meetings attended is provided in Appendix C. These interviews and meetings can be categorized as: meetings to gain access to the site organizations and to define the scope of the research (Fall 2004), research interviews with NFCC board members and staff (December through April 2005), research interviews with JWB staff (December through April 2005), critical reflection meetings to review preliminary themes and findings (June 2005), and a research presentation to the JWB board of directors (July 2005).

Five JWB staff were interviewed to provide background about the NFCC process, as well as to uncover the experiences encountered before and during its implementation. These staff included senior management and the staff directly involved with the NFCC

(for a complete list, see Appendix C). One member of the JWB staff, Program Planner Paul Lackey, served as my primary contact throughout this study. He assisted in gaining site access and approval, and he served as a sounding board when I had questions or wanted to discuss my findings. Interviews were conducted with all NFCC members who were willing to participate (all 11 participated), including the NFCC executive director, all of the board members (NFC executive directors), and one associate member who was a former NFC executive director. Two members assisted greatly and served as my primary contacts: Lounell Britt, president of the NFCC board of directors and executive director of the James B. Sanderlin NFC; and Keith Knowles, executive director of the NFCC.

Interviewing and narrative form.

As previously discussed, most accounts of AR are rendered in narrative form (Greenwood & Levin, 1998) that includes detailed discussions of group processes. The goals of narrative are to evoke emotional experiences in the reader; to give voice to stories and groups of people traditionally left out of social scientific inquiry; to produce high literary/artistic quality; and to improve the lives of readers, participants and authors (Ellis & Ellingson, 2000). Other researchers also recommend the use of stories as a useful method for capturing the voices of managers and others within nonprofit organizations (Wilensky & Hansen, 2001). There has been some recent recognition of the value of stories in other disciplines, such as public administration. Ospina and Dodge (2005) discuss the “narrative turn” in public administration, and how the further development and proliferation of narrative holds promise for strengthening the field (p. 144). This is a significant change within an industry that has been heavily focused on quantitative

research. Ospina and Dodge recognize the special characteristics and value of stories: “Stories contain within them knowledge that is different from what we might tap into when we do surveys, collect and analyze statistics, or even draw on interview data that do not explicitly elicit stories with characters, a plot, and development toward a resolution” (p. 143).

More specifically, Sandelands and Boudens (2000) identify two important functions that stories have in the workplace: 1) They collect and communicate the life and feelings of work. “With stories, people can grab hold of feelings that would be otherwise inexpressible and unmemorable” (p. 58). These stories reinforce and amplify work feelings. 2) Stories define “the group” for those within and outside the group. Sandelands and Boudens explain that stories are usually about “us” and “them,” by virtue of who is and who is not included in the group. “Stories are thus a powerful way that people learn about who they are and who they like and dislike” (p. 58). Similarly, Fineman (2000) recommends stories as a research method that captures feelings and emotion in the workplace. These qualities make stories especially relevant in the nonprofit sector.

Consistent with the literature on narrative and stories, my research work included qualitative methods that can be reflected in narrative form. That approved interview protocol incorporated components similar to many other established methods for qualitative interviewing, including active interviewing (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995), oral history interviewing (McMahan, 1989), sequential in-depth interviewing (Ortiz, 2001), interactive-relational interviewing (Chirban, 1996), intervention-counseling interviewing (Fineman, 1985), and interactive interviewing (Ellis, Kiesinger & Tillmann-Healy, 1997).

Elements of various styles were incorporated into the research interviews with the primary site organizations. Interviewing incorporated, to the greatest extent possible, active engagement of the study participants to determine respondents' beliefs, attitudes, values and feelings about the concepts under study.

The model that most closely resembles the type of interviewing I sought to engage in was active interviewing. In active interviews, the interviewer's objective is not to dictate research methods through a predetermined agenda but to provide a supportive environment for the production of meaning that addresses key issues. This type of interview is more of a conversation where the method is cooperatively developed, and where meaning is being mutually developed by the interviewee and interviewer (Ritchie, 1997). How the process unfolds is as important as what is being asked and answered.

Interviews ("discussions") were conducted with each participant utilizing the list of topics and questions co-created with the participants. These interview topics served as a guide for the interview process. Corresponding questions were worked into interview discussions informally as they fit within the flow of discussions. As part of my research with the NFCC members, I asked about the individuals' background with their own organizations; their background and involvement with the NFCC; individual experiences, thoughts, ideas and concerns throughout the process of developing the ASE; observations about the group interaction; and experiences and observations about interaction with JWB and other outside funders.

Ethnography.

In addition to interviewing, I incorporated ethnographic methods into my research process. "Ethnography is the use of direct observation and extended field research to

produce a thick naturalistic description of people in their culture,” (Gephart, cited in Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000, p. 259). The ethnographic research methods that have been incorporated in this study included complete observer, complete participant and participant-observer/observer-participant.

The settings for this research were within the site organizations, at the NFCC board meetings, as well as at the individual NFCs. Methods of naturalistic inquiry focus on how people behave when they are absorbed in genuine life experiences in their natural workplace settings (Frey et al., 2000). Most of the research done in these naturalistic settings was observed directly or recreated through the use of in-depth interviewing techniques, where participants were asked to describe in detail what they experienced or were continuing to experience. Other methods that were employed include documenting direct emotional accounts and observing organizational meetings, activities, and the material symbols within the organization. These types of qualitative research efforts offered insights into the private experiences and feelings of the members involved.

Because the site organizations requested to participate and interact in this research, I was able to engage fully with the members. At times, however, I wanted to conduct observation without participants feeling like they were being observed. This type of observation occurred at NFCC board and committee meetings and at various events where members interacted. They regularly had a few observers present at their board meetings, including staff from JWB, a consultant representing one of their funders, and other guests; this made it easier for me to blend in.

While my presence at meetings and functions mostly was to observe, there were times when I was asked to participate more fully as a member, advisor or facilitator, such

as working with members to develop research questions and providing interim research findings to the management and board. This level of interaction added to my autoethnographic experience (Ellis, 2004), and provided an opportunity to give something back to the organizations participating in the study. Being a participant-observer in this manner allowed me to experience activities first hand, while still having revealed my research agenda.

As suggested in the literature, when the action researcher fills a role of facilitator, “the inquiry should always include an explicit evaluation of the facilitation process” (Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001, p. 18-19). When reviewing my process for data collection and analysis in the next chapter, I will include a reflection of my involvement. As a researcher who has personal experience with the phenomenon being studied, my research included an element of autoethnography that required honest disclosure and reflection. My honest disclosure to the members from the start of the research process was helpful in terms of establishing a common ground and to building a level of trust. Knowing that I had been an executive director, as well as a funder, provided members with a level of comfort. I was not just an outsider coming in to study them; I would be a research partner who could share in their experiences.

Document analysis.

While a comprehensive document analysis was not done as part of this research, many organizational documents were reviewed to provide background and historical context for the transition that was taking place. I also reviewed various documents related to the planning, implementation and operation of the ASE. Documents reviewed included NFCC Transition Team Reports, NFCC board meeting minutes and documents, NFCC

grant applications, and various JWB documents related to the NFCC, such as JWB board minutes, strategic plan and research studies. Reviewing these documents helped me prepare for the research interviews, provided background on the mechanics of the integration partnership, and offered a less biased view of their successes and challenges.

Stages of Critical Reflection

During my interviews and observations, I was able to witness group and individual behaviors related to the proposed communication phenomena being studied and to track observations through detailed field notes. This included a combination of written and audio-recorded notes. When it was not possible for me to be present to observe, other methods were used such as reviewing meeting minutes or by documenting from participant recall of the meetings. This phase of the AR process will be described thoroughly in chapter 5.

Because of the nature of AR, there were multiple stages of data analysis and generation of findings. As described in the next chapters, once all the research interviews were completed, a systematic, preliminary data analysis was done. Preliminary findings were shaped and presented to the research participants to receive their assistance in interpreting the meaning of the data and to solicit their feedback and response to the research process. Throughout this process, the research participants had opportunities to identify any new or unanswered questions that warranted additional research. It is important to note here that a great deal of the “action” and the cyclical process of follow-up research with the participant organizations will continue on after completion of my research and dissertation. To limit the scope of the findings presented in this dissertation, this part of the AR process will not be covered.

Considerations

A main goal of my research was to establish a high level of confidence and trust between me and the research participants. “Confidentiality” was not a concern to any of the members, but because member’s responses would be shared with their colleagues and funding agency, there was a concern about the manner and tone in which their comments would be reported. This was important to address up front, because it was vital for research participants to feel comfortable to speak freely about their experiences, thoughts and feelings. To assuage any concerns, I addressed this during each of my research interviews. At the beginning of every interview, I let participants know that I wanted them to feel comfortable to say anything without concern about it being used in my final report. I told them that at the end of the interview, I would ask them if there was anything they shared during our session that they would like omitted or toned down, and I stressed that I would honor their wishes in this regard. This seemed to work well, and there were no concerns ever expressed about my breaking the trust we had established.

One ethical consideration was my dual role as a University of South Florida (USF) researcher and a local government funder. Two of the NFCs received funding through my office, which were contracts that I managed. In addition, my government employer received funding from JWB for some of it’s youth recreation programs. This required multiple levels of disclosure, not only with my research partners, but with my employer. Working in any level of management within a Florida governmental entity required strict adherence to ethical codes of conduct. This blurring of boundaries required me to confer with my government employer’s attorneys to determine if there would be any ethical violations, and to draft a statement documenting my activities for disclosure

purposes. What was more important however was maintaining a separation between these two personas when working with the research participants. I was careful to always introduce myself as Beth Eschenfelder from the USF Department of Communication, and never as my government role, and I avoided talking about city government business while in the presence of my research participants. I only distributed my USF business cards and only gave out my personal cell phone number and email address. For the most part, I was able to keep my identities separate, and the research participants always acknowledged me as the USF researcher.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of my research questions and research methodology. I introduced the methodology of AR and how it was utilized in my research. In the next chapter, I will provide a detailed overview of my process for data collection and analysis, and I will continue my description of the AR process of critical reflection. I will describe how the research participants were involved in helping to analyze and interpret the data. In chapters 5 and 6, I also will provide a thorough description of the entire process, mostly told through the words of the participants.

In chapter 7, I will describe how our cogenerative process shaped the findings of this research process. These findings will be explored from two perspectives: from the perspective of the research participants, with regard to how it answered their questions and concerns; and from my perspective as a communication researcher to determine how this study addressed the broader research questions applicable to organizational communication research.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND EXPLORATION OF THE INTEGRATION PROCESS

– PART 1

Introduction

Throughout my research, interviews were audiotaped with a portable tape recorder and my observational experiences were documented in field notes. This included a combination of audio-recorded and written notes. The next step in my research process was to analyze the data. This was done through several means: a) by reviewing interview tapes and field notes; b) by extracting common responses from the interviews to reconstruct the shared experiences of participants in developing the administrative service entity (ASE); c) by analyzing responses and the reconstructed ASE process to identify prevalent communication themes; d) through follow-up discussion with the Neighborhood Family Centers Coalition (NFCC) board of directors to review, clarify and amend these themes; e) through followup with the primary site liaisons to confirm feedback provided by the NFCC board; and f) by matching these findings with existing communication theory and practices reflected in the literature. Because of the complexity of the organizational relationships and the integration model being studied, I have chosen to first present my data in a chronological sequence, as mentioned above in steps a and b. This is followed by a thematic analysis in chapters 5 and 6, in which I will tell the story of the NFCC integration process and the experiences of the research participants. In

chapter 7, I explore related communication themes to develop findings related to the original research questions.

Before presenting and discussing my research data, there are a few approaches I have taken in my data collection and analysis that are important to note, including an introduction to a few key interview participants and my categorization of the interviews. I will also describe the multiple phases of data analysis utilized to conform with the action research methodology to involve the research participants at various stages of analysis.

Organizing the Data

For ease of communicating my data analysis, I have chosen to minimize the number of individuals identified by name to four key participants. Others will be referred to as collective bodies or as members of a collective body—collective bodies being the NFCC board of directors and the Juvenile Welfare Board of Pinellas County (JWB) staff who participated in this research. For example, I might convey the following: “Most members of the NFCC coalition indicated...” or “One member of JWB staff said...” The four respondents whom I have chosen to identify by name are principal to this research, because they were the leaders within the site organizations, and they were identified repeatedly throughout all the interviews. These four research participants include the following people who will be introduced more fully in the following section.

Paul Lackey, program planner for the Juvenile Welfare Board, who served as my primary contact throughout the study;

Jim Mills, director of the Juvenile Welfare Board;

Lounell Britt, president of the NFCC and executive director the James B. Sanderlin Neighborhood Family Center (NFC); and

Keith Knowles, executive director of the NFCC.

For the purpose of data analysis and reflection, I have organized my interviews into four different categories that include: introductory and context-setting interviews, NFCC member interviews, JWB staff interviews, and critical reflection process sessions. Following, I provide a brief overview of these categories and explain the key interviews contained within each category and my method for analyzing the interview data. All interviews followed the interview protocol described in the previous chapter, and all were audio recorded.

Introductory and Context-Setting Interviews

My first interviews provided context for my study and helped me to refine my interview questions and process. I intentionally scheduled my first interviews with participants who were most knowledgeable about the history of the system. The four individuals previously identified comprise the only interviews included in this category: Paul Lackey, Jim Mills, Lounell Britt, and Keith Knowles. These interviews were longer and contained more questions related to background and planning. These interviews were also transcribed in their entirety and served as a guide for setting up initial coding themes, which aided in reviewing the remaining interview tapes. Because these four key participants are referred to by name in all the interviews and, therefore, will be referenced considerably in this data analysis, it's necessary for me to provide a short introduction to each of these participants to help place interview comments in context. These introductions will be provided after reviewing the three other interview categories.

NFCC Board Member Interviews

All members of the NFCC board of directors and one associate member (a former NFC executive director) were interviewed. In addition to Board President Lounell Britt, nine other members were interviewed. Interviews ranged from 1½ to 3 hours in length, with longer interviews broken into two sessions. All interviews were conducted at the NFCs where each member worked. The board of the NFCC was diverse with respect to age, gender, race, and years of experience working in the field, and the demographics of most directors were representative to their respective neighborhoods.

JWB Staff Interviews

In addition to JWB Program Planner Paul Lackey and Director Jim Mills, three other JWB management staff were interviewed. These included senior managers responsible for planning and key decision making, and the contract manager responsible for all NFC funding contracts and the new NFCC contract. Interviews ranged from 1 to 2½ hours in length, and all took place at the JWB office.

Critical Reflection Process Sessions

As part of the action research methodology, the research participants were actively involved in reviewing my data analysis and preliminary findings to provide feedback and to help shape and formalize the final research findings. This critical reflection took place through a group, retreat-like session; through individual follow-up interviews with key participants; and through individual feedback by phone, in person or via email. The group retreat and the individual follow-up interviews will be briefly introduced at the end of this chapter but will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter 7 as part of the critical reflection and findings process.

Introduction to Key Participants

Because the introductory and context-setting interviews are critical for this research, I am providing a brief introduction to each of the key participants included in the introductory context-setting interviews. My first interview was with Paul Lackey, program planner for the JWB, who served as my primary contact throughout the study. Paul originally moved to Pinellas County in 2000 for an early retirement but immediately realized that he “couldn’t sit down.” He was invited into and accepted a management position at the Pinellas County Health Department. Before retiring, Paul worked for a large company in Oklahoma where he had thousands of people under him; he was not seeking another supervisory position. “The job I wanted was to work with people and not supervise people,” he explained. He found that opportunity at the JWB as a program planner, which involved working with social service agencies and working on special projects throughout the south part of the county. For his first 6 months, he worked on small projects and then was introduced to working with the NFCs. Eventually, he was asked by JWB administration to take on the development of the NFCC administrative service entity (ASE).

Paul served as the primary liaison between the JWB and the NFCC. He became an advisor and advocate. Almost all members of the NFCC talked about Paul during their interviews. My first interview with Paul was informal and provided background about the JWB’s involvement in conceiving the ASE model. He also told me a little about each of the NFCs and the members of the NFCC board of directors.

My second contextual interview was with JWB Director Jim Mills. Jim was directly responsible for carrying out the directives of the publicly appointed board of

directors of the JWB; therefore, he served as the primary driver of the integration model. Jim had been working as director of the JWB for more than 20 years, and, by the time of our interview had already expressed his plans to retire. Jim was known countywide and beyond as a leader in the social service industry. He was often identified as being cutting edge in his use and implementation of new strategies for service planning, management and technology.

My first formal interview with an NFCC member was with Lounell Britt, president of the NFCC and executive director the James B. Sanderlin NFC. Lounell had dedicated her professional career to social services, formerly working as an area manager for the Florida Department of Children and Families, and she helped found and served on the board of directors for the James B. Sanderlin NFC. She was about to retire, when the Sanderlin NFC board of directors asked her to consider running the struggling center. She agreed to take it over, accepting only a nominal salary.

I chose to start with Lounell because, among all NFCC members, she was the most involved, knowledgeable, and patient. I told her that my time with her would help me refine the research questions; for example, that I would ask her all the questions to test out which were effective in addressing the research questions identified by the research team, and to determine which questions were really needed. My first interview with Lounell was lengthy, and we ended up scheduling a second session to fully cover the interview protocol topics and questions.

My final introductory interview was with Keith Knowles, executive director of the NFCC. Keith formerly worked as executive director of the Safety Harbor NFC. When the opportunity presented itself for him to run the newly forming NFCC office, he

expressed an interest; he started his position as executive director of the NFCC in September 2002. Keith was my third NFCC interview, after Lounell and one other NFC executive director. By the time I interviewed Keith, I needed some clarification on the background and timeline, and my time with Keith was important for that reason. I conducted the same type of interview with him as I did for all the NFCC board members but added some other questions that were relevant to his position.

When there were occasions for the NFCC to work closely with the JWB on any planning issues or organizational changes, Lounell and Keith were the two NFCC members who represented the organization. They, therefore, had the greatest breadth of knowledge about the process being studied. In addition, while it was helpful to get multiple interpretations of the background of the NFCC and JWB, this became unnecessary to ask every participant in detail, because most of the background was gleaned from my introductory interviews.

With these interview categories defined and key participants introduced, what follows is clarification about my process for data analysis.

Data Analysis Process

I ended up with 26 audiotapes that contained a maximum of 90-minutes of audio recording. These tapes comprised 18 individual interviews and two group sessions that took place during an 8-month period. Most interviews filled the 90-minutes worth of tape; six interviews ran over to second tape. Field notes were written in three 70-sheet steno pads where I documented my observations from various meetings that took place over 1½ years. Field notes were also written on meeting documents that were referenced during group discussions. The interactive nature of action research led me to explore

different levels of analysis at different times throughout the research process. For easier reference, I will identify these as phases 1 through 5:

- phase 1: refining the interviews;
- phase 2: practitioner analysis;
- phase 3: selective full transcription and coding;
- phase 4: supplemental tape review and transcription; and
- phase 5: analysis of critical reflection sessions.

Some of the interview tapes were reviewed in multiple phases. For the most part, tapes were listened to two to three times; sometimes painstakingly and methodically, as during full transcription, and sometimes in a relaxed manner, such as during long drives.

Phase 1 of my data analysis was also part of my research process, whereby I listened to my early interview tapes to ensure that the types of questions being asked were being comfortably received and responded to by participants and that the answers provided were useful for future data analysis or background. This also allowed me to consider any new issues that might need to be explored further in future interviews. This was completed early in my research process, and it involved listening to the audio tapes from my introductory and context-setting interviews. While no transcription or analysis was done at this time, this early review of key interviews helped with the preliminary identification of issues that might warrant additional probing during the forthcoming interviews.

Phase 2 involved steps of data analysis that were more cursory and practically motivated than the following phases of analysis necessary for this dissertation. The JWB had requested me to make a preliminary report their board of directors. Because the ASE

coalition was a new programmatic model that was under the microscope of the JWB board, participants were eager to gather preliminary findings to assist in evaluating the process of developing the ASE coalition for possible replication in the coming year. Due to the short turnaround time to prepare a report for this presentation, it was necessary for me to do an abridged analysis to develop preliminary research findings that would be presented to the JWB board of directors, as well as NFCC members.⁷ My analysis in this phase could be described as being done from a practitioner perspective to provide a quick overview of key issues discerned from the research. This analysis involved listening to all interview tapes in a manner that allowed to me to scan for common responses to the central interview questions. To assist in this process, I prepared a tabular worksheet that corresponded to the list of interview questions from the research protocol. As I listened to the interview tapes, I typed short responses into the table to identify those that may have represented consensus among members, general consistency among members, or disparity among members. The main purpose of this process was to present data in consolidated format that members could quickly review and reference during discussion, such as when the NFCC board of directors reviewed this information and provided feedback as part of a critical reflection session. A representation of this consolidated information table and instructions is included in Table E1 (in Appendix E). This critical reflection process will be described more thoroughly in the following chapter. Although simplistic, this analysis provided an excellent birds-eye view of all the data, which made the next phase of my data analysis easier and more focused.

⁷ This is an example of what can happen in AR: because the researcher doesn't "own" the research process, the researcher may be required to do some things that are unusual for academic research. This is a natural part of the give-and-take of the cogenerative process.

Phase 3 began the more detailed and formal stage of my data analysis that involved full transcription of audio tapes from the four introductory and context-setting interviews and coding of these transcripts and my field notes. My normal process of coding involved conducting a systematic review of my raw transcription and field notes and highlighting or making notes in the margins to identify responses and examples that are interesting, redundant or surprising. This included the identification of dilemmas, the use of various rhetorical devices, and the description of practices and examples. This began my process of connecting and organizing key interview data to help identify communication concepts that were prominent during the process being studied. Due to time constraints, this full transcription and coding process took place after the NFCC critical reflection sessions. By this time, some preliminary themes had started to emerge, such as *resistance*, *loss of autonomy*, *leadership*, and *enhanced capacity*. The themes identified are listed and explained in chapter 7. Themes identified in the previous phase of analysis became the initial themes used when coding the transcribed interviews and field notes, and additional themes were added as they were identified.

Phase 4 was an extension of the previous phase that involved listening, once again, to all of the interview tapes and extracting and transcribing portions that supported or contradicted the data already drawn from the interviews, or that identified new communication concepts that seemed worth exploring. These interview tapes included the NFCC board member interviews and JWB staff interviews.

The final phase of analysis (phase 5) overlapped with my process of developing research findings. As with the development of the initial research questions and the development of the research protocol, finalizing the research data and findings was done

jointly with the research participants. As the principal researcher, this involved conducting preliminary analysis of the data (as described in phase 2) for presentation to the research participants to solicit their feedback, seek their assistance in interpreting meaning of identified themes, and identify any unanswered questions. The critical reflection sessions, however, became another element of new data that also needed to be analyzed for my final research outcomes. This phase of analysis involved transcribing the audio tapes from critical reflection process sessions and conducting a similar coding and categorizing process as described in phase 4.

Having described these phases of data analysis, what follows is a description of the NFCC integration process from conception through execution. Data will be woven throughout this description, and this data will be categorized into themes when reviewing the research findings in chapter 7.

The Story of Developing the NFCC

Following is the NFCC and JWB story of developing the ASE. While I attempt to share experiences from the voices of the research participants, it is important to note that there will be different points of view, in particular from the perspectives of NFCC members versus JWB staff. Much like the parable of the blind men describing the elephant, the individual perspectives of the research participants may have led them to describe a tusk, tail, trunk or leg. Even when all members were in agreement that they were describing the same “elephant,” their take on the matter varied slightly at times, while at other times, there was agreement about what this animal looks and feels like.

Background of the NFCC

As introduced in the previous chapter, the NFCC was first created to serve as an informal networking group for the NFCs. Lounell described the main purpose of the group as “the comfort of knowing that together they were all JWB funded. Sometimes they didn’t understand the funding, so coming together...they could share their experiences and commiserate a little bit about the funder.” Keith, who was an NFC director at the time, had a different perspective about what the purpose of the NFCC was: “I have no idea. We sat around and talked about things, but no one would share information.” He recalls a number of occasions, when he would say, “I need this and that and the other thing,” and his requests were met with silence. “So I have no idea what it did.”

Paul described it as “being more like a club. It was just a way they came together, once in a while, and talked about what was going on in the centers and discussed issues they had.” The coalition started to become more formalized with the help of a capacity building grant from the Allegheny Franciscan Foundation. Allegheny wanted to help them develop one entity that could represent all the NFCs, to help them develop their mission statement and to try to bring some cohesion to the group. “But they were so different,” said Paul. “The center in Tarpon Springs was totally different from a center in St. Petersburg; so, to bring them all under one coalition was a real effort.”

Shift in Funding Strategy

Around the same time, the NFCs started to draw some negative attention from the JWB board of directors. There were two NFCs that experienced administrative problems and had some conflict with JWB staff and board members. These two centers closed, in

addition to one other NFC that was ineffectual when its “neighborhood” was dispersed due to the closing of a large housing authority. There also were some changes among the JWB board membership, bringing on new members who were not familiar with the NFC concept.

Perceptions of the JWB board of directors are interesting to note. Lounell described the board shift in this way: “It went from a bunch of retired social workers to the big boys. The *Saylor*s of Raymond James [*referring to the JWB board president*] and the good Republicans and folks like that.” The way the board perceived things also changed. Up until that time, explained Paul, “the NFCs had kind of a free ride”:

They had been developed by JWB for the community, so they were pretty much in place and nobody questioned their funding. And when those two or three started failing, it brought them to the forefront, and there were a lot of questions.

“There was a lot of negative discussion going on at the [JWB] board about NFCs,” explained Paul, “and they were basing it on history, not current conditions,” referring to the centers that closed or were defunded. “So, that really tainted their view of the NFCs.”

Several NFCC members regularly attended JWB board meetings to keep tabs on what was going on. “There was, and I think continues to be, some concern by certain board members about the NFCs,” said Keith. “Some board members think it’s a waste of time, money, effort...I think principally because they don’t understand what we do. So, they were anxious to see the money that was being spent on us go to other programs.”

“And we were beginning to feel like, uh-oh,” said Lounell, “the train’s coming down the path going 190 mph, and the light we see is NOT the end of the tunnel; it is the train that is coming at us.”

Those headlights got closer in March 2003, when the JWB board undertook a comprehensive strategic planning session to update their 1996 strategic plan. They focused on five goals, the biggest being “increased efficiency,” as stated below:

Goal #3: Increase the efficiency of JWB’s work by actions such as:

- a. program consolidation;
- b. elimination of contracts where economies of scale are not achieved;
- c. continued elimination of poor performing programs;
- d. internal restructuring to support strategic direction;
- e. examination of new business models such as Lead Agencies; Administrative

Service Organizations or other means (Juvenile Welfare, 2003, p. 7).

They wanted to look at new organizational models, and they wanted to look at funding large organizations rather than so many small ones, explained Paul. One of the decisions made by the board during this process was to not fund any contracts under \$250,000 (which later shifted to \$500,000). Lounell explained what she perceived the decision to be based on, as it pertains to the size of program budgets:

At the time, they were saying \$250,000 and above was considered an okay amount to have, and then they went to half a million dollars. I don’t know how they went to that, but they did...And it wasn’t really going to be based on how well they [the agencies] did or not, but that they were small agencies. They were getting out of the business of funding small agencies.

Paul also provided an explanation: “The reason for that was they felt like the impact would be greater for the community...They thought it would also be more efficient to do it that way.” Paul pointed out that there are a lot of expectations from the JWB board “about making sure we get every tax dollar back to the community.”

NFCC members saw it differently. To them, not wanting to fund small agencies didn’t make sense. It wasn’t a fair barometer of successful or efficient operation. NFCC members pointed out that “some of the big boys get in trouble fiscally,” so that wasn’t a valid reason. The expressed sentiment was, “What do you mean, I’m small, and I don’t have money to sustain myself?” As Lounell and other NFCC members pointed out, they were operating just fine on their own. Regardless, the JWB board had made their decision, and plans moved forward.

JWB staff were responsible for carrying out this JWB board directive, but they also were committed to protecting the NFCs. Jim described what he was thinking at the time:

I know I felt very strongly from the get-go that we needed some sort of a collaborative arrangement if the whole network was going to survive. I pushed that very hard—the cooperative. A lot of people started talking about: “How do we do this? What are the problems? What are the issues? What are we trying to form?”

JWB staff members were committed to keeping the NFCs intact, because they knew the value of what they did. The bottom line was, as explained by Jim, “If the board doesn’t like little agencies, then we gotta make these guys a big agency.” JWB staff had to work quickly to develop proposals to bring back to the JWB board. Paul was asked by

JWB management what he thought would be the best way to combine the NFC contracts. Paul said the NFCs would need a separate board in order to allow them to maintain their independence, and they would need staff to support the process. They also would need time. Paul was asked to take charge of the project, and he and other staff started looking for alternative models for integrating agencies and consolidating contracts.

I was asked to take over this project—pulling together 11 totally different NFCs to put them under one umbrella and not spend any more money; finding a way to do it and finding a way to get them to agree to it and govern it. And I said, “Well you know, while I’m at it, I can also do some miracles.” But you know, I’m one of those people, I just love challenge.

The challenge was a huge one. Paul foresaw the impact this would have on the members involved. He describes his thoughts when he first started work on the project:

First, it was like, I only have a few months to do this, and I said, “I can’t do it. It’s just too monumental to do,” because there’s too many things to get done. And first of all, every one of these organizations is going to go through the process like a person dying. They’re going to go through denial, regret and all that. So, we’ve got to give them breathing time, first of all, and then we’re going to have to give them time to regroup. After that, I can say, “Okay, so here’s what we’re going to do.” Then they have to deal with those issues.

In April 2003, only a month after their strategic planning retreat, the JWB board approved consolidating the 11 NFCs into a single contract. Jim asked the JWB board for extra time and funding to support the process. This concept the JWB board understood. According to Jim, the board president spoke up and said, “Well, when you start up a new

business, it takes some capital.” The board agreed to the requests but with some conditions, explained Paul: “We’re going to expect some things from you. One of the things we’re going to expect is a better functioning body; a body that can get more done than they can individually.” They also expected savings—spending less to do the same work or better.

Paul was very open with his supervisors about the role he planned to play with the NFCC. “I told them in a meeting, ‘You know, I won’t lie to anybody for money. I won’t do it. I won’t change the color of this picture.’” Paul was fully supported by his supervisors. Jim’s response was, “That’s wonderful. You tell them that, exactly like you told me.” That support was important to Paul, in addition to the lessons he learned working with Jim:

I just love working with Jim. He tells you exactly what he wants, and he puts trust in you to do it, and he’ll stay that way unless you prove that you can’t be trusted. And he supported me throughout that entire time.

Jim was committed to the NFCs, the executive directors and to the newly forming ASE. Jim told Paul, “They are your number one priority, over anything else that anyone gives you.” That helped Paul balance his workload and stress. His other direct supervisor said the same thing. Knowing the NFCC could be his number one priority always allowed Paul put to the organization and its members first.

NFCC’s Response and New Role

Even though “the writing was on the wall,” as some NFCC members put it, and “they could see the train coming,” there was disbelief about the imminent threat until they heard it from the horse’s mouth—the *horse* being Jim Mills. Paul and JWB staff

knew the message would be difficult for NFCC members to receive, so Paul tried to prepare them in advance. He went out to individual NFCs to talk to directors to let them know this was coming, and that Jim was going to talk with them to explain what they had to do. JWB staff cared about the NFCC members and about what needed to be done. They wanted to be sensitive to their feelings, yet they had to convey a clear message. “We sort of laid it on the line,” said Jim.

Jim told NFCC members, “This wasn’t what the staff decided; it’s what the board decided.” Jim explained that as agency directors, themselves, the NFCC members all understood the challenge of working with a board. “And I think the [JWB board is] willing to give you a chance to put something together. Now it’s up to you to do it.”

Paul gave examples of specific NFCC members who said, “No, I won’t play.” Jim knew exactly who would say that, because he knew the members. “He knew all about these centers. He knew all their old problems, all their new problems. He knew the personalities.” Paul described the meeting between the JWB and the NFCC where the message was delivered:

Jim got in there and sensed in the room that [the message] was going to be interpreted as some kind of directive from JWB, to take it or leave it. He didn’t want that, because that’s not how we work. And thank goodness, he was sensing correctly.

Paul had prepared well for the meeting. From his early research, he had drafted up some examples of new organizational models that he planned to share with the NFCC board:

I had it all on paper and everything, and I had it there for Jim. He decided not to use it, which was a wise decision. That's why I say he's a wise person. He said [to NFCC members], "We're going to work with you to let you develop the model." And I thought, whew! Boy! And I slid those [documents] right off the table.

NFCC members could see the diagrams and materials Paul had in front of him, and they began asking, "Is there a handout? Is there a handout?" After taking his lead from Jim, Paul quickly responded, "No, there's no handout." Paul further described the discussion and JWB's approach:

Jim tried to give them as much autonomy as he could in this process, which was helpful—[laughing] or a hindrance at that the same time—because giving them autonomy allowed them to still try to work independently.

Regardless of efforts to deliver the message benevolently, it was still taken as a threat by NFCC members. Keith described his take on the message:

Jim called us into a meeting. He said, "Okay, this is what we're going to do, and if we don't do it, then some of you sitting around this table will no longer be in existence."

All NFCC members initially took the message as a take-it-or-leave-it directive from JWB. As Lounell put it, "The message was to get on board or get run over. That's basically what the message was." As will be explained in forthcoming sections, sentiments toward the JWB directive bordered on hostile, and resistance to the recommended model was great. But there was no time for resistance. The NFCC had to move quickly to agree to accept the JWB's proposal to go under the single contract. The NFCC board already had a "transition team" committee in place, as part of their capacity

building grant with the Allegany Franciscan Foundation. The single JWB contract and the new ASE model became the new sole focus of the transition team. At their first meeting devoted to this process, their primary focus was simply coming to agreement on the key issues before them—in a sense, coming to an agreement about what the elephant looked like—verifying that they all understood the JWB board directive, that they all received and understood related correspondence from the JWB, and that they all understood JWB’s stated purpose for the ASE, which was to reduce costs for both the JWB and the NFC’s. They also agreed that it was to the benefit of the NFCC to control the ASE (NFCC, May 2003).

Because of the weight and potential impact of the decision being made, the NFCC board members were committed to consensus. They also acknowledged that consensus would not be possible in this situation, due to the disparate impact of the model on individual NFCs and the divisiveness being caused by the situation. They elected to develop a decision-making process that would allow them to move forward while still recognizing the opposition of members. The group developed their own “consensus process,” which Lounell called *The Rules of the Game* (NFCC, May 2003). *The rules of the game* were agreed to as follows:

Each decision or agreement will be brought to a group vote requiring the agreement of all members. A consensus vote will be indicated as follows:

- Holding up one finger (the index!) – I AGREE.
- Holding up two fingers (your choice) – I DISAGREE, BUT WILL SUPPORT THE GROUP DECISION.

- Holding up three fingers – I DISAGREE AND WILL NOT SUPPORT THE GROUP DECISION. (If members [*sic*] take this position, they must also present a specific alternative for group discussion and action. If such an alternative is not presented, then the majority opinion will prevail. A written dissenting opinion may be submitted along with the Team’s recommendation.)

(p. 1)

The transitional team record (NFCC, May 2003) further notes the following:

“Once consensus has been reached by the transition team, an issue is resolved and will not be revisited. The resolved issue and/or the dissenting opinion will be presented at the next full NFCC board meeting for discussion and approval” (p. 1). With this decision-making process clearly delineated, the transition team members were ready to begin the work of determining their own fate and beginning the planning process. They had a decision to make, said Lounell:

Do we want to play by JWB’s rules? If we didn’t, then we need to think about how we are going to fund what we do. And unless we can find a millionaire or some kind of way to fund what we do and tell JWB to take a flying leap into the middle of next week, then we have to make a decision about how we were going to do this.

Lounell pointed out that “you don’t find many funders out there that will fund staff and buildings.” Another concern shared by members was that when JWB started their strategic plan, some of the smaller centers had already been written off and likely wouldn’t survive without this integration.

Paul's role in the decision-making process often involved reminding members of the impending reality they faced with the JWB board. He was straightforward and honest with them, while always trying to avoid the impression that anything was being "shoved down their throats." He would talk to the group as if he were one of them:

Look, you know guys, we're kind of in a problem here. We're in a situation. If we don't pull this off within the 14 months—if we get through the end of the 14 months and nothing's happened—then they [the JWB board] are going to start saying, "Okay, they're not willing to work together. We're going to look at them individually and figure out which one's we need and which one's we don't."

The group dialogued about it. "There are some very practical people on our board," said Lounell. "The bottom line was we want to do what we're doing. So we figured out a way to get it done... We chose to make it work."

"We decided that it was inevitable," said Keith. "There was nothing we could do about the single contract. That was a done deal." The question for the group then became determining whether they wanted the coalition to fill that role or "to throw ourselves at the mercy of fate," said Keith. The NFCC board chose to let the coalition fill that role, "because at least at that point, they would have some control over their destiny."

Despite the unwelcome pressure from the JWB and their resentment of the directive, NFCC members knew that JWB staff were trying to do what they could to save the NFCs while adhering to the JWB board's directive. As Lounell explained, "I think they did not want to see us go down the tubes. I think it would have been a public relations disaster, because we were functioning." *Functioning*, meaning that most of the

NFCs were being run quite well. The perception of the public relations concern was also touched on by Keith:

Everyone involved in this is interested in it succeeding. It's very important that it succeed. From the JWB's standpoint, it's very important that it succeed for a number of reasons; certainly, politics is one. The other is that the NFCs fill a significant need in this community, and without them, those needs would go unfilled, and that would create enumerable problems at the neighborhood level.

All members of the NFCC agreed that money is always a primary concern in their organizations. Because of this, funding concerns were at the forefront of their organizational planning and action. "When you have one funder, who is your major funder, whether or not you are on the good side of that funder or not so good side of that funder can make a difference in your life," said Lounell. She used to tell the other NFCC members and other agency directors, "You are either on the poo-poo list or not on the poo-poo list. It depends."

Lounell previously worked as a funder with the state of Florida, and she understood the pressures all funders face: "You have to recognize that funders have their rules they have to follow, too. So sometimes when it doesn't feel too good, it is not necessarily that they are trying to be mean and nasty to you, but they have to play by their rules, too."

Paul understood the challenges he faced working with NFCC members. "There was still some skepticism; some feelings of not trusting," said Paul. He explained that some of the members had been treated poorly in the past, "not by JWB but by other community organizations, so, they were not real trusting of large organizations like JWB.

They thought we were probably out for something other than what we were saying we were out for.”

Summary

This chapter began with an overview of my data analysis process, including the first step of organizing data into the story of developing the ASE. Shared here has been the starting point of that story, including the background of the NFCC, an overview of the membership and the philosophical shifts among the JWB board of directors that led to impending changes for the NFCC, and the NFCC’s effort to face up to the challenge of developing the ASE with a little help from their JWB liaison. The next chapter will delve more deeply into their process of implementing the ASE, including developing needed business systems and dealing with and responding to members’ continued resistance.

CHAPTER 6

EXPLORATION OF THE INTEGRATION PROCESS – PART 2

Introduction

This chapter continues my presentation of research data by sharing the experiences of the administrative service entity (ASE) integration process through the voices of the research participants. This chapter further explores the process of implementing the ASE, including developing needed business systems and responding to members' continued resistance. Toward the end of the chapter, members reflect on the lessons they've learned that they want to share with others facing similar challenges.

Developing the ASE

The Neighborhood Family Center Coalition (NFCC) transition team and board of directors began working on establishing the ASE in May, 2003. The task ahead of them was enormous. They had to consider the business aspects of developing the ASE, and they had to deal with continued resistance from members throughout the process. They needed a coordinated business system and a cohesive team to make it come together and to keep it going. They had to deal with challenges within both the business and people systems. As their work progressed, they also achieved successes in both systems. For clarity, these two systems—business and people—will first be described separately, starting with the business systems. After exploring challenges and accomplishments in both systems, I will share some of their examples of how these systems came together to

build the organization's capacity and to identify some lessons they wanted to share with others.

Business Systems

NFCC members worked closely with Juvenile Welfare Board (JWB) staff to develop the new ASE model. This involved strengthening their organizational structure, determining how to manage and administer the single contract and interfacing with JWB, exploring options for administrative efficiencies for members, resolving how to pay for the new model, and addressing other issues related to group process. From the perspective of JWB staff, most important was allowing NFCC members to develop the ASE structure *themselves*. As another example of describing the elephant, however, perceptions of this concept of autonomy varied.

As previously referenced, JWB researched collaborative organizational models before they approached the NFCC, but they put those aside to allow the NFCC to develop their own model. There was still the feeling by NFCC members that, because JWB staff had a model in mind, the NFCC had to work toward that: "So, we had to...figure out what it is they [JWB] thought was going to be created, and then begin to share things back and forth."

There were some elements of the model that JWB staff felt were important to encourage. They wanted to ensure that all members had an equal level of authority, regardless of their agency size. They also felt it was important to allow a level of control and autonomy for the members. "We didn't push for the wholly-owned operation," said Jim. He explained that it was important and helpful to this process that the member agencies all remained autonomous: "that everybody kept their board; everybody kept

their corporation.” That really helped, said Jim. “They could look at that, and they could hang on to that: ‘It’s still my board; it’s still my corporation; I can still do these other things.’ I think that was very helpful in the process.” Overall, they wanted NFCC members to be in control of their own destiny. As Paul explained:

I think the biggest thing we did was to tell them that they’re still the boss. They still run their programs the way they’ve always run them. They can collaborate on contracts; they can collaborate for funding; they can collaborate for all kinds of money-saving deals; or they cannot. We left it completely open.

Developing an organizational model that met the contracting and administrative needs while still fostering a level of autonomy for all members was a challenge, and it required all involved participants to think outside the box. The organizational model would not be easy to enact, and there were many problems to overcome.

Organizational Structure

Before the integration model, JWB communicated and contracted directly with the individual neighborhood family centers (NFCs). With the integration model, there would be a new “reporting” level between the NFCs and the JWB—the new level being the NFCC. This was a problem for the members, explained Paul.

The fact that we were going to fund Keith and the coalition, and he, in turn, would fund the application [for the individual NFCs], that was a real problem, because that was like a step down for some of the members. It’s like saying to them, “We’re defunding you.” They lost face over it, a little bit. They saw us funding Keith and this big machine, and that they were subservient to Keith.

Lounell summarized the concern: “It’s one thing to have a funder control your money, but then to have another layer in between there...What does that mean?” There also were some issues related to who’s really in charge of the contract, the funding, the reports, the monitoring, and other requirements. “They really hadn’t figured that out,” said Lounell. “We sort of wrote the book as we went along.”

The concept JWB had in mind was controversial, as explained by Paul to the members:

The way we’re going to do it is going to be a little odd to some people, but the way we’re going to do it is going to keep you in control of your own destinies. The organization that will say “yes or no,” will be directors of each one of the agencies on this board [all the NFCs]. Each organization has one vote, and you all will make your own decisions. Keith will work for you.

Paul further explained the new dynamic that would exist between the board and the NFCC executive director: “He is responsible to them. There’s no kowtowing to him for help, or begging for help or anything. They are his boss.” Without a doubt, this put great pressure on Keith, but this was something for which he had ongoing support from Lounell and Paul.

This model also raised issues of conflict of interest. Lounell explained some of the complexities involved in this process:

They [JWB] keep saying to us, they’re going to monitor the coalition, and that the coalition will have to monitor the NFCs. And I keep saying to them, “But that’s incestuous, because I’m monitoring myself.” If the coalition is responsible for saying that I get an A+, and I am the coalition...

She ended that statement by shrugging her shoulders and shaking her head. The concern about conflict of interest was discussed by the NFCC transition team and the board of directors, as explained in their meeting records (NFCC, Dec. 2003):

It was decided that while there may be a conflict of interest between the activities of NFCC board members and their responsibilities as Center Directors, that conflict was very difficult to resolve and therefore was acceptable. It was agreed that a policy would be created stating that in the event that an NFCC board member felt they were in conflict, they would declare that conflict and it would be discussed by the board members. (p. 1)

Ultimately, members had some control, and the opportunity they were being given was unique. As Lounell said:

We got an opportunity to build this thing that WE wanted to build. There isn't anybody else who can be in charge of the executive director who is in charge of their money. We are the board, so we can build it to meet our needs. That is how we began to do that.

Finding just the right mix of encouraging autonomy and providing help and structure was difficult for JWB staff. As Lounell explained: "They tried real hard not to get in the way. It was in that sense, they tried real hard not to drive the train, not to get in the way, not anything. And so, it worked."

Another issue the NFCC board felt necessary to address was to define some of the terms that were being thrown around when talking about the new ASE model. At one meeting (Dec. 2003) they discussed definitions of terms such as *autonomy*, *governance* and *policy* as they related to NFCC activities. They felt it especially necessary, as they

moved forward, to develop a definition of *autonomy* that was prepared and presented for approval at the following NFCC board meeting:

Autonomy: Each NFC is an independent entity and is organized and incorporated as such. As a 501(c)(3) corporation, each NFC has its own board of directors that is responsible for all the activities that accrue to a non-profit board. Each NFC has autonomy regarding programs, staffing, and operations. A NFC may select certain financial activities that can be conducted by the Coalition for a fee. (NFCC Definitions, 2004, p. 1)

One issue alluded to in this definition is efficiencies, which are discussed in a later section. One hope JWB had for the ASE was that members would purchase administrative services through the NFCC, but this was not welcomed by members. This issue will also be addressed.

Single Contract and Changing Norms

Because everyone was committed to making this work, JWB staff went out of their way to be flexible and to alter their internal procedures and practices for contract management. To make this process work, JWB had to be flexible and accommodating like never before, and JWB staff had to go to bat for the NFCC. “The JWB [staff] has been an integral part of this process,” said Keith, “and an important part; not just because of the [funding], but because what they’ve brought to the process.” He referenced the role of Paul as a liaison and advocate. Because the NFCC was a new structure and different than anything else the JWB ever dealt with, they had to be accommodating to change the rules and try new practices. As Keith explained:

I think the JWB [staff] has been very cooperative throughout the process. Their role has been to advise and to support. They've been very supportive, and they've been very accommodating. They've changed policies and procedures that were literally cast in concrete to accommodate the differences with the coalition.

"When I use the word accommodating, I was understating it," Keith continued.

"They've been very, very interested in working with us, and they have made some changes that, frankly, I would not have anticipated them being willing to make." The JWB knew they were charting new territory. Keith explained that one reason for their willingness to change policies and practices was because they hoped this would become a model they could apply to other similar situations. "The work we're doing now and the system modifications that they're making, in all likelihood, will be applied to others."

Keith considers himself "a JWB believer." He acknowledges that there were times when he obviously was frustrated by the JWB. "I think anybody who isn't is crazy. But I think that they have done an exceptional job in working with this entity and this process. An exceptional job!"

One of the strategies JWB put in place was to operate dual systems for all contracting functions for 6 months, April through September 2004, before the NFCC had to be successfully operating on their own come October 1. The NFCC and the JWB implemented and tested new financial policies and procedures, programmatic data reporting, and other contract practices for a 6-month test phase. This proved in retrospect to be a critical strategy, explained Paul.

There were questions that came up that you didn't think about when you're building this thing, because sometimes you can't think of every possibility. Thank

goodness we had that 6-month testing period for every possible thing that could have gone wrong. Some of those things we did have to go back and renegotiate.

As Keith explained: “Paul Lackey, individually, has done a significant job in negotiating the needs that we have with the JWB and helping them to understand the accommodations that they’re making.” NFCC members understood that it became Paul’s mission to get the coalition off the ground and operating smoothly. Paul admits that some other projects suffered. “There was a time there, probably 6 months, that I [worked on] something EVERY DAY: insurance, systems, computers, policies...” During a vital 6-month period, he estimated spending 25 hours a week on the NFCC ASE project.

“October 1 they had to fly all on their own,” said Jim. JWB staff members were holding their breath, said Paul. Everyone wanted and needed this to go well. “I think that I had a cardiac getting their first reimbursement in,” said Jim. “Would it be right? Would it go through?”

The test phase proved successful. By October 1, when the NFCC was scheduled to be fully operational and independent, “It took over like that [snap!],” Paul said. “Everything went perfectly. It was incredible. I mean nobody even noticed that it happened; it was so smooth. I mean, it was scary; it really was.”

When October 1 came, the previously perceived threats diminished, said Keith. The members saw “that this was not going to destroy us; that it wasn’t going to interfere with their operations; that there really was very little change, subtle changes only, in how the funds were flowing.”

Efficiencies and Costs

In addition to managing all components of the contract, there also was the hope that the NFCC could serve as a true ASE to share and reduce administrative costs. One idea was that smaller centers would be able to inexpensively purchase various administrative services from the NFCC such as bookkeeping, human resources work, data reporting, and the like. Some centers only had four staff members, so this type of arrangement could be extremely beneficial to them. This issue was taken into account in the early planning of the ASE model, explained Jim:

Community groups tend to be very, very mission driven...If one of the ongoing problems is trying to do programs and trying to manage—and most of the problems come out in the management side—well, let's figure out a way to ease up the management demands and let folks concentrate on what they really love, which is programs.

Paul perceived this type of model as a great benefit for the small agencies, and he talked about how some of the members started to get excited about it:

As the months went by, some of them were saying, “You know this is great. I’m getting to farm out all of my bookkeeping, my month-to-month, and I get a statement, and I don’t have to write any checks; all I have to do is run my programs. This is wonderful.”

Jim described it similarly: “We had people that wanted to turn it over the second meeting.” He explained that members would say, “We don’t want that piece of it.” At the time of the interviews, most members continued to do their own administrative work, but Paul foreshadowed what he thought would happen:

They've [the NFCs] let go of more than I ever thought they would let go of, and I think as time goes by, they'll let go of all of it. Because how could you not want that deal; I mean, not to have to deal with administrative problems. It would be one of the greatest things an administrator could ever get, just to get to run their programs and never have to worry about staying in your budget.

Paul explained that as members started to explore these services and talk about the options at meetings, the sentiment eventually caught on among the smaller centers. They would say to Paul: "We can't wait for this, because it's going to save us so much money." As those kinds of conversations continued to occur at meetings, "all of a sudden," Paul said, "things got a little better."

Mentioned at the beginning of the previous chapter was the parable of the blind men describing the elephant—this was another example of such disparity. One NFCC member said, "I think the [JWB] board thought it was going to save money, but it doesn't. Not on our side of the fence, it doesn't save any money." NFCC members felt like they were promised less paperwork and less administrative work, but that didn't happen and there were no cost savings. They perceived that the only efficiencies were going to be for JWB. "It reduced the number of contracts they have to manage by a great deal, and they're proud of that."

"The Tax."

There was one aspect of the business system that especially hit some nerves, which was the requirement for members to pay for this new model, which they didn't want in the first place, and to decide on a process for dividing up the costs. The JWB board only agreed to provide 14 months of funding, after which time, the NFCC had to

become self-sufficient. “JWB wasn’t going to give us any more money,” explained Keith. NFCC members had talked many times before about finding money to pay for staff to help them do the things THEY wanted to do, but they never before thought about looking at themselves as the source of that funding. Lounell said, “I don’t think they [NFCC members] would have ever stepped up to the plate and said, ‘I’ll give 2% of my budget to do this.’” (Two percent being the final financial commitment “agreed upon” by members.)

This became one of the most verbalized points of contention among members about the integration process. Members “went crazy!” Some of them didn’t want any JWB money involved in funding their coalition. Members referred to giving up their funding to JWB as “having to give them blood.” Some members threatened to walk out or leave. “It really got hairy,” said Lounell, “but, hey, 2% is 2%.” Many variations of how to fund the coalition were discussed. After many arguments and debates about the issue, it was decided to take a portion of everyone’s JWB funding to pay for the office and staffing of the NFCC. The final figure was 2% for every member, regardless of the size of the member agency, their level of funding, or their level of anticipated dependence on the new NFCC.

“We settled on 2%, and that’s what it was,” said Lounell. “It’s a way of funding the coalition, and that’s basically how we come up with that set amount of money. So, it is JWB’s money, but it’s JWB’s money we gave up.” Even after the decisions had been made, however, “members would come back to the next meeting and some of the arguments would start over again.”

“You mean, was there ONE TIME when that happened?!” Keith said, laughing in response to my question about opposition and conflict among members. “Were there an ENDLESS number of times when that happened?! An UNCOUNTABLE number of times?! Yes, there were uncountable times.” At its worst, “every board meeting was an exercise in contention.”

One way they moved past this was because of sentiments expressed by their board president, Lounell—as described by Paul:

Lounell, bless her heart, the saint she is, said “I’m paying more than anybody in this room, and I agree with this, and I think this is the way we should go. I’m willing to pay my 2%, and it’s much greater than anybody else.”

“That really diffused a lot of things,” explained Paul. He shared more of Lounell’s words to her colleagues that helped turn the tide:

I would survive, probably, over everyone [“And she would have.”], but I choose to be part of this group. I choose to save everyone, not just two or three of you. I choose to save everyone that’s willing to be saved.

“Wow!” said Paul. “You know, how do you fight that?”

Despite her strong sentiments, Lounell and most of the members felt that the 2% was not doing anything for them. “It is my contribution to running the coalition and to that office. That’s all,” said one member. “But it doesn’t bring me anything in that sense.”

NFCC members soon began to call the 2% share *The Tax*, which seemed to provide an opportunity for joking and mocking JWB. “They got to calling it *the tax*,” said Paul, “...lovingly.” When Paul was at meetings where members started bantering about

the tax, he said, “Instead of getting upset with them being silly, I just started laughing, and I’d call it *the tax*, too. And, we kind of got through that period of time.”

When push came to shove, members had to find ways to contribute their 2%. JWB did some things to help ease the 2% tax burden, explained Paul. JWB was able to give the NFCs a cost of living increase that was about the same as the 2% tax. Paul explained the 2% increase and JWB’s perspective:

It’s the 2% they normally get for their employee raises. So, they had to give up their 2% to pay the tax. But then they started to realize that they were going to save more. So, they kind of started hushing up about it.

As previously mentioned, however, most members didn’t see any immediate cost savings, nor any in their near future.

Decision-Making Practices

In addition to developing new ways of talking about the shifts and changes occurring around them, members also had to develop new ways of making decisions. One area where problems resulted was within the NFCC board’s committee procedures, especially with the integration transition team. Like most boards of directors, the NFCC board had a number of committees, such as finance, strategic planning and evaluation. Because the board was small, each committee comprised only three to four board members. In some instances, outside volunteers would be asked to serve on committees or to provide counsel, as was the case with transition team committee, which Paul usually sat in on. As previously explained, an ad-hoc committee called the “Transition Team” was formed to develop plans for integration. The transition team members, like all of the board committees, worked on the details of the integration plan and brought

recommendations to the full board for review and adoption. When these recommendations were made by the transition team to the full board, controversy erupted, because members felt they were being left out of key decisions.

“I think we kind of had a showdown meeting,” explained Paul. “We really had a realization meeting for everyone—of where we’re at, and what we’re doing.” As it pertained to receiving committee recommendations, a couple NFCC members said, “All we want is to be part of the process.” It was then that Paul realized something very basic and important about working with NFCC members:

It was like, golly and oh my God! Sometimes you think that you’re helping somebody by doing something for them. And to them, you’re doing something without them. And we didn’t even think... We thought we were trying to be helpful.

For the time being, the board changed its process to have more discussions at the board level. The board developed a new policy and procedure (NFCC, Jan. 2004) for how this would be handled:

It was decided that all materials would be sent to each director, rather than the Transition Team only, so that everyone is included in the process and can participate. It was also decided that directors would be asked to respond to materials submitted for review and comment no later than 10 days prior to the next board meeting. (p. 1)

Once members got included in the discussions and started getting every piece of paper, the conflict subsided and things started moving more smoothly. As Paul described:

It was just amazing—the change that happened. I thought, my God, if I had known that 10 months ago, I would have handled this so differently. Because sometimes you just try to do so much for people, and you don't realize that you're taking away from them things they really want to do for themselves. It means something to them, as far as being a leader of the organization.

From that point on, said Paul, “They're being included...they're not being told what to do.” As a result, members more easily supported changes in policies and practices because they were involved in helping to create them.

Contractual Interdependence

Restoring their sense of autonomy and having a new level of authority brought new challenges to the NFCC board of directors. Under the new ASE model, all the agencies became responsible to and for one another. This included holding one another accountable, as well as holding each other up when they needed help. This feature of the new organizational model also provided opportunities for breakthroughs and further development of the coalition, its members, and their relationships.

Being interdependent means that if one of the centers gets in trouble somehow, the NFCC board of directors can make decisions about how to handle that. They become responsible for the level and forms of contract compliance that JWB staff and board previously had. This takes some of the pressure off the NFCC executive director, explained Paul. “That's why we created this board. Whoever is the chair will be on the agenda to discuss or say, ‘Somebody's out of compliance.’ This takes some of the stress off of Keith.”

Being in or out of compliance means that one of the centers is not meeting its contractual requirements. Due to the new interdependence model, it also means the entire coalition is out of compliance; thus, what happens to one center impacts all of them. If noncompliance issues go uncorrected it could lead to funding problems for the entire NFCC.

“What that would mean,” explained Paul, “they’d come to the table, just like they do up there [pointing up to JWB administration], and say, ‘Okay, tell us where you’re having problems.’” This was a significant change, because in the past, Paul explained, members had an attitude of, “This is my business. I’ll take care of that.” Now, said Paul, it’s more like, “If you can’t take care of your business, you’re going to have to open up and tell us what’s going on.” This has really led people now to open up more, explained Paul.

Keith further described the process and how the role of the NFCC board of directors will differ from JWB staff:

First of all, we can intervene in far more productive ways than the JWB could intervene. We can intervene constructively. The JWB often has to intervene punitively. That’s their role. I’m not saying that’s a bad thing; that’s just their role. You know, when you do something wrong, you get put on “corrective action.” That’s punitive. We intervene at the level where you don’t have to be on “corrective action.” We guide you through. We haven’t had the opportunity to do that yet, but the day will come.

Paul further described the role the NFCC would play:

It makes it actually easier for this group to go out and say, “Here’s the situation...and we’ll help you do whatever you need to do to get through...and get your act together. We’ll help you get your problems solved, but if they persist, it’s going to affect the overall funding of the organization.” Then they can bring the hammer down and say, “Look, you know, we’re going to insist on this, because it cannot affect the overall funding of this organization.”

In summary, Paul explained, “They can help each other when they start having problems. They can step in, help organizations that are failing and...bring them out of it before the [JWB] board has to get involved.” This level of interdependence required a strong level of trust among members that needed to be fostered throughout the process. They needed to have a cohesive team that was willing to act in everyone’s best interest. People systems, therefore, became equally important to the success of the integration effort.

People Systems

In addition to dealing with the business aspects of the new model being developed, participants also had to deal with the people involved: their fears, resistance, and conflict. Throughout the implementation of the model, they had to find ways to overcome the challenges that impacted their group cohesiveness and communication, and they had to find ways to strengthen to the team to become even stronger to deal with the new model put in place. Maintaining a strong and positive relationship between the entities, the NFCs, the NFCC and the JWB was also essential.

Resistance to the New Model

Issues of resistance from NFCC members toward the suggested integration manifested themselves in a number of different forms and for a number of different reasons. They resisted because they failed to see the logic in the new model. For practical reasons, they resisted because they were going to have to pay (*a tax*) for the new model they were being forced to create. Their outward manifestations of this resistance took the form of conflict through arguments, threats and delays. Members also resisted for more personal reasons, because they felt they were losing their independence or were being denigrated, as if they were incapable to running their own agencies.

As demonstrated in a previous section, NFCC members thought the new model didn't make sense, which became one reason for their resistance. "All it does," explains Lounell, "is take our money from JWB, send it to another entity, who then sends it to us." Members could not see a rational explanation for the creation of the ASE. "There were no cost savings. Maybe there will be some efficiencies later on, but at the time, there were no identifiable, quantitative reasons to make this entity," said Keith. From Keith's perspective and others, "There was no valid reason to create a single contract."

When the members formed the coalition, they never realized that one day their funding would be challenged. "There was a lot of resentment at first," said Lounell. Some members of the coalition had a fit. They "did not want to see JWB's hands in OUR coalition," was how one member described it. "You know, it was like, wait a minute! This is ours! JWB's got nothing to do with it." "I thought, they've got a lot of nerve telling me how I will do business," said Lounell; "and, what do you mean, I have to do it this way?"

“This was not something that anybody sought out or wished to have happen,” said Keith. Nor did anyone feel it was the right thing to do. “This was something that was forced upon people who had been functioning quite well and quite independently for quite some time.” Most NFCC members felt like they were losing their independence. The resistance, said Keith, was: “I’ve got this agency that I’ve been running very successfully, and I don’t want anybody to screw around with it.” One thing Lounell said about the process stuck in my mind: “I’m the one who used to have the paper saying, ‘You gave me forty acres and a mule,’ and now you want to take my mule and the forty acres away?”

Losing their independence and control, complying with a “senseless” mandate, and giving up a percentage of their budget pushed members toward varying levels of resistance and conflict. Degrees of resistance varied, explained Keith, from: “Well, if we’ve gotta do it, let’s do it.”—to—“This is a terrible thing, and I’m gonna make it as difficult as I can for this process to unfold.” Some of the members hoped, said Keith “that somewhere along the line that it would simply disintegrate. It was NOT a happy, easy, period or process.” One member would repeatedly say, “Well, my board’s not gonna go for it.” A couple members felt they “could fight this until the bitter end” and prevail and not do it—not join the coalition, retain their money, retain their agencies, and carry on. “They were told flat out by Jim Mills that wasn’t going to happen,” explained Keith.

Lounell had a way of reminding people about the bottom line:

I just frankly had to tell them, well, you have two choices: JWB has said...they’re going to give our money to the coalition, so you can either be a part of this, or you

can choose not to be a part of this. That depends on whether you want the money or not. I would prefer to have the money.

Some of the resistance was manifested throughout outright conflict among individual members. “Sometimes saying JWB’s name around that table was like waving a red flag, you know, all over the place,” said Lounell. Paul described it as this: “They were in a room here screaming and stomping and threatening to walk and do sit-ins. I mean, you name it; they were threatening everything imaginable.”

Keith pointed out, however, that in many cases the resistance went beyond professional criticism to being aggressive and personal, and this is what he disagreed with—the way this criticism or resistance was demonstrated, principally with the board. In some cases, conflict resulted in hurt feelings, such as members saying they “didn’t care whether the small ones make it or not.” Members also made personal attacks or would say things like, “Well, I don’t need you.” “You know, those kinds of things were hurtful, and people don’t forget that,” said Paul. “Even when things get good they still don’t forget that.” One member would remind others that they couldn’t take things personally:

We gotta keep it at what it is, which is something that we’re working though. So let’s not personalize. Because if we’re personalizing, then we’re not going to get along; we’re not going to like each other. And we all have to work together. So let’s not make it personal.

“And it did get personal,” she said. “There were personal attacks on one another.”

Keith, in particular, had some challenges with certain members; or as Lounell put it, “They were ready to kill each other.” In her typical Lounell way, she advised Keith,

“You can get more flies with sugar than you can with salt.” She said they finally figured out a way to work together and not clash.

“Everybody’s input is valid,” said one NFCC member. Some members expressed that it was important to allow everybody to vent, to say what they think. It was also important to be able to express themselves openly: “There was no other place where they could do it and get away with it. If you’re majorly frustrated, and you’re not able to [have a] place to vent that major frustration, what do you do with it?” Keith talked about the important role played by the members who were in continual disagreement:

Their perspective was just as important as the people who wanted to move this forward. I don’t believe that criticism is a negative thing. It challenges us. It makes us think. It makes us consider. You know sometimes we change positions because someone has questioned that position.

Even though the conflict was tough to get through, many members agreed that it was a needed and important part of the process. “We needed to go through everything that we went through,” said one member.

Time to Change

Most participants understood the importance of allowing time for members to go through the process of developing the ASE, both time to work out the logistical details of operating the new entity and time to deal with the personal challenges and emotional impact of the change. “It’s also hard for people not to do what they’ve always done,” said Lounell. “It’s really hard for people.”

As previously indicated, Paul felt strongly about having at least 14 months for NFCC members to develop the new model. A couple of NFCC members didn’t think the

extra time was necessary or desirable and felt that the process could have gone much more quickly if JWB just communicated from the start what they wanted. “They had already done research and had a model in mind,” said one NFCC member. “They could have just shared that with us from the beginning and saved us a lot of time.”

Most members, however, felt strongly that the extra time was essential, or even that more time was needed. Lounell thought that the directive from JWB could have been gradually introduced. “It kind of felt like it was stuffed down our throat. I think, gradually, folks might have seen the picture, but it was all of a sudden.” Keith recommended more time:

You have to commit 18 months from the time you start the process until the time you turn the key that starts the whole thing going. If you don’t have that period of time, you will not be able to go through the essential part of the process, which was the anger, the acceptance, the denial, the resignation.

The feelings, thoughts and emotions of all members need to be accepted as a natural part of the process. Keith provided the following warning: “People look at this as, ‘Well, we’re just gonna do it.’ Well, no you’re not going to just do it. There’s some things you really, really, really have to be very mindful of—personal interactions.” He reiterated the stages of grief that members go through as part of the process.

As demonstrated in the previous section, in addition to the emotional changes, there were the logistical challenges of pulling all the respective parties together to work on the planning and change process. Keith quickly did the math out loud to make his point:

When I talk about 18 months, what am I talking about? Thirty six hours is what I'm talking about. Think about it. That group meets once a month for 2 hours—36 hours. Okay, so there were other meetings in between—50 hours! Fifty hours of effort to create something of this magnitude is no time. NO TIME! So, what if you wanted to do it in 6 months? Well, 6 months times 2 is 12; so, maybe you've got 15 hours to do it.

His point being: It can't be done in a shorter period of time. "You need the time."

When we were discussing this point, I referred to a comment made by members that they wished it was done more quickly. I asked about the possibility of condensing those 50 planning hours into a 2-week retreat; couldn't that be done? "It would be very exciting!" was Keith's response, with laughter. "What you would do is you would go through the first itsy, bitsy, tiny part of the process." But he reiterated the point that there's more to it than the planning. It's about the people involved:

You know, we're human beings. We evolve. Our emotions evolve. We don't go from one emotion to the other like that [snapping fingers]; particularly something of this complexity. You know, we've got to go through the whole grieving process, if you will.

Several members of both the NFCC and JWB staff talked about this emotional aspect of the process, similar to the stages of grief and loss. Mentioned during the interviews were emotions of denial, anger, regret, resignation and acceptance. Resignation was identified as being a different stage than acceptance: "We fought the fight. We're not going to win the fight. Give it up."

Jim said that they could have done it more quickly, but that they were fortunate to have the time to let the relationships develop. “I think having as long a time to do it as we had was positive. It was not one of those things where you can just throw the switch. Because, yes, they knew one another—some of them more than others—but they really needed time to get through the emotional stuff.” Dealing with the “emotional stuff” in a way that is caring and respectful, yet still effective in moving through the change process required strong leadership and trust among members.

Leadership and Trust

Many members of the NFCC demonstrated leadership at various times throughout the process of developing the ASE, as well as some of the JWB staff. The leadership and the commitment by JWB staff became essential to the success of the process. As Paul summarized:

I think part of it is you have to really be committed to something like this to make it happen. Because if you just say, “You all got to do this,” the chances of them really doing it and getting it the way it’s suppose to be is going to be hard to do. You’re going to have to have somebody that’s going to be the leader of the project.

Many NFCC members recognized the strong role JWB staff played in the process, but as previously reflected in member interview quotes, the JWB was also seen as the enforcer and the instigator of a new model that no one wanted. Balancing these impressions was a challenge for JWB staff.

Keith and the NFCC board members were assisted throughout the process by Paul. Paul’s support was especially important for Keith, because NFCC members were

used to turning to Paul for help. Paul supported Keith in his new role as executive director telling NFCC members not call him [Paul] but to call Keith whenever they had issues or concerns. “I support him,” explained Paul:

I still meet with him weekly. We talk about all the issues—everything. And if there’s anything I can do to help him through them, I do. If I can do anything, or talk to somebody, or come back here and talk to somebody, or help get something done, I do it.

This type of support and liaison role was talked about by all NFCC members, especially the role Paul played in the ASE development process. Most members said there was a lot of trust in Paul and in Pam (the JWB contract manager).

NFCC members acknowledged the importance of Paul’s role in their interviews: “Paul is retired and he’s made his money.” They expressed that “Paul’s going to say what he’s got to say. He’ll say it to Jim or [other JWB management]. He doesn’t really care.” It was important to NFCC members to have that kind of advocate to speak on their behalf, to get certain things done, and to be their liaison to the JWB. Paul took this level of trust seriously, and he worked hard to keep it, as he worked with them to develop the ASE model.

Within the NFCC membership, the most talked about member was Lounell, whose role as a strong leader was recognized by everyone. She describes her role simply: “I kept them advised all along the way about the strategic plan the JWB had and their plans for the coalition, the direction we were going in, and that it was going to cost us.” But she also realized that she was often the one to put forth a challenge to individual

members when needed: “Sometimes I just had to say, ‘Well look guys. This is the way it is. You can either ride on the train or get run over by the train.’”

Many members commented on this trait of Lounell, saying that she was the only person who could have challenged certain members and gotten away with it. Members had various explanations for this leadership trait: her age, her race, her gender, her experience, her wisdom, her motherly persona, and her eloquent use of colloquial sayings. Jim described her as having just the right mix of, “I’ve been there. I know why we have to do this. We’ve got to do it.”

Whatever the explanation, everyone agreed that she was well-respected. Lounell, of course, chalks it up a little more lightheartedly: “That’s one thing about getting old; you can say things that you need to say or that should be said.” She says she doesn’t care what people think, but observing her, it’s evident that she is always sensitive to people feelings.

“Lounell provided tremendous leadership to this,” said Jim. “She’s really formed a community, and there’s no question about her commitment to that community. I think that made a big, big difference.”

A few other people were referenced during interviews for their leadership role. One NFCC board member, Bilal, became identified as someone who really changed throughout the process, from an uncooperative independent who fought the ASE model at first to one who supported it. He was also recognized for his ability to make well-timed and powerfully stated challenges to other members.

Keith, in his role as NFCC executive director, was also discussed several times. Most interview participants recognized that it took a while for him to move into his new

leadership role but, once he did, thought he did a great job. As Paul described it: “It took him a while to build up to the point of saying, ‘Okay, now, you’re going to have to respect me in this position.’ But he was accepted into the program. I think he feels pretty comfortable now.”

Keith saw his role as being a moderator and negotiator and described the unique challenge he faced in this role: “Mollifying JWB on one hand and the directors on another, and very often contradicting in that mollification process one with the other, but ultimately resolving all of it...all the differences.” He saw the importance of his role to address various concerns as they came up to help make the process easier. “But that’s all I take credit for,” said Keith. He fully attributes the success of the process to the NFCC board of directors:

They’ve gone through an incredibly difficult process. It was difficult professionally, and it was difficult personally. It was difficult in terms of the interaction that they experienced, and they were not daunted by that process. They were often frustrated, but they were never daunted.

In this regard, every member rose to new levels of leadership throughout the process.

Demonstration of Systems at Work

The most significant breakthroughs in the ASE development process occurred when business systems and people systems intersected most strongly—when members demonstrated their ability to challenge one another, yet work together toward common goals.

Self-compliance

At the time of the participant interviews, the NFCC board had not yet had occasion to deal with compliance issues, but it did face a couple of situations where their new interdependent structure was put to the test, where they needed to govern themselves and make some difficult decisions. The most significant challenge that all members discussed in their interviews was dealing with one of the NFCs (Garden Villas) that was located in a public housing complex being vacated to make room for private development. The Garden Villas issue came to the NFCC board of directors early in the ASE development process when everything was still new. It became identified as a key turning point in the organization's development and cohesiveness. The board of the NFCC was given the opportunity and responsibility of determining what to do with the Garden Villas NFC, its clients, and its funding. This was described by all members as a tough situation to deal with. One reason was because the Garden Villas executive director was a member of the NFCC board and was involved in the decision making.

The least difficult decision made by the NFCC board of directors was to close the Garden Villas NFC. It didn't make sense to keep it open, when all of its clients were being dispersed throughout the county. The difficulty was that it would mean a loss of jobs for the Garden Villas staff, including the executive director who was an NFCC board member. This was another area where JWB staff (Paul in particular) was able to assist by helping to find jobs for the Garden Villas staff. On an interpersonal level, this process impacted the members, because in some ways, the NFCC board is like a family. As Paul explained:

They were able to handle the stress of losing a member, because they're kind of like a family. Sometime they're dysfunctional, like most families, but they're still a family. It's that feeling of, "you've got to save the family as a whole." But it's very hard to cut somebody out. I think it made it easier when we found another job for Tracy and her staff.

The next step in dealing with the closing of Garden Villas became more controversial: what to do with the clients and the JWB funding tied to those clients. At first there was a recommendation from JWB staff to track those clients to the other centers and have the funding flow to the various centers accordingly. The NFCC directors pointed out the impracticality of following clients who are often transient, and they recommended just splitting the money up among all the centers. "Then we had to make a decision about what to do with that money," said Lounell. "Now that was a heated discussion!" Everyone discussed this issue in their interviews, and all seemed to agree that having this money to divide up tested the abilities of the group to work together. They talked, they argued, they reasoned, and in the end decided to allocate larger portions of the funding to a few of the centers that were moving into new facilities, because they would have extra and unforeseen expenses, and to split up the remaining funds equally among the remaining centers. Overall, they transitioned the money through a plan whereby all the centers benefited. Many of the members, and especially JWB staff, thought this decision-making process was "just short of a miracle."

Some of the greatest change in interpersonal communication and leadership was demonstrated after this decision was made when one of the NFCC board members complained about the way the money was dispersed. Another member, who rarely ever

“takes on” the first, spoke up and told him he was out of line and was not adhering to their previously adopted policy on board votes and decision making. “You were not here to vote. You were given the opportunity to vote. The votes were tallied, and we’re done!” The board was not going to reopen the issue because one member failed to follow through on his responsibilities. This was a huge breakthrough, according to Paul. When talking about this, Paul was excited:

I thought we have come so far! [clapping his hands in tempo for emphasis] I thought, my God! I was so proud; I didn’t know what to do. Because, you know, for them to get to that point from the point where they were screaming 12 months earlier...

There was one other significant instance of self governance that I was able to witness during one of their board meetings. It was in the midst of the JWB budget cycle, and JWB staff realized that due to rising tax revenues, they would have extra funding to recommend for grant allocations. They wanted to recommend some additional funding to “shore up the NFCs.” Pam, the JWB contract manager for the NFCC, was sent by Jim and other JWB senior staff to deliver this message to the NFCC board and to ask for their input. Time was of the essence, explained Pam, due to the JWB budget approval timeline. Pam delivered the message to the board proposing three suggestions from Jim for how the funding could be used. The three suggestions fell flat and there was little response at first. Pam requested that the members email her with their feedback.

As an observer in the room, I wouldn’t describe what happened next as an instant eruption, but it simmered, it steamed, it bubbled, and boiled, and then erupted.

Simmering: NFCC members started throwing out ideas and suggestions of what they really needed at their centers, instead of the suggestions offered by Pam. For the most part, there was agreement among the members. They needed “flex funding,” kinship care support, paid tutors, staff to help with youth issues, and other direct care services. These didn’t fall within the scope of the three suggestions offered by the JWB, and Pam again tried to clarify the parameters of the request.

Steaming: NFCC members felt their suggestions were being ignored, and they didn’t like being pressured to make this decision so quickly. Tensions started to rise, and NFCC members started to make demands: “This is the time we need to talk with Jim Mills. These are his ideas; he needs to come out and present them. We need to hear from him.” Pam emphasized the time factor and explained that she was at the meeting to represent Jim.

Bubbling: Members continued to be uneasy, and they reiterated this discomfort and their desire to hear it from Jim: “This is a serious issue...very serious. We need to talk to him. This is forcing us to rush to judgment. We’d be irresponsible directors, if we did that.” Another member said: “If it’s Jim’s concept, Jim should be telling us.” Pam again explained the time constraints, and said she needed feedback by Monday.

Boiling: This prompted NFCC members to reiterate their points in a longer outburst: “You don’t ask people in responsible positions to rush to judgment like that...that’s irrational.” The member pointed out that this was the kind of thing they educate their families about every day. “So, why would we do that as directors? ...It’s irrational.” They wanted Pam to communicate back to Jim:

It's not fair to ask us to make those kind of decisions with that short of a time frame, because you would not ask any rational person to do that...and I know if the [JWB] board asked [Jim] to do something like that, he wouldn't just jump and do that; he would say, "Well, can I come back to you?"

Pam seemed to be getting a little frustrated, but she patiently repeated it all again. She reminded them about the JWB budget cycle and the time pressures. She also encouraged them to act on this promptly to ensure they wouldn't lose this opportunity to get extra funding. "I need feedback; I need emails...so I can put together a general proposal. Email me, please, if you can, no later than tomorrow." By this attempt, her voice began to escalate, seemingly in desperation for compliance.

Eruption: One member seemed to hit the nail on the head when he honed in on Pam's repeated request for members to individually email her:

I'm very uncomfortable with all of us sending individual emails, in terms of what we want to do collectively. I would suggest—I know we already try to work our executive director to death—but I think we should send our stuff to Keith...There's a general consensus about what WE are talking about... What Keith's gonna compile is what he thinks is the general consensus. He can send it to us, and we can say, "Yeah, we think that's a go," or "No." Because what you'll get, if we do it individually and one of us doesn't like it...

He didn't need to finish this sentence, because all heads were shaking in agreement to affirm that they knew what would happen. "...And you don't need that," he concluded.

The board was in agreement. They talked through the details of how Keith would handle the process, in a way to meet Pam’s deadline while still communicating their concerns and ideas (as well as their appreciation) regarding the potential for additional funding. This one scenario was important to the NFCC because there was a strong sense of accomplishment among the board—not because they had stood up to JWB, but because they were unified in their communication and response.

There were a few other smaller instances where the NFCC board governed themselves by making tough decisions that impacted their members, especially small centers that faced occasional struggles: one couldn’t make payroll, another had financial challenges when they moved into a new building, and another needed a van to transport clients. In every case, the board members pulled together to resolve the issue and authorized the NFCC to lend or give the small centers the funding they needed to get through the difficult time.

These types of situations became demonstrations of the trust and cohesiveness that had been established among the members. “We’re learning to not just care about ourselves but to care about each other,” said Lounell. “There’s a lot of sharing going on. I think it’s a positive place for all of us to be.” In addition to the cohesiveness of the group that developed from these situations, the strength of the individual members also grew, as well as the capacity of the entire coalition.

Building Organizational Capacity

The greatest enhancement for the NFCC was yet to come. It was an “unknown value” at the time of the interviews, but it was the hope and anticipation among NFCC members and the JWB that the NFCC would be able to attract new funding—new

funding that they would not have access to as individual members. Keith explained the idea:

The unknown value is the resource development advantage of a combined entity, as opposed to an individual entity. I believe that there is a significant resource development advantage to a combined entity. I mean, I know there is, because people like Eckerd [referring to the Eckerd Family Foundation] say that there is. When you look at some of the funding opportunities, it's clear to see that people would be far more interested in funding a countywide \$3 million dollar entity than a citywide \$200,000 dollar entity. And the perception of stability... That's where the advantage is going to come.

People started to see what was possible, explained Lounell, and "some of the folks are glad to be sitting where they're sitting" because there are options and opportunities.

Another way members thought the NFCC could increase its organizational capacity, as well as benefit other agencies, was by adding other small agencies to their membership. As the NFCC matures, explained Lounell, "I think, ultimately, small agencies in this community may want to become a part of what we are." She pointed out that more questions would arise to determine what that would mean; whether the new members would have voting rights, pay *the tax* and share other responsibilities for ASE oversight. If other agencies wanted the NFCC services, "That would come with a price tag on it," said Lounell. "If they want us to do their administrative work, then we would charge for that." This was one of the strategies talked about by members as both a way to

generate funding, in addition to helping other small agencies. Keith shared a similar aspiration:

My hope would be that it, first of all, would be a resource for other neighborhood-based agencies to become a part of and to benefit. My hope would be that it would be a means of expanding the NFCs well beyond their current level of funding and programs. The only way they're going to expand is with additional resources. The resources are gonna come from places other than the JWB.

At the time of the interviews, these goals seemed achievable to the members.

Lounell described the NFCC as being fairly strong. "I think we still have some coalescing to do and to get a little bit more sophisticated," but overall, she and other members felt comfortable with where the NFCC was and was headed. The JWB, especially, couldn't be happier with the progress, as explained by Paul:

I'm proud, in a way. I think that they've really come to a point where they can govern themselves, and they've proven that. And Jim's just so proud of this, he didn't know what to do. Because they have just transitioned so smoothly; and no kinks, no problems, no binds, nothing. Everything went as it was suppose to go. And even facing an organization crashing and burning [Garden Villas], they were able to handle it and smoothly.

"They've come a long way," said Jim. He thinks the JWB board has seen this growth and development. "I think they saw that we laid out a challenge and this group rose to it."

The JWB board also recognized the value of the NFCs and their strengthened capacity as a coalition, explained Jim:

The ironic thing that has come out of this, is that now there are board members who talk about, “Well, couldn’t we do this through the Neighborhood Family Centers?” And I don’t sit there and point and laugh and say, “See silly board! You wanted to get rid of these, and now you want to give them more responsibility.”

Lessons to be Shared

Because of the unique model and their ability to make it work, the NFCC started to attract even more attention. Many NFCC members talked about how interested other people were in what they were doing, because it had never been done before. JWB staff began doing presentations about the NFCC integration effort. Lounell said that other staff members at JWB began to say things like, “We’re watching what you all are doing. It’s very interesting.” Lounell said she didn’t know why it was such a spectacle. “It’s not like an administrative service organization is something new. I mean there are actually groups out there that do this for a living; so, I really don’t know.”

Even within JWB, when Paul first started conducting research, they realized they were already experimenting with and working with similar models. Paul said, “It was kind of funny that people didn’t even realize that they had used those models, and they didn’t know that until they saw this report I did.” But they still got a lot of calls from different places about it—different children’s services groups across the state wanting more information. Paul talked to them by phone, “quite a bit, off and on.” Some places have tried it and failed, for different reasons. What seemed to make this model unique was the collaborative process put in place by the JWB and the NFCC, especially the strong level of technical assistance, the funding and the time provided by the JWB to help

make this happen. That was one unique aspect that other community organizations wanted to learn about or to demonstrate to their funding boards.

That's when Jim said, "You know, we've got to somehow capture this whole thing about technical assistance." He explained that this is something that the JWB board and others don't understand the value of. They think you can just throw out directives and people should be able to do them. As Paul explained:

They don't understand that, especially in the beginning, an organization needs a lot of TLC to get going and be successful. Sure you can back off after a few years, but you have to give them that time to make their mistakes, help them through them, and those kinds of things.

Paul referenced that JWB staff had seen their share of disasters, where directives or funding was just thrown out there and someone said, "Here. Go!" "They didn't know what to do," said Paul. Jim proposed that they capture this information, as an example of where somebody was assigned to work on technical assistance with the organization over a long period of time, to do research, to help them, to look for the things that could cause some problems, and to help them through all of these things. Jim expressed his reason for wanting research on the process:

I think there are some lessons learned here, and transferability to other communities. Too often we learn by the mistakes; we don't learn by how things went. And not everything went swimmingly. There were tough times in there. But they got there...They got there.

The JWB learned what to do and not to do with such a process, and they hoped to share this with other organizations and to use the lessons learned for their own future

planning. Capturing and sharing lessons learned from the process also was important to the NFCC board. It was one of the things they expressed a desire to accomplish when helping to develop this research protocol. This was reinforced by most members during interviews and in planning meetings. Throughout the interviews, NFCC members identified the lessons they thought would be most important to share with others. In some cases, the lessons learned by the JWB and the NFCC were shared. In particular, lessons pertaining to allowing adequate time, being flexible, and caring for the people involved. One key lesson NFCC members repeatedly said they would share with other organizations was: “Take your time.” Keith elaborated slightly: “Take the time with the process. Be very patient with the people in the process.”

Involving the people who will be most impacted was another key lesson NFCC members wanted to share. Lounell provided this advice: “Before they begin the process, the people who are involved need to be a part of the process. It needs to be a process that starts at the bottom and works its way up. I don’t think a lot of that happens.” Once you get people to the table, another member advised involving everyone as much as possible:

Don’t have one person sitting in the corner and just looking, because everyone has to buy into it. At some point, we all bought into it. You have to. If you don’t, it just creates problems. So everyone will have to buy into it.

For the most part, these lessons from the NFCC mirrored those shared by the JWB members, but one lesson from NFCC members was distinct: “Don’t fight it.” Lounell stated it this way: “When the handwriting is on the wall, don’t waste your energy fighting for a lost cause, because you can tilt at windmills all you want, and you will waste your energy.”

Summary

Through the research participant's story of developing the ASE, I have explored the background of their organization and what led to the development of the ASE, examined their processes for developing business systems for this new entity, reviewed the personal and group communication challenges they faced and overcame throughout the process, looked at some of the milestone occurrences that demonstrated their progress, and considered the impact on organizational capacity and the lessons member learned through this process that they want to share with others. Throughout the description of this process, themes have emerged from the data. Some of these were anticipated, others were not. Some are relevant and important to this research, some are less so. Themes that relate to the communication and management issues will be extracted and delineated in the next chapters, as they related to the four research questions. The process for identifying these themes was done collaboratively with the research participants as part of the critical reflection phase of action research. This is introduced below and is described in detail in the beginning of chapter 7.

Introduction to Critical Reflection

As part of my action research methodology, I approached the broader research team to begin to identify and refine the key themes. The next step of this action research process for me, as the principal researcher, was to synthesize this still large mass of data into preliminary findings that focus on the organizational and communication issues that the NFCC, the JWB and I were interested in learning about. The critical reflection process used to accomplish this is described more fully in the following chapter, including identifying the primary findings for discussion; sharing these with NFCC

members and my JWB liaison for validation, changes and additions; and working collectively with these same research participants to determine and approve the final research findings. These findings will be further explored, as they pertain to the research needs of the NFCC and the JWB and to my research needs for this dissertation. In the final chapter, I will explore their possible application beyond the scope of this work, in addition to discussing the cautions and limitations of these findings and areas for continued research.

CHAPTER 7

CRITICAL REFLECTION AND FINDINGS

Introduction

Staying true to the action research methodology, research participants were included in the critical reflection process to help interpret results of my data analysis and to formalize the research findings. This included several means of collaborative reflection: a) through individual review and feedback by research participants, b) through a group session with the NFCC board of directors, and c) in individual meetings with the NFCC executive director (Keith) and the designated staff liaison from the JWB (Paul). In this chapter, I will review the critical reflection process and present the findings related to the original research questions.

Critical Reflection Process

The process of critical reflection included several steps that will be reviewed here. Before any review or analysis could be done by the research participants, data analysis results and preliminary finding needed to be summarized in a format that was comprehensible for their review. The critical reflection process entailed providing opportunities for research participants to review and respond to this data and to help develop the research findings. Members provided input both individually and as a collective body. Lastly, the process required my synthesis of the participants' feedback.

One immediate outcome of this process for the NFCC and JWB was to develop findings for the report that would be presented to the JWB board of directors. The JWB report is not included in its entirety in this chapter nor as an appendix, but the research findings shared with the JWB board are included in this chapter. A brief outline of key elements presented to the JWB board is included in Appendix F. The JWB report will be referenced several times in this chapter when describing the research participants' involvement in the critical reflection process and as one targeted outcome of their effort.

Preparing for Group Review of the Study Results

Involving the research participants in this stage of analysis was important to help distill and finalize the research findings. Their time was limited⁸, so making the most of the time we had together for critical reflection of the data analysis results was essential. To do this, I tried to make it easy for them to review material and respond individually and collectively. In chapter 5, this is referred to as phase 2 of my data analysis, which I described as being done from a practitioner perspective to provide a quick overview of key issues discerned from the research data. To prepare data analysis results for presentation to the research participants, I organized it into two formats: one for the data analysis results (summary of comments from interviews and observations), and a short narrative that provided examples of preliminary findings.

The first format involved sharing the key research data in a consolidated table format (see Table E1 in Appendix E) that members could review and reference during discussion sessions. This data table corresponded to the list of questions from the

⁸ Another common issue that needs to be managed in AR is differing timelines and pressures between academics and practitioners. Action researchers need to be amenable to work around the participants' needs and to balance those with their own research parameters.

interview protocol, summarizing the answers provided by members. This was challenging to do, because it reflected about 50 hours of interview tapes.

The second format was a short narrative identifying what I discerned to be some of the preliminary findings for their review and consideration. This was developed by extracting what appeared to be key themes that emerged during my preliminary review of the data. Some of the themes included change resistance, JWB's role in the process, impact on members, lessons learned, and the NFCC today and in the future. These are included in this chapter as presented to and amended by NFCC members, although some categories have been renamed or blended. Providing a draft of preliminary research findings was necessary due to our time constraints for critical reflection. In an ideal setting, we would have had an entire day to review, dialogue and develop findings collectively. Because these directors were so busy, however, they were happy to have a draft to review and elicit their response.

Communicating these preliminary findings required me to balance my varied roles as an action researcher—as facilitator, engaged participant, and objective researcher—providing only subtle guidance to the members regarding key findings that I thought needed to be emphasized. By this time, I felt comfortable enough with the research participants to know that they would feel free to express disagreement or discontent.

My original intent in this chapter was to present the preliminary findings as they were organized for presentation to the research participants, organized into prominent themes related to the original research questions. In the next section (*Response to the Data by Research Participants*), I planned to share the detailed feedback provided and

the changes made by participants. In the final section of this chapter, I planned to re-present the final findings as they were shaped and accepted by the research participants. The changes made by the research participants, however, were minor; participants concurred with my preliminary findings as presented, because the findings accurately conveyed the sentiments expressed in interviews and meetings. A full presentation of both preliminary findings and final findings, therefore, would be redundant. Therefore, findings will be presented in their final form, and where applicable, comments and changes made by research participants will be noted.

Response to the Data by Research Participants

As previously identified, data analysis results and preliminary findings were reviewed with the research participants in three different ways: a) through individual review and feedback by research participants, b) through a group session with the NFCC board of directors, and c) in individual meetings (held separately) with the Keith, the NFCC executive director, and Paul, the designated staff liaison from the JWB. There was no substantive individual feedback provided by NFCC members. Reviewed here are the collaborative critical reflection processes with the full NFCC board, and the individual reflections with Keith and Paul.

Collaborative Reflection with the NFCC Board of Directors

Data was presented to the NFCC board of directors at their June meeting. The original plan was for me to review and discuss these preliminary findings with them and solicit their feedback at this meeting, however, other board business resulted in their meeting running later than usual. It was agreed that I would provide a quick introduction and distribute the data table and narrative overview of preliminary findings, and that we

would engage in open discussion and reflection at their upcoming technical assistance training the following Monday. To help structure their review, interpretation, and response to the data results and the preliminary findings, I posed several questions to them, both in written form in the documents provided and verbally during our group reflection session the following week. NFCC members were asked to consider several questions that are listed below exactly as they were posed to the members:

- a) *In reviewing the summary of comments shared on the following pages (referencing the data table included in Table E1 in Appendix E): What is most directly on target? What is most significant to be shared with others? What is irrelevant, if anything? What's missing? What else is important that hasn't been covered?*
- b) *What is most important to be shared with the JWB Board about this process? Identify three key points that you think are important to convey?*
- c) *How will this research and report help the NFCC, if at all?*
- d) *How will it help JWB and the JWB Board?*

These questions were asked to confirm and/or correct the data presented and to seek additional feedback in key areas where existing data was weak, limited or conflicting. It also served as a means to get NFCC members to identify the preliminary research findings that were most important to them and to help prioritize the key findings that should be shared with the JWB board of directors. During the group reflection session, I added other questions to get clarity on some research findings and to get members to elaborate on areas that needed further probing. In particular, there were a few questions in the research protocol that elicited wide-ranging responses from members

during individual interviews. I wanted to explore these further as a group. The additional questions I asked at the group session were as follows:

- a) *Think about where you started from 2 years ago, in June 2003: What would you recognize as your greatest accomplishment today?*
- b) *Picture me as your least favorite JWB board member...Why is this (the ASE) worth it to us?*
- c) *Would you have developed an ASE without JWB involvement? (to clarify conflicting individual answers)*
- d) *You perceive the ASE to be a benefit to JWB only and to have negatively impacted the coalition. Is this accurate? (my summary of their comments – asking for validation)*
- e) *Think 5 years ahead: What are some ways you can get your 2% worth? (referring to “the tax”) And what can the coalition grow into?*
- f) *Should funders take the kind of role that JWB did, to say, “We want you to do this” (develop an ASE)?*
- g) I made a general request for open comments.
- h) *What three findings do you think are most important to share with the JWB board of directors?*

Relevant responses to these questions are reflected in the following sections to support various findings. A few of their comments don't fit within any particular finding but are worth noting here.

Regarding the table of board member interview responses (see appendices Table E1), NFCC members did not perceive any inconsistencies between my perceived results

and the perceptions of NFCC members. There were no objections by any members about the summarized interview comments in the summary table, and only minor changes were made in the wording or the order of categories. When the NFCC board of directors was collectively reviewing this table during the reflection session, there was some joking about some of the interview responses summarized in the table. In particular, attention was drawn to comments about the “two members” who “continued to resist throughout the initial planning,” and the “two members” who “repeatedly disrupted the process.” The members who joked and laughed about these comments were the “two members” featured in the comments. “I don’t know who this could be referring to...” laughed one of the members. “It couldn’t be me, that’s for sure,” said the other. “She must be referring to you.” This lighthearted banter brought laughter to the entire group. This banter and group laughter, in itself, was a indication of the tremendous change the group went through during the course of the year. If these interview results were shared a year or even 6 months earlier, the response by members could have caused hurt feelings and resulted in conflict.

Another lighthearted comment that really kicked off the group discussion was a response to my first question regarding their greatest accomplishment. An immediate response was thrown out by one member: “We didn’t kill each other!” This was followed by an overwhelming expression of agreement, laughter and joking. Joking aside, members elaborated on their greatest accomplishment, which was nicely summarized by Keith:

I think more importantly, what has happened is that this group has come together as a working group. I think that is the single biggest accomplishment: that this

very diverse group of folks, all with very diverse perspectives, is now working together. And it has been a very difficult process, and one that I think they should be particularly proud of.

“Hear, hear!”

Most of the discussion during our reflection session pertained to the summary of preliminary findings. Overall, members were in agreement with the narrative of preliminary findings as presented—they provided some minor elaboration through comments shared during the reflection session. These responses are included in the following section to support the related findings.

Finally, I wanted to get NFCC members to help prioritize the findings for presentation to the JWB board of directors. Although this was the framework I communicated for this discussion, it was also a way to get them talking about the overall collection of preliminary findings. When asked to “identify the three most important things to be shared with the JWB board,” the immediate overwhelming response was: “Keep the money coming!” Although this key issue was not part of this research focus, it reiterates and emphasizes the importance of and continuing concern about funding by the members of the NFCC. This comment was later shared verbally, in jest, with the JWB board of directors as part of the introduction to the research presentation.

NFCC members identified the most important findings to be presented to the JWB board of directors, and these were refined and titled as follows: a) impact of the ASE model – increased capacity; b) the Juvenile Welfare Board’s role in the organization’s transition; c) outlook for the future, and d) cautions and limitations. As previously

indicated, these findings are included in this chapter, although in some cases, they have been reorganized or renamed.

Identifying these four findings is not to say that other findings are irrelevant or inconsistent with the observed phenomenon, but rather some findings were more directly applicable only to NFCC members, to JWB staff or to this overall body of research in organizational communication. Findings may have been useful to participants for future planning and follow-up action or just for learning and better understanding the integration process. In some cases, findings address backstage issues that were considered to be more private among the research participants and preference was expressed not to share these with the JWB board of directors. All relevant findings are shared in this chapter.

Individual Reflection with Staff Liaisons

Prior to finalizing the report for the JWB board, one-on-one reflection meetings were held with Keith, executive director of the NFCC, and with Paul, my JWB staff liaison. The intent of these meetings was to review the findings more thoroughly and to get their confirmation of the feedback provided by the NFCC board of directors. As with the reflection session with the NFCC board, their relevant comments are included in the following sections within the related findings.

As agreed at the start of our action research relationship, a brief report was presented to the JWB board of directors incorporating feedback and input provided by the research participants. This concluded what I previously identified as the “practitioner” phase of analysis. What follows is the more detailed phase of analysis that incorporated results from the practitioner analysis, as well as from my review of interview transcriptions and field notes. Through my process of coding and analysis (described at

the beginning of chapter 5), prominent themes began to emerge that connected data and findings to the original research questions. These themes and findings are shared in this next section.

Identification of Themes

The identification of key themes was straightforward and mostly fell within the overarching research questions. Having provided a detailed description of how my data analysis was conducted, what follows is an overview of some of the data that was extracted from my full body of research. Because it would be too voluminous to share all the relevant data, a table has been included in the appendices (see Table G1 in Appendix G) that shares a larger collection of relevant interview responses and observations. This table format was modeled after one used by Harter and Krone (2001) in their research on a cooperative support organization to categorize data from their qualitative interviews into “developing themes” that represented recurring patterns of behaviors and meanings (p. 254). I found this to be helpful in organizing my data into preliminary themes for further analysis. Themes include key organizational and communication concepts that contributed to or resulted from the integration process being studied. For ease of reviewing these themes, information is being grouped within the respective research questions:

- Research question #1: *considerations and challenges* in implementing the new integration model;
- Research question #2: the *funder’s role* in guiding and assisting in the integration process;

- Research question #3: *management and communication strategies* implemented to mitigate the negative effects of this type of organizational change and/or to contribute to successful implementation of this type of integration model; and
- Research question #4: *lessons learned* that may benefit future JWB efforts, as well as funders and service providers in communities throughout the United States.

Although these are organized to correspond to the four research questions, there is much overlap among them. *The funder's role*, for example, will be referenced to some degree within each research question, because the funder was actively involved throughout all stages of the process. Following is an overview of the key research findings that were identified by me and accepted and approved by the research participants.

Findings Pertaining to Research Question #1: Considerations and Challenges

Research question #1 posed the following: *What considerations do nonprofit service providers and funders confront when beginning the implementation of a new collaborative model? (i.e. Within the selected research sites, what were the concerns, issues, challenges and problems faced before and during the implementation of a management service organization? And how were these challenges addressed by participants throughout the process?)* Following are two findings extracted from the data analysis that address this research question, including *inducement to integrate* and *resistance to change*.

Inducement to Integrate

As addressed in the literature review, the reasons why nonprofits choose to merge, consolidate or integrate are wide-ranging. Commonly cited reasons include concern for administrative efficiency, avoidance of redundant effort, to fill service gaps, to better meet client needs, and to provide a fuller range of services (see Alexander, 2000; McLaughlin, 1998; Rein, 1983; Snavely & Tracy, 2000; Werther & Berman, 2001). As shown in this research and as supported in the literature review, however, one prominent reason is that organizations are being encouraged (“forced”) by funders to develop new collaborative models. Two themes were uncovered in the data analysis related to this finding: *protecting the NFCs* and *the bottom line*. These two themes relate to different perspectives of the same question – why integration? The first theme very much represents the perspective of the funder (JWB); the second theme represents the perspective of the NFCs. As reflected in these themes, one group’s guiding hand can be another group’s forceful push. Reviewed here is a summary of these themes related to this finding.

Protecting the NFCs.

Overwhelmingly reflected in the research data, JWB staff felt strongly that the development of the ASE was a way to save and strengthen the NFCs. Also reflected in the data, it was clear that the NFCC members understood the JWB’s motivation and their commitment to keeping the NFCs intact. JWB staff also knew they needed to explore new organizational models to help the NFCs survive the JWB’s board directive to eliminate funding the “little agencies.”

The JWB, like many funders, cares about and watches over the agencies they fund. Part of this involves monitoring and planning for emerging needs and trends. Sometimes these needs and trends clash with the funder's desire to support certain grantees. As will be discussed in the findings related to the next research question, funders have the ability to scan the environment and head off political threats that may negatively impact their grantees. By being on the forefront of new organizational models, the JWB staff was able to do this for the NFCs to react to the looming threat before them.

In one of the critical reflection sessions, an NFCC member identified the ASE as a means for the NFCs to continue to function, calling it a "life boat." "This was a means by which the NFCs could continue to function, despite the change in the JWB strategic plan. It was, in fact, a life boat." Although the NFCC members understood this motivation, it was not THEIR motivation. The notion of such forced integration was vehemently opposed by the NFCC members.

The bottom line.

From the perspective of the NFCC members, the reason for the integration model was solely due to the bottom line—the financial bottom line. All NFCC members agreed that they would not have formed an ASE in the immediate future if they weren't forced to do so, as a result of the JWB board directive. Members acknowledged that they did "have a choice," but the choice was to comply or lose their funding. Continued funding for their organizations was contingent upon developing and participating in the ASE.

Funding is always a critical issue for the NFCs, and the integration was taken as a threat by many members. The message they heard was, "Take it or leave it," (leaving "it" being their funding). "It was this or nothing." "You will be on this train, or you won't be

anywhere.” Further examples of these reactions will be provided under the next theme related to *resistance*.

This is an example of what Ott (2001) described regarding the challenge for nonprofits to maintain independence from their funders. NFCC members felt obligated to respond to their funder’s “requests” because of their dependence on the funding. Because a majority of funding for the NFCs comes from JWB, it became difficult for them to remain independent. The relationship between the NFCs and the JWB is a demonstration of how nonprofits organize themselves to mirror and imitate their public sector counterparts (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2002). This includes adhering to whatever mandate comes their way that may threaten their future existence.

Understandably there was great resistance to the JWB’s directive to form the ASE, and this will be explored in the next finding, but the NFCC members eventually realized that “It was inevitable.” What they could control was their response to the directive.

As expressed previously, the NFCC members understood that the JWB staff were just doing their job: “Funders have their rules they have to follow, too.” They have to adhere to their bottom line, and the bottom line gets pushed down to the grantees. Throughout the ASE integration process, discussions always came back to the funding. The NFCC members succumbed to the pressure of the bottom line. Making the decision to “make it work,” however, came only after months of resistance by members, which is the next finding to be reviewed.

Resistance to Change

The second finding related to research question #1 pertains to the NFCC members' resistance to the imposition of the new model. As explored in the literature review, resistance can be caused by fear, uncertainty and doubt (Pietersen, 2002), all are common responses to organizational change. When trying to implement change within any heterogeneous group, the level of conflict is likely to be high (Brightman, 1988). In organizational change efforts, participants tend to view change from their own perspective, with regard to how it will affect their own organization (Provan et al., 2005). This can contribute to resistance. For example, members may believe that they will lose power or resources (Brightman, 1988). Issues of resistance received a great deal of attention during the interviews and were evident during meetings, and these concerns were evident in the research data. Three themes emerged related to resistance: the members' reasons for resistance, the way this resistance was manifested, and their personal reactions to this resistance. These three themes are presented below.

Reasons for resistance.

A primary reason for resistance by the NFCC members was their concern about losing their independence. Commonly expressed feelings included resentment that responsibilities were being taken away from them. "It's about independence," several members expressed. There were also feelings of being discredited: "They were not being respected as executive directors of their own organizations."

NFCC members were also resistant because they didn't think that "defunding" the NFCs and executing a single contract through the NFCC made sense. NFCC members perceived the directive from the JWB board to be due to the fact that they're small and

they “didn’t have money to sustain [their organizations].” That didn’t make sense to them, because they had been “functioning quite well and quite independently for quite some time.” To mandate that funding go to only large organizations wasn’t a “logical argument.”

NFCC members also felt that the ASE wasn’t necessary, because they could manage their own contracts, and they could represent themselves better than going through a coalition. They also saw the ASE as extra cost and effort with no return. As reviewed in the previous chapter, NFCC members didn’t notice any of the initially promised cost savings. The fact that the NFCC members had to pay the administrative costs to do the work that JWB staff used to perform added fuel to their fire. As explained in previous chapters, this was achieved by each member forfeiting 2% of their JWB funding to pay for the NFCC staff and office. All members identified the 2% administrative fee as a hindrance to their organization with no return. In a sense, they saw their coalition executive director as becoming “a very expensive contract manager.” This became one of the single most contentious topics that members argued about. Members eventually started calling this “*the tax*,” and they would make a point of saying that and joking about it whenever JWB staff were at their meetings. Their subtle protest of joking about *the tax* demonstrates one subtle form of resistance.

This resistance also caused conflict within the NFCC circle. “When they brought the money into it, it caused a lot of division,” explained one member. This member described the group as previously being a fun, helpful group. When the money came in, however, “that really shifted. That’s when some of the competitive edge came in—the

resentments and the arguments. The money just changed the general good will and good nature of the entity that I sensed at the beginning.”

In addition to resistance and arguments about the tax, members also questioned the very model designed to give them autonomy (see *Funder's Role*); a model whereby the NFC executive directors govern the very organization that will be funding them and monitoring them. (Also see Figure 4.1, in chapter 4, for a depiction of this relationship.) The potential for conflict was evident to them, but their desire to maintain control was greater.

Manifestations of resistance.

The NFCC experienced the full range of resistance, including moderate levels from most members and strong resistance from a couple members. Members resisted throughout the planning and implementation process in various ways, sometimes subtly, such as joking about “the tax,” and sometimes through open conflict. As may often be the case, resistance and conflict are interconnected, with conflict being one of the main manifestations of resistance observed within the research site. Some covert resistance also was identified by some NFCC members, such as members “withdrawing their presence from meetings” to slow down debate on important topics; another member would not give his email address; others refused to comply with new procedures or dragged their feet.

More obvious forms of resistance became a focal point at meetings: when “tempers were flaring,” and when members acted like “roosters in the barnyard ruffling each other’s feathers.” In some cases, members made personal attacks, and conflict resulted in hurt feelings. One member referenced this as being an understandable “fight

or flight” behavior: “I think that just happens when people feel like their backs are up against the wall.” This type of discord may have slowed down progress and damaged relationships among members. This corresponds to information cited in the literature review by Putnam (1986), who described some of the self-coping techniques members use to avoid strained interpersonal relationship, including fostering harmony by taking “flight from controversial topics, placating or smoothing over difficult issues, or compromising to get disputes settled in a hurry” (p. 175).

More often, however, the conflict was focused toward the common enemy: the JWB. Having a common enemy can turn conflict into a positive for the group. *Having a real or invented enemy* is one characteristic that Bennis (1999) identifies as common among great groups. “Even the most noble mission can be helped by an onerous opponent,” (¶11). The members joking about “the tax” was one way they came together in their dialog about their enemy.

Personal responses to resistance.

Although many members were frustrated by the resistance, most felt it was necessary. One member expressed that he thought the group “wasted a lot of time on the resistance and arguments.” Most members, however, felt that even though the conflicts took up a lot of time, it was important to give people “a chance to be heard.” Members also acknowledged importance and value in allowing the conflict to occur at meetings—to have a safe place where members could vent their frustrations.

While members were tolerant of the conflict, they also employed proactive management and communication strategies to mitigate the resistance. These strategies will be explored when discussing findings related to research question #3. Much of the

conflict, however, resolved itself simply over time as the process unfolded. Included among these research themes have been references to the role of the funder, as it pertained to being a cause of resistance and forcing the bottom line. The next section addresses the role of the funder more specifically, including their role in both pushing and guiding the process.

Findings Pertaining to Research Question #2: Funder's Role

RQ#2. What role do funders play to guide and assist nonprofit service providers in this process, both during the research, consideration and implementation stages?

As evidenced in the previous section, the role of the JWB was significant; they were the primary motivator for the implementation of the ASE model. Addressed here is the role of the funder in guiding this process. In this finding, there are three themes that emerged from the data analysis that address this research question, including *funder pressure*, *fostering autonomy and making accommodations*, and *having an advocate*. Additional references will be made to the JWB in the next section, as it pertains to the management and communication strategies they used to foster a successful change effort.

Beyond the initial negative reactions toward the integration effort, there was general agreement about the role of the JWB in the transition planning and implementation, and there was consensus about the role of various staff members, especially Paul Lackey, who served as a primary liaison between the NFCC board and JWB. When discussing JWB's role in the process of creating the ASE, members' reactions were initially negative, due to the perception that the centers were forced to move in this direction. Data related to this theme are the first explored related to this finding.

Funder Pressures

Directly related to previous findings on resistance is the role of the funder in encouraging integration efforts. As addressed in the literature review, there are increasing pressures put on nonprofits by funders that are pushing their grantees to consolidate to be more efficient in service delivery efforts and to be cost-effective (Kohm & La Piana, 2003). Many of the reasons cited in the literature for nonprofit consolidation have been adopted by funders as reasons to encourage consolidation. Many of these were reasons conveyed by the JWB for the board's directive to integrate: to be "a greater impact for the community"; to be "more efficient"; and to "make sure we get every tax dollar back to the community."

Because the JWB was the primary funder of the NFCs, the NFCs felt obligated to comply with the directive. "Playing by JWB's rules" became essential to the NFCs' survival, as alluded to in the previous category of findings pertaining to "the bottom line." This corresponds to the "quid pro quo" or "matching rule" identified by Lewis et al. (2003, p. 422), wherein the level of stakeholder resources serve as the basis for determining the level of dedicated communicative attention.

A push versus a guiding hand.

Referenced several times previously has been the parable of the blind men describing the elephant, and this is yet another area where perceptions of the JWB and the NFCC differed—how the NFCs were "encouraged" to integrate. Perceptions by the NFCC members were that this was forced upon them. When NFCC members did use the word "encourage," it was always said with extra emphasis, as if they were mocking the use of this word to describe what was happening: "They encouraged...EN-COUR-

AGED some people to merge.” “They kept pushing and EN-COUR-AG-ING and pushing...” “They would sugar coat it nicely,” said one NFCC member, but it wasn’t really “encouraging.” Members felt it was forced; it was an ultimatum; it was not a choice.

A previous finding, however, demonstrated that JWB staff saw this as a way to save the NFCs. As will be discussed in future subsection, the JWB staff thought their actions and messages were benevolent, and they tried hard not to come off as forcing the integration: They truly believed this: “We were not trying to stick this down their throat.” One way they tried to break down the image of enforcer was by allowing autonomy for NFCC members to develop the model themselves. This will be addressed further in the next theme.

The NFCC members who worked most closely to JWB staff, had some harsh opinions of the process, but they could also understand the difficult position the JWB staff were in, having to quickly initiate the JWB board’s directive. “They weren’t being given credit for what they were doing,” expressed one NFCC member.

Fostering Autonomy and Making Accommodations

One of the most important aspects about the integration process, from the JWB staff’s perspective, was that they tried to foster autonomy among the NFCC members. They did not want the process to be perceived as taking away the members’ control or disempowering them in their contract relationships. JWB staff felt they gave the NFCC “as much autonomy as they could,” and NFCC members eventually realized the autonomy they were given: JWB “could have structured it in such a way that we had no control over our funds.” “We were allowed to decide how we wanted to play that game.”

JWB's perceived need to foster autonomy among the NFCC members was perceived.

The struggle to maintain autonomy was a prominent concern of NFCC members. This is touched in other themes in findings related to research question #4.

They also recognized the flexibility and support of the JWB staff. This addresses another area where everyone was in agreement about the role and character of JWB staff, which was demonstrated through their willingness to be accommodating to meet the unusual needs of the integration model, such as through the adoption of new policies and procedures. Most members expressed that there were many questions about policies and procedures that had no answers, and Paul worked with other JWB staff to find or develop the answers, to see what would work. There was discussion about the JWB having to change policies and to renegotiate details of the single contract. JWB staff were also recognized for their sensitivity to the needs of NFCC members during the change process, and for the great level of support they provided. Members commented that they didn't feel like anything was being held back from them by JWB staff. Some NFCC members described JWB staff as open and honest about the situation and forthcoming with information. A few members expressed that JWB staff went out of their way to look out for the NFCs and supported the process in every way. Some of the supportive management and communication strategies implemented by JWB staff will be elaborated on in findings related to the third research question.

Overall, many NFCC members acknowledged that JWB staff did an exceptional job in working with the NFCC. JWB was also acknowledged as being wise for some of their decisions and strategies, such as allowing the extra time to develop the system, and implementing and testing the system for 6 months. In general, most members felt that the

level of JWB involvement was helpful. JWB served as a good resource, without too much interference in the process. Most members appreciated that JWB didn't dictate what the ASE model should be, and they recognized that JWB wanted the coalition to develop it on their own. Especially important to all of this was the role played by one JWB staff member: Paul Lackey.

Having an Advocate

Paul served as the primary liaison to the NFCC members. The importance of this role was evidenced in the data from Paul's perspective, as well as from the NFCC members. Participants addressed issues of mutual trust, Paul's level of commitment, and the role he played in negotiating and advocating.

Building trust.

Paul worked hard to build trust by communicating openly and honestly and by demonstrating his commitment through supportive actions: "I'm not going to lie to you." "If I tell them I'd do something, they knew I'd do it." Paul felt like his efforts paid off: "They got to where they would trust me." One demonstration of trust the NFCC members had for Paul was their belief that he would speak his mind and speak up for the NFCs.

For a long period of time, at least through the full transition, the NFCC was Paul's number one priority. He talked about how much work he did for the NFCC members and about his genuine commitment to the NFCs. He provided support through a broad number of ways and through all stages of the process. He was charged with getting them ready for the process. The role he played as liaison in communicating with the JWB and in advocating on behalf of the NFCC, was critically important to both organizations. He was the person who carried and correctly interpreted messages between the two entities.

“He was kind of given the lead and kind of nursing us along and being the go between the two entities.” NFCC members could “bounce off what [they] were doing” with Paul. NFCC members explained that Paul would “send it back [to JWB] and make sure that what we were doing wasn’t going to get thrown back in our faces.”

Providing support to members sometimes required “a lot of handholding and smoothing and finessing,” explained Paul. He provided extensive assistance to the new NFCC director, and on occasion, he played a role to help keep members calm and to maintain harmonious relationships between the members and the entities: “I tried very hard to make sure that people were trying to cool their heels.”

It also was important for Paul to know when to step in and out of conversations: “I didn’t get involved. I was trying to sit back and be quiet, unless I was asked for my input.” NFCC members also recognized this trait in Paul: “He didn’t butt into the process,” unless the group was going in a direction that would cause a problem.

Paul’s commitment to the NFCC was so strong that, in some cases, when Paul talked about the NFCC, he would talk as if he was one of them. He would change between third-person and first-person speech when talking about the NFCC: “We’re in a situation. If we don’t pull this off...” “We need to be unified.” “We went out and bought furniture together. We went out and hired people together.” “We have come so far!” The type of connection that Paul had to the NFCC mirrored what Scott and Lane (2000) referred to as a blurring of boundaries where stakeholders may perceive “an overlap between their self-identity and the cognitive image they construct of an organization” (p. 48). They identify with the organization to varying degrees and among various dimensions. Paul identified strongly with the NFCC. “I got to be involved in all of their

problems.” “I got very, very invested, in this.” Because of Paul’s strong association with the NFCs, JWB staff would occasionally tease him: “They would call me the director of this [or that organization].” This bothered Paul, because he was concerned that if it was overheard it might seem disrespectful to the NFC directors, whom he respected greatly.

Paul’s role in this process will be addressed further in the next finding pertaining to the management and communication strategies use by research participants that fostered successful implementation of this integration model. Because JWB staff, especially Paul, worked hand-in-hand with NFCC members to implement the new model, their role also will be addressed.

*Findings Pertaining to Research Question #3: Management and
Communication Strategies*

Research question #3 posed the following: *What management and communication strategies are implemented to mitigate the negative effects of this type of organizational change and/or to contribute to successful implementation of this type of integration model?* There were several key management and communication strategies employed by members of the NFCC and JWB staff that helped mitigate some of the challenges previously demonstrated. Some of these were practical strategies that dealt with the process of forming the ASE. Others were more pressing strategies for taking care of the people involved. Reviewed in this section are interview comments and observations that point to some of the effective strategies employed by members. Within this section, some of the common themes that emerged from the data included allowing *time to change*, *leadership*, and *participation and relationships*.

Time to Change

Most research participants understood the importance of allowing time for members to go through the process of developing the ASE, to both work out the logistical details of operating the new entity and to deal with the emotional impact of the change. As described in the previous chapter, Paul felt strongly about having at least 14 months for NFCC members to develop the new model, largely due to the workload involved. There were many time consuming steps involved in setting up and managing the *business systems*: “It was just step-by-step, inch-by-inch, all the way through.”

But more important, time was needed to help NFCC members make the transition, in particular, “to get through the emotional stuff.” Several members of both the NFCC and JWB staff talked about the emotional aspect of the process, and they compared it to going through the stages of grief and loss. Most NFCC and JWB members felt they were fortunate to have time to let the relationships develop. A couple of NFCC members didn’t think the extra time was necessary or even desirable, and that the process could have gone much more quickly if JWB just communicated from the start of the process what they wanted. Most members, however, felt strongly that the extra time was essential. Some thought even more time was needed.

As mentioned in a previous theme related to resistance, another reason for needing extra time was to allow members to work through their conflicts. While some of this was naturally resolved through the passage of time, in other cases, strong leadership was needed to guide members.

Leadership

Resistance and conflict are common occurrences within any organizational change effort. Responses to these challenges can be addressed through supportive communication techniques utilized by qualified staff and empathetic leaders. Leadership was one strong theme that emerged from the data, especially as it pertained to members who were credited for their strong roles in advancing the process and empowering team members. As discussed in the literature review, effective change leadership during organizational transition deals with many communication issues, such as trust, organizational culture, dealing with member concerns, and the use of supportive communication. It also involves understanding the expectations of various stakeholders and managing those.

Several JWB and NFCC members were identified as leaders among the group. One person identified by all research participants as a strong leader was Lounell. Members talked about a myriad of characteristics that made her a strong leader: They described her as a “very calming leader” and as having “a lot of experience.” Most often, however, people talked about her ability to say what needs to be said and her ability to be convincing because of her experience and wisdom. One member said the following about Lounell: “You can lead a horse to water but you can’t make him drink. Well, she could make him drink.” Members indicated that Lounell had a skillful ability to smooth over tough situations and heated discussions, and overall, she could keep things moving along.

Sometimes her well-placed and eloquent comments were enough to move members to action. Her words and actions were often filled with commitment, such as being the first member to volunteer to pay *the tax* and voicing her assurance to protect all

the NFCs. “It was that kind of thing that really helped us through the hard times,” said one member.

Lounell closely matches the description of “the leader as craftsman,” described by Agranoff and McGuire (2001), who “elicits common goals, creates an atmosphere of trust, brokers organizational and individual contributions, and deploys energies in accord with some strategic plan” (p. 314). Lounell’s perception of herself was more lighthearted. She described her optimistic outlook when facing a challenge:

The glass is always half full to me, and there’s always a way to get things done.
Even if I have to take off my glasses and put on my rubber pads and do it myself.
But there is always a way to get it done.

Also cited by members as a unique trait was her ability to cite fun colloquialisms at just the right time: “If someone gives me chicken poop, I know how to make chicken salad.” “Everyone who’s going to sit at the table ought to do some of the cooking.”

Paul was identified as a leader for the many reasons described in the previous theme related to *the funder’s role*. Keith also was identified, although members acknowledged that his leadership was developed and grown into throughout the process. Members explained that Keith didn’t want to be the leader, because he was new. “At first, he was really paranoid about us saying, ‘We’re going to fund you.’ He’d say, ‘No, your not! You’re going to fund the coalition, not me.’ [They joked and teased him about it.]” Keith eventually accepted his new role and became recognized as a strong leader. Keith recognized certain skills that he brought to the process, “principally political skills,” and the role he played “of keeping the ball rolling,” keeping things “on track, and understanding the nature of the resistance.”

Jim was cited as a leader, most often by the other JWB staff, for his wisdom, his commitment to the NFCs, his support, and the trust he puts in people to do the right thing. His foresight and sensitivity were also discussed: “He kind of saw some of the things coming down the road that he knew might happen.”

The leaders cited within this team match the four behavioral traits identified by Bennis (1999) that are shared by leaders of great groups: providing direction and meaning; generating and sustaining trust; displaying a bias toward action, risk taking and curiosity; and serving as purveyors of hope. To some degree, all JWB and NFCC members exemplified these traits. The strong will and effort of members was identified as another factor contributing to the successful integration effort. Some said that members cooperated and worked together to get the job done. This collaborative effort by members and the ability to maintain relationships despite significant strain, were essential to the transition process. These emerged as important themes related to research question #3, regarding *management and communication strategies*.

Participation and Relationships

There were several instances where turning points occurred in the group’s integration process and in the level of trust among members. These largely involved situations where group members came together to make important decisions that impacted individual centers or the full group. Other examples revolved around situations of dialogue and debate, where members were encouraged to participate, express their views and their conflicts, and where they were supported by their peers for doing so. As discussed in an earlier finding, members even embraced conflict and people’s need to voice their opposition. This is consistent with what Heath and Frey (2004) explained

regarding communication processes practiced by collaborative groups, such as through dialogue and consensus decision making that attempts “to honor the viewpoints of their members’ various constituencies” (p. 208).

In the NFCC’s decision-making process, full involvement by all members became a critical turning point. The original decision-making process involved assigning committees to do the required work and reporting back. For the integration effort, however, this turned out to be problematic—members felt like they were being left out, and they expressed their desire to be involved. Although discussions may have been longer and more difficult with full inclusion of members, it is essential for creative problem solving and system change (Medved et al., 2001). This is consistent with the suggestion by Eisenberg et al. (1999), that “because complex issues require the combined intelligence of multiple individuals, dialogue is essential to the survival of today’s organizations” (143). The NFCC members had a lot of serious business to deal with. “They had to do the work, and they had to negotiate with each other around that table.”

This type of group dialog and consensus-based decision making is not easy to enact. The NFCC members went to great lengths to create new systems for decision making, such as *the rules of the game*, described in chapter 5, that involved a one, two or three-finger vote to express various levels of agreement or discontent with decisions being made.

Less serious forms and occasions of communication also became opportunities for further bonding, for example, laughter. As the integration progressed, the NFCC slowly started to have small occasions for laughter. When a golden nugget of laughter was found, it was held onto and glorified as a unifying agent that helped bring members

together. These also unified the two organizations, the JWB and the NFCC. One such nugget was the repeated joking and laughter about the 2% tax. Members also engaged in lighthearted laughter with the JWB staff about the roles played by Paul and Jim. They joked about them being “good cop, bad cop.” This eventually shifted, when one member said: “I don’t know. Seems to me it’s bad cop and worse cop.” Everyone laughed about this, including JWB staff, and this made JWB staff feel good that the NFCC members were comfortable enough to laugh and joke in that manner. Members were also able to laugh at themselves, as demonstrated at their critical reflection session when two members joked and laughed about featured interview comments that were slightly negative and clearly about them.

Difficult conversations and lighthearted communication helped the group grow closer. One member expressed that if it hadn’t been for the process of developing the ASE, relationships among the group members would not have improved. The NFCC was described as a family that often has to deal with difficult situations. This type of closeness among the NFCs is an equally important function of groups, explained by Bennis (1999): “They provide psychic support and personal fellowship. They help generate courage.”

Overall, members felt there was more cooperation, sharing and support among members, and they believed the board worked well together. Some members expressed that the NFCC was beneficial because members were able to learn from one another and build off of one another’s strengths. Some of these *management and communication strategies* carry over to the next category of research themes regarding *lessons learned*. In particular, the category will address the *impact of the ASE model through increased*

capacity of the NFCC and its members, and the *lessons learned* by members that they wish to share with others facing similar situations and challenges.

Findings Pertaining to Research Question #4: Lessons Learned

Research question #4 poses the following: *What lessons can be learned from the Juvenile Welfare Board and the Neighborhood Family Centers Coalition experience that may benefit future Juvenile Welfare Board efforts, as well as funders and service providers in communities throughout the United States?* As previously mentioned, the JWB and NFCC were looking for lessons learned from their experience. JWB staff had several interests: they wanted to demonstrate outcomes to the JWB board; they wanted to identify lessons from which they could learn, because they anticipated similar ventures in the future; and they wanted to share lessons learned with other organizations and communities. The NFCC shared this last interest—a desire to share their story with others who may benefit and learn from their experience. They all wanted to learn what worked in the process and what the impact was on the member agencies. In this finding, there are two themes that emerged from the data analysis that address this research question: *impact of the ASE model through increased capacity, and learning and sharing the lessons.*

Impact of the ASE Model – Increased Capacity

Among the NFCC members, no immediate impact of the ASE was recognizable, and it was difficult to determine if eventual changes and accomplishments were due to the development and efforts of “the Coalition” (the collective group aside from the ASE); if they were due to the new ASE model; or if they were due to the increased capacity of members and their strengthened relationship, as a result of developing (or surviving the

development of) the ASE. Throughout this research, members preferred to talk about “the Coalition” as the pre-existing, voluntary organization that was separate from the concept of the ASE. Everything that was good about the NFCC and the integration process was attributed to “the Coalition.” Members referred to the ASE when talking about the negative aspects of the process, such as dealing with issues of contract compliance, funding flow, and the extra workload. From an outsider’s perspective, it was often difficult to see where the Coalition ends and the ASE began, and it appeared that the outcomes and successes were a result of the blending of the two. There were two areas of increased capacity that intertwined these separate identities of the ASE and the Coalition: fiscal capacity and peer support.

Fiscal capacity.

When first looking at increased capacity, participants’ first interest was cost efficiencies. The ASE model was originally deemed to be way to reduce costs and to save “taxpayer dollars.” As efficiencies became more difficult for members to identify and measure, and as it become evident that these may not be achieved, the focus shifted to the overall capacity of the NFCC membership—their ability to do more with less and their ability to function as a strong collective body.

As it pertained to financial impact on the NFCs, the perceptions varied depending on the size of the agency. The larger centers felt that the impact, if any, was negative, due to *the tax*. As previously stated, they saw it as a simple funding pass-through, for which they had to pay *the tax* to make happen. Representatives from larger centers didn’t see any immediate positive outcomes for their NFCs, and despite their early complaints, the negative impact was negligible.

Where there was a greater impact or potential impact was with the smaller NFCs. The plan was that they would be able to inexpensively purchase various administrative services from the NFCC. As demonstrated in previous chapters, however, NFCC members felt that this didn't happen. Some still hoped that such savings would be realized in the future. To a limited extent some of these savings did start to occur throughout the continued course of this research.

One area where there was an immediate impact was in their ability to attract new funding. As a collective, the NFCC enhanced the group's ability to bring in collaborative grants. They were able to attract grants from funders that told them they would not fund individual member agencies, but that they were interested in supporting the collective body. Over the course of 2 years, the NFCC was able to increase its total budget from \$2.3 million to more than \$4 million, largely through new grant revenue. Members also felt that the entity improved the reputation of the NFCs and NFCC. The NFCC became seen as a "viable entity" for the provision of countywide services, new program development, and securing competitive grants.

The NFCC members identified three overall areas where the NFCC increased its capacity as a result of the integration effort: increased support, increased stability and improved service. *Support:* The ASE may provide additional administrative support/services as needs change, and the ASE can provide training for new staff and management at the NFCs. *Increased stability:* They anticipated that the NFCC would grow and diversify its funding to benefit both the NFCC and its member organizations. *Improved service:* Through collaborative efforts, the NFC's built greater consistency of their service delivery efforts, operations and systems without affecting the autonomy of

each center. The NFCC was able to function as a single entity to view and respond to service delivery needs throughout Pinellas County, as demonstrated by securing new funding for the provision of new services countywide. Some of these areas relate to the next theme on *peer support*.

Peer support.

Some members said that the ASE helped their individual organizations, because it provided specific assistance in certain areas, such as emergency funding and peer support. A few members expressed that the ASE was a benefit to their individual organization through help provided by NFCC staff. NFCC staff and members were readily able and willing to provide technical assistance to one another. The provision of support helped ensure program sustainability among member centers. As explained in earlier chapters, the NFCC members became accountable to one another in a contractual manner. This includes when members fail to meet assigned performance outcomes, and they are responsible to help one another in such situations.

One significant capacity building opportunity that members hadn't realized by the time of their interviews was the ability to support new directors coming into the system. After the research interviews were completed, one NFC director left her position and a new director was hired. Through her membership in the NFCC, she was able to get training and assistance from the NFCC office. This was one capacity building benefit members had not initially acknowledged, but they later recognized this as being vital as they continue to grow and add new centers.

Overall, the capacity of the NFCC did grow, especially in the ability of its members to work together. Lounell provided one demonstration of this: "Two years ago,

JWB wouldn't have had an inkling or a twinkling in their eye about coming to the NFCC and saying, 'We have \$600 thousand. How can we spend it?'" Another member said, "We went from being step children to being something that [the JWB] take's a lot of pride in." The JWB staff are especially pleased and proud of the developed capacity and cohesiveness of the group. As Paul expressed, "I see them so strong now, I just can't imagine them failing."

Learning and Sharing the Lessons

The perceived success of this integration effort is what made it desirable for members to want to study, to learn from, and to share their story with others. Related subthemes that emerged from the data and which are shared here include *JWB's technical assistance and lessons from members*.

JWB's technical assistance.

Because of the unique model and the members' ability to make it work, the NFCC started to attract even more attention. Another thing that made this model unique was the strong level of support provided by the JWB, especially the technical assistance from staff, the funding support, and the time provided by the JWB to make this happen. These were unique aspects that other community organizations wanted to learn about or to demonstrate to their funding boards. Jim proposed that they capture this information as an example of where somebody was assigned to work on technical assistance with the organization over a long period of time—to do research, to help them, to look for the things that could cause some problems, and to help them through all of these things. Technical assistance provided by funders can take many forms and may include helping to build problem solving skills, training in special skills or for specific initiatives, and

more general organizational development. An end goal of technical assistance is often to work toward improving services that can be sustained over time. As addressed in the literature review, providing technical assistance and making efforts to evaluate this type of collaborative effort is one thing that is strongly recommended but rarely done by funders.

Lessons from members.

In some cases, the lessons learned by the JWB and the NFCC were shared; in particular, lessons pertaining to allowing adequate time, being flexible, and caring for the people involved. Key lessons NFCC members said they would share with other organizations were to take the time needed to plan and develop the process; to be patient with the people involved; and to be flexible. One lesson that NFCC members wanted to share that was distinct was: “Don’t fight it.” And if it is an option, a few members recommended not to develop an ASE, at all.

Involving people in the planning process who will be most impacted was another key lesson shared by members. “It needs to be a process that starts at the bottom and works its way up,” said Lounell. One more thing was offered, as a word to the wise more than a lesson to be shared: as nonprofit service providers see their funders conducting strategic planning and everyone begins to pat themselves on the back, beware, that they may be “coming for you next.”

Summary

This chapter started with an overview of the critical reflection process that involved the research participants in identifying emergent themes related to organizational and communication concepts that contributed to or resulted from the

integration process being studied. These thematic findings were grouped within the respective research questions:

- Research question #1: *considerations and challenges* in implementing the new integration model;
- Research question #2: the *funder's role* in guiding and assisting in the integration process;
- Research question #3: *management and communication strategies* implemented to mitigate the negative effects of this type of organizational change and/or to contribute to successful implementation of this type of integration model; and
- Research question #4: *lessons learned* that may benefit future JWB efforts, as well as funders and service providers in communities throughout the United States.

In reviewing these themes, connections were made between the interviews, observational data, the literature review, and my own key learnings to explore answers to the research questions. In the final chapter, I will discuss some additional key learnings, explore the implication of this research for nonprofits, funders, collaborative partnerships and scholars. I will also discuss the limitations of these findings, and propose areas for continued research.

CHAPTER 8

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Introduction

This dissertation research provided a unique opportunity to explore a nonprofit integration effort while it was unfolding. It also allowed me to look at the process from the perspective of the nonprofits involved as well as from the perspective of the funder responsible for initiating the new model. Through qualitative interviews and ethnographic study I was able to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges facing the organizations and individuals involved and to examine communication and management strategies they used to move the transition process forward.

In the previous chapters I shared the NFCC integration process through the words of the research participants and through my own observations. Themes that emerged from this construction were explored in relation to four research questions.

Research question #1. *What considerations do nonprofit service providers and funders consider when beginning the implementation of a new collaborative model? (i.e. Within the selected research sites, what were the concerns, issues, challenges and problems faced before and during the implementation of a management service organization? And how were these challenges addressed by participants throughout the process?)*

Research question #2. *What role do funders play to guide and assist nonprofit service providers in this process, both during the research, consideration and implementation stages?*

Research question #3. *What management and communication strategies are implemented to mitigate the negative effects of this type of organizational change and/or to contribute to successful implementation of this type of integration model?*

Research question #4. *What lessons can be learned from the Juvenile Welfare Board and the Neighborhood Family Centers Coalition experience that may benefit future Juvenile Welfare Board efforts, as well as funders and service providers in communities throughout the United States?*

Some of the themes relevant to these research questions will be revisited in this closing chapter.

A challenging and rewarding part of this research warranting special attention is the fact that participants wanted to be actively engaged in the research process, came with their own research questions and desires, and wanted to be involved in designing the research and in identifying findings. This allowed me to learn more about action research and to practice the principles of this methodology. The cogenerative nature of this research resulted in learning that was meaningful to all the participants involved: the funder (JWB), the nonprofits involved in the partnership (the NFCC members), and the scholar (me, the aspiring Ph.D.). In this final chapter, I will discuss the implications of this research within these three categories: *implications for funders, nonprofits and nonprofit partnerships, and scholars*. Recommendations for further research will be

shared under *implications for scholars*. After discussing these implications, I also will identify limitations of this study and make some closing remarks.

Implications for Funders

The active role of funders in organizational restructuring and consolidation is becoming a more common area of study, because more funders are moving in the direction of encouraging funded agencies to explore these strategies. This was referred to by Agranoff (2003) as an “engagement philosophy” that has unfolded for government: “Government should take on more of a developmental or steering role, promoting, regulating, and encouraging various types of nongovernmental activity and operations” (p. 8). An example of this is mandating partner nonprofits to consolidate or form new integration models.

In many cases, funders have an enhanced ability to see future trends that may have a detrimental impact on their grantees, and they can head these off by encouraging consolidation efforts. In this dissertation research, the JWB had the foresight to see the challenges the NFCs and other funded organizations may face in the future and provided the guidance needed to help agencies prepare for the coming change. What role a funder should play in encouraging or supporting consolidation efforts, however, is controversial: Should funders force consolidation if they think it’s in the best interest of the nonprofit, its clients, the community, or the tax payer? Or is this beyond the scope of the funder’s role?

A related implication for funders is that they should be more aware of and responsive to the perceived power that their grantees think funders wield over them. This issue was both addressed in the literature and revealed in this research through the

conflicting perceptions of the JWB and the NFCC members. Where JWB staff thought they were being helpful and providing gentle guidance, the NFCC members felt they were being forced to do something that would weaken their organizations. As pointed out by La Piana and Kohm (2003), because of the pressure felt by nonprofits, “it may not be realistic for funders to believe they can suggest and educate without their grantees feeling some pressure” (p. 21).

As funders encourage or mandate formal partnerships, they may be seen as contributing to the challenges nonprofits face, but they can also be viewed as essential supporters and advisors to organizations. Funders can play an instrumental role in helping nonprofits explore restructuring options, and they can play an important role in helping nonprofits implement new management or change strategies. Despite the fact that maintaining funders’ support is a primary reason why organizations pursue consolidations, few funders offer help in planning and implementing formal integrations.

Strongly recommended in the literature and demonstrated in the NFCC integration was the need for funders to provide support to nonprofits, should the need for consolidation become necessary. Especially when funders impose a consolidation or integration, the funder should take into account the time needed for participants to plan and go through the stages of change. Funders should also provide needed funding and technical assistance to ensure that new collaboratives are successful in achieving the desired ends. When measuring those desired ends, funders should avoid focusing solely on the cost effectiveness of the new model, because costs savings and efficiencies may not be realized or may take time to achieve. Funders also need to consider supporting

related research. These implications are addressed further under *implications for scholars*.

Lastly, funders need to be cautious not to pressure or persuade agencies to move away from their guiding mission. As covered thoroughly in the literature review, pressure to alter or move away from a guiding mission can result in identity confusion (Young, 2001) that can impact an organization in a number of key areas, including service delivery, advocacy efforts and personnel shifts. This relates to some of the implications for nonprofits and nonprofit partnerships addressed in the next section. Nonprofit partnerships may include relationships with other nonprofits, funders, and other private or government entities.

Implications for Nonprofits and Nonprofit Partnerships

Another implication of this research is that nonprofit managers and leaders should initiate proactive responses to potential shifts and trends that may threaten their mission and existence. Even if no such threats occur at present, nonprofits still have opportunities to explore new collaborative models that could reduce costs, protect their programs, and strengthen their agencies. To accomplish this, nonprofits need to be open to new collaborative models and to proactively seek these out. Most nonprofits participate in various community planning collaboratives or networks. These may include other organizations that may be potential partners for future consolidation efforts, and these may be perfect settings to initiate such discussions, even if only for contingency planning purposes.

Another implication for nonprofits pertains to their relationships with funders. Addressed within this research were issues related to nonprofit-funder relationships. As

demonstrated in the literature review and in the research with the NFCC and JWB, these relationships are often complex and conflicted: while they are essential for the survival of needed community services, they pose challenges such as increasing service delivery expectations and stringent reporting and accountability requirements. There also is a perceived imbalance of power felt by the nonprofit that results in funder suggestions and requests being construed as mandates, a concern discussed in the previous section. Often the pressures imposed by funders are cautionary or meant to be protective of their nonprofit partners, as demonstrated in the motivations of the JWB staff to ensure the continuation of all the NFCs.

Leadership of nonprofit organizations may need to trust that their funding partners are acting in the best interest of their nonprofit partners, and that they are often aware of forthcoming trends and policy shifts which may impact funded agencies. Regardless of well-meaning motivations, however, sometimes political pressures or agendas take decision making out of the hands of the funding representatives who work most closely with grantees. Because political shifts may occur with every election cycle, changes in funding sources and priorities will be ever present.

In addition to being proactive in exploring opportunities for mergers, consolidation or integrations, nonprofits also need to explore other sources of revenue to strengthen their independence. As described in the literature review, nonprofit organizations must be effective strategists “if their organizations are to fulfill their missions, meet their mandates, and satisfy their constituents in years ahead” (Bryson 1995, p. ix). Although diversifying revenue sources was not a focus of this dissertation, the pressures presented here underscore the importance of this strategy, and there are

many methods that nonprofits can explore in this regard, including endowments, client fees, and commercial approaches (see Alexander, 1999 & 2000; Dees, 1999; Salamon, 2003; Saxon-Harrod & Heffron, 2000; Smith & Lipsky, 1993).

Nonprofit Partnerships

As demonstrated in this research, when parties combine forces in a collaborative or network model, they should act as a single entity. Success in such an effort requires several organizational competencies and elements, namely a strong leader, acknowledging the emotional impact of the change, allowing time to implement the change and deal with emotional impact, the need for extra support (funding, staff and technical assistance), and supportive communication practices.

Having strong leadership, in addition to having qualified staff support, will help ensure that the benefits of a consolidation or integration are realized. Leadership and staff support were identified during this research as factors critical to the success of this planning and implementation effort. This included leadership of the NFCC board chair and support from the NFCC and JWB staff. Ensuring adequate staff to support a consolidation effort is a critical implication for nonprofit managers and funders. Many nonprofit managers (and funders) are already overwhelmed by their day-to-day work. Planning and implementing a new consolidation or integration model requires extra time and effort. For nonprofit and public managers, staffing should be a vital concern in the formation of future integration efforts, including the need for dedicated and qualified personnel who can deal with the myriad of process and relational issues that will certainly arise. Although nonprofit managers do not always have a say regarding who the elected or emergent leaders will be (in particular within the board of directors), managers can

initiate relevant training for leaders regarding partnership models and effective management and communication practices.

Having enough time to research and explore alternative models and to progress through the stages of decision-making was important for the success of this integration effort. In this study, participants acknowledged that slow parts of the process (including periods of conflict) were necessary, because members “needed to have those disagreements and discussions.” Conflict was part of the process and time was needed to allow members to work through disagreements, as well as the emotional feelings evoked by the change effort. This should be an important consideration for any collaborative partners who may be responsible for initiating future consolidation efforts.

Putting staff support in place to assist with a consolidation effort and allowing extra time to adequately plan and implement a new collaborative model requires financial resources. Too often, collaborative partners don’t adequately plan for the costs of consolidation, or they don’t entertain the idea of consolidation because of the costs involved. Additionally, funders often do not see this as a worthy expense. In many situations, these types of administrative expenses are not allowable under funding guidelines. An implication related to this issue is that funders and their respective policy makers need to look beyond the short-term expenses and outcomes to find ways to support these initiatives. All collaborative partners need to explore a broad range of opportunities to fund consolidation costs, such as through private foundations and donors.

Consistent supportive and effective communication also is critically important for the success of any consolidation effort, as demonstrated by this research. The literature is full of examples where poor communication or lack of communication hindered

organizational change efforts. Clear and consistent communication was integral to the success of the NFCC integration effort, including communicating early, frequently and honestly. The goal of communication should be not just to inform but also to engage members in the vision and process. By actively engaging and supporting members, they will be more likely to share in the vision of the model and support its success.

Implications for Scholars

Many of the implications for scholars can be identified by looking at the full body of research presented here and identifying any questions not fully answered or identifying any new questions that may have arisen as a result of this research. This is consistent with the cyclical nature of action research (Dick & Swepson, 1997; Greenwood & Levin, 1998 & 2006). Action research, including the research conducted for this dissertation, includes multiple cycles of action and critical reflection. During critical reflection, the research team examines what happened previously, then decides what to do next (Dick, 2002). Research teams should consider: What worked? What didn't? What have we learned? How might we do it differently next time? This mirrors the *lessons to be learned* that was expressed as a main reason for why the JWB and NFCC desired to participate in this research.

Implications for scholars also can be drawn from some of the research themes related to question #4 that addressed these *lessons learned*. Although this research question and related themes pointed to some lessons already learned from this research, from these lessons more questions can be raised and further areas for research can be identified.

This research provided a snapshot of this integration process. Interviews and critical reflection sessions were conducted during an 8-month period of time, and ethnographic observation continued for an additional year. Although this is a considerable amount of time, it doesn't provide the benefits of a longer-term study that might show how integration models like the NFCC or other public management networks fare over the long term. Because of the significant resources put into some of these ventures—resources being both financial and personal/emotional—additional research that explores the long-term outcomes of these relationships would be beneficial. Action research would be especially appropriate for this type of longitudinal study, whereby the primary researcher and organizational members can establish a relationship and mutual commitment that would withstand over time.

In addition to studying network relationships and how they change over time, research should explore the emotional impact of these types of consolidation efforts. This was not a focus of this research, but emotional issues and concerns were addressed throughout the interviews. As discussed in the literature review, care and attention to the nonprofit workforce is important because employees constitute an organization's culture and identity (see Domagalski, 1999; Fineman, 2000; Rafaeli & Worline, 2001; Shuler & Sypher, 2000). Unique to nonprofit human service work, major transformation caused by a consolidation can present significant challenges related to members' emotions and the need to support, engage, and assist them in moving through such a transition. Expressing care for people's emotions during a major change will not only help to maintain contentment among members but also can contribute to the success of the consolidation effort.

Another issue that is beyond the scope of this research, but which was repeatedly discussed during interviews and in meetings, was measuring the cost effectiveness of the new integration model. Cost effectiveness is important to public servants who are entrusted with making sound financial decisions with taxpayer dollars. The cost effectiveness of funder-initiated consolidations should be studied, but researchers need to be flexible about how to accomplish this. As demonstrated by this dissertation research, cost savings did not occur within a short period of time. In fact, depending on the type of consolidation or integration model, cost effectiveness, as reflected in financial statements, may never be realized.

Researchers need to broaden their definition of cost effectiveness and efficiencies. They cannot solely look at budget line items such as reductions in administrative staff, or reduced costs for insurance or office supplies due to joint purchasing agreements. If a new collaborative entity provides a safety net for small organizations that might otherwise close without occasional intervention, there are cost savings from not closing needed programs and by avoiding costly start-up of new organizations to fill a service gap. If a new nonprofit director benefits from the experience and capacities of the network and is able to hit the ground running, there are cost savings in reduced training time, and there may be immediate financial returns from the new director's enhanced productivity. If the synergy of a collective group inspires and provides emotional support to its members, which in turn enhances their job satisfaction and productivity, there are some cost savings or financial returns that will likely be gleaned. These types of cost savings and financial returns are not easily quantified, and therefore not often studied.

Sound research in this area may benefit many organizations that are pressured to prove their (cost) effectiveness.

In addition to new or broadened areas for further research are opportunities to incorporate different research methodologies and methods. This research incorporated strong components of action research that I would have liked to extend through further cycles of action and reflection. Demonstrating this type of extended research relationship may provide exemplars for future research and produce new ways of learning within this developing research paradigm. The research methods used could also be varied.

I wish I was able to fully share the stories of the research participants. One of the desires conveyed by participants was “to share their story.” While the case example provided within this dissertation shares many lessons from which others may benefit, it loses the rich descriptions that could better share people’s experiences and emotions within an organizational context. Narrative inquiry can be a useful research method for exploring organizational issues such as emotion in the workplace, and it is especially relevant in the nonprofit sector. Fineman (2000) and Sandelands and Boudens (2000) recommended stories as a research method that captures feelings and emotion in the workplace, claiming that “narratives can be used to discover universal human truths about feelings and forms of life” (Sandelands & Boudens, 2000, p. 56). I hope to continue my presentation of this research in a form that justly reflects the experiences of the NFCC and JWB members through their stories.

Overall, it’s also important for scholars to consider the importance and richness of these types of settings for further organizational communication research. As the trend

of nonprofit consolidations continues, there will be opportunity for further research in these settings.

Limitations

I have expressed several times that the sites included in this research were unique for multiple reasons. In chapter 4, I shared some data that reflected the setting of this research in Pinellas County, Florida, and highlighted some of the factors that made this research setting unique and factors that may have contributed to the phenomenon being studied, such as the large number of nonprofits located in a small geographic area. These factors alone are reasons why this research is not generalizable to other communities or other organizations. This dissertation, however, may serve as a useful guide to funders and nonprofits in other communities that may be facing similar funding constraints and consolidation pressures. There were some lessons shared by these participants from which others may be able to learn; thus the lessons may be transferable, even though they are not generalizable.

The nature of the action research methodology employed also makes it difficult to generalize these research results. Claims can only be made about the people and the systems studied (Dick & Swepson, 1997). As Dick and Swepson explain:

It may not be safe to assume that other people or other systems are the same. For that matter, it may be hazardous to assume that what is true of this person (or organization or community) today will be true next year. (§ 39)

What would be useful would be to have more research settings where situations and outcomes could be compared. This could lead to implying some level of generalizability if similar situations and actions produced similar outcomes. Although

such studies may not be conducted together, if sufficiently explained in a documented research study, comparisons could be made to test the broad applicability of findings (Dick & Swepson, 1997).

Summary

This dissertation research provided a comprehensive examination of the NFCC's development of this ASE. It provided a snapshot of this unique effort at an important time of challenge and change within the nonprofit sector, when more nonprofits and funders are exploring alternative ways of responding to the changing climate. This research is not intended to provide any definitive findings from which future decision should be made, but rather to provide an example of how one collaborative process moved through the steps to develop a new model for administrative services and oversight. This research has been shared with the NFCC to assist them in their decision making and planning related to improvements to their ASE and to assist them in helping other organizations that are considering similar consolidation efforts. This research has been shared with the JWB to help them make informed decisions about encouraging future consolidation and integration efforts and to guide them in their role within such efforts.

From a personal and professional perspective, my hope is that nonprofit organizations will be open to considering consolidation or other strategic restructuring as options that can prevent needed programs from closing, as well as to maximize the dwindling base of financial support available to organizations today. In addition, my hope is that funders will identify ways in which they can assist their funded organizations and the communities that depend on them.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Map of the Neighborhood Family Centers

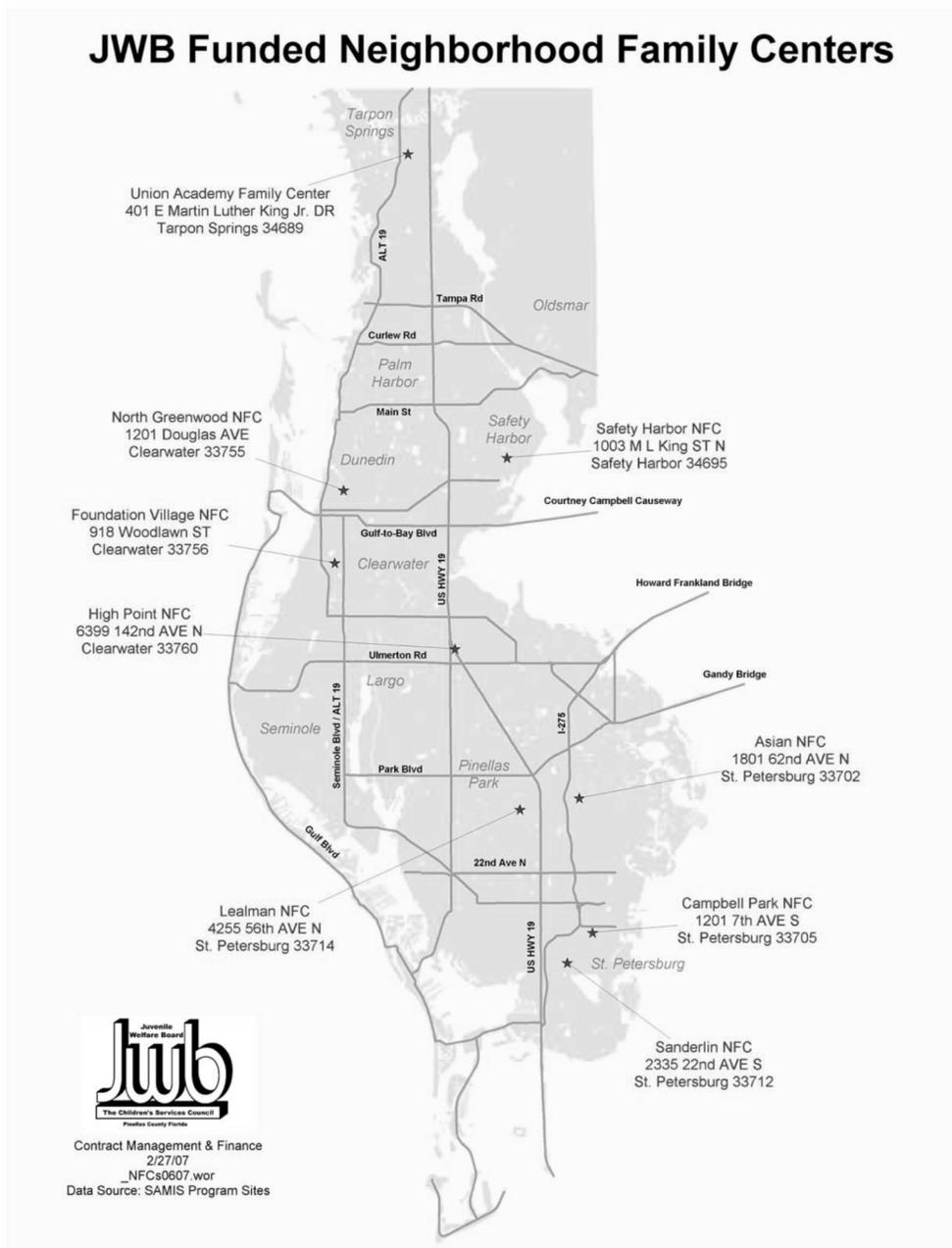


Figure A1. Locations of the neighborhood family centers throughout Pinellas County.

Appendix B

Qualitative Interview Guide

The interview structure, topics and questions listed here have been jointly identified by me, members of the NFCC, and JWB staff. Remaining consistent with action research practices, the process has been participative, reflexive, and cyclical in nature. Research participants were actively involved in developing the research questions and participated in a critical review of the findings, at which time, follow-up steps were determined, such as the need for change in organizational practices or the need for additional study. The interview questions listed here, therefore, were intended to be a first step in the research process. The need for and type of follow-up research was determined upon review of the findings from the first set of interviews.

My style for conducting these research interviews was to have a formal schedule of topics to be covered and/or questions to be asked but to allow the conversation to flow naturally, thus encouraging narrative and personal stories. When conducting research conversations and interviews for this study, I started learning about the individual participants and member organizations by asking broadly worded questions such as:

Q. Tell me about your own neighborhood family center. How and when did you get involved? How does your center differ from others around the county? What are the greatest challenges you and your organization are facing today?

In most cases, this elicited very open-ended responses that provided great opportunities for probing and follow-up. I also attempted to capture stories that reflect the culture of their organization(s). After asking a respondent about the general background of their organization, I may have asked something like the following:

Appendix B (Continued)

Q. Tell me about one of your most memorable experiences here. (This has been followed up on to obtain descriptive recollections.)

Question formats were structured in such a way to draw out narrative responses that could be shaped into stories, such as:

Q. Walk me through what this experience has been like for you, starting from the first time you heard the idea of a management service organization being proposed. How did you find out? What were you thinking and feeling at the time? What were the following days, weeks and months like?

While the tenor of my discussions with interview respondents followed this type of unstructured format, a list of key topic areas was developed in conjunction with the NFCC and JWB, from which I proposed an interview structure and sample questions. These topics were addressed during each interview discussion, to the greatest extent possible.

Interview Structure

[Note that any documents shared with the NFCC use the term ASE (administrative service entity), instead of MSO.] Interview questions normally progressed in the following order and structure.

Background / Past

Individual NFCs

- A. The individual NFC's history, uniqueness, challenges, stability, etc.
- B. The individual's involvement/role within their NFC
- C. The NFCC (the informal collaborative)
- D. The overview, purpose, structure, members, individual involvement, etc.

Appendix B (Continued)

Introduction of “The ASE”

The NFCC

- E. Introduction of the ASE concept; members’ personal experience, thoughts and concerns
- F. Recalling the timeline of events and reactions, for self and others

Individual NFCs

- G. State of the individual NFCs at the time of the ASE announcement: condition, reactions, decision-making, etc.

Developing “The ASE Coalition”

- H. Timeline of activity, conversations, decision making, conflict, milestones, reactions, etc.
- I. The role of JWB and other outside parties: communication, planning, assistance, challenges, possible alternative outcomes (i.e. without JWB & others), etc.
- J. To break up the tenor of the interview and to provide a different framework for recalling and expressing views and feelings, I’ve added a few analogies for members to describe various aspects of the process.

Process Analogies

- K. What analogy would you use to describe this process, and why? (ex. Developing “The ASE Coalition” has been like getting a wisdom tooth pulled, because _____.) Explain.
- L. What analogy would you use to describe the JWB and their involvement? (ex. JWB is like _____, because _____.) Explain.
- M. Sticking with analogies: How would you rate the overall process? ex. smooth as silk, rougher than a road with 3-ft. wide potholes, like climbing a mountain, etc. Explain.

Appendix B (Continued)

Today

The NFCC

N. Description of the organization, the board, members, culture, etc.

O. Give me another analogy: “The NFCC today is like _____? Why?”

Individual NFCs

P. The impact of the NFCC on individual centers, the benefits, challenges, etc.

Q. Change in individual roles

Looking Back and Looking Forward

R. Looking back: overall thoughts, changes that could be made, response to decision

S. Projections and hopes for the future

T. Lessons learned and to be shared with other organizations & funders

U. At the conclusion of my interviews, I asked the participant some wrap-up questions to solicit open responses and to clarify any questions the participant may have about the process.

Wrap-Up Questions

V. What question(s) would you like to see this research answer? For you? For the NFCC? For JWB?

W. Is there anything you’d especially like to learn from the other members that you haven’t already? (i.e. their thoughts about the process)

X. Is there anything you’d especially like to learn from JWB that you haven’t already?

Y. Are there any questions I haven’t asked that you wished I had? Or that you would like to add to my mix of questions?

Appendix B (Continued)

Z. Are there any things we've discussed today that you might be uncomfortable having shared in the research results? Either with your name identified to it? Or shared at all?

What adjustments can we make to give you a level of comfort in this regard?

AA. If I conduct follow-up interviews, to learn more about members' individual experiences, would you be interested and willing to participate in such an interview?

Example Questions

(numbered for discussion purposes, with the NFCC)

These interview questions were not asked as shown here, neither in order nor form. This full list of questions was provided to NFCC members (Evaluation Committee) to give them an idea of the type of questions that could be asked. This list of questions was developed collaboratively with the Evaluation Committee of the NFCC and received approval by the group.

General Information about the Individual NFCs

1. Tell me about your own neighborhood family center.
 - Organizational purpose and history
2. How does your center differ from others around the county?

Individuals' Background with Their Own Organization

3. How and when did you get involved in your organization?
 - Personal reasons for involvement in the organization

NFC Organizational Challenges

4. What are the greatest challenges you and your organization are facing today?
5. What challenges have you experienced in the past?
6. How would you identify the stability of your organization today? (ex: stable, stable but concerned for our future existence, currently going through some difficult times, unstable)

Appendix B (Continued)

Introduction of the NFCC

(Before entering this set of interview questions, I will distinguish between terms for ease of discussion: “The Coalition” will refer the originally formed collaborative, and “the ASO Coalition” will mean the current administrative management structure.)

“The Coalition”

7. When did you first get involved in “The Coalition”?
 - Identify participant’s role within The Coalition
8. What purpose did “The Coalition” serve at that time and throughout your involvement?
 - Identify structure, purpose, benefits, etc.

“The ASE Coalition”

9. When do you first remember hearing about the idea of an “administrative service organization”?
 - Details about the instance of first learning about the ASE

Initial Experiences, Thoughts, Ideas and Concerns about “The ASE Coalition”

10. Walk me through what this experience has been like for you, starting from the first time you heard the idea of a management service organization being proposed.
11. What were you thinking and feeling at the time? What were the following days, weeks and months like?
12. How did you first react to the idea? (ex. favored highly, favored somewhat, not sure, not interested, opposed, strongly opposed)
13. Why did you feel that way, at that time?
14. What were the following days, weeks and months like?
 - Individual experiences

Appendix B (Continued)

15. What about the other members?

- Individual observations about the group reactions

Individual Organization's Situation When Learning about "The ASE Coalition"

16. Back to the question about the challenges facing your organization, what was your organization like when you first heard about "The ASE Coalition"?

- Details about the organization's situation at the time of ASE planning, such as financial constraints, staffing, leadership, etc.

17. What occurred within your organization after first learning about the "The ASE Coalition"?

- Discussions among staff, board, etc.
- Type of decision making

18. How and when did you/your organization make the decision to become part of "The ASE Coalition"?

- Factors that lead to consideration of the administrative service organization

The Process of Developing "The ASE Coalition"

19. Following the first announcements or discussions about "The ASE Coalition," what happened within the NFCC?

20. Overall, how was "The ASE Coalition" formed? (*Extra time has been spent on this question to ensure all the following issues are addressed.*)

- How the group proceeded through the process
- Decision-making processes
- How the organizational structure was determined and established
- Leadership from/among board, administration and other entities
- Communication among members
- Conflict; dealing with conflict

Appendix B (Continued)

21. What role did JWB play in this process?

- Involvement of the Juvenile Welfare Board in the planning and implementation process
- Communication and relationships between the JWB, the NFCC and individual centers
- Individual experiences and observations about interaction with JWB

22. What did the JWB staff do to assist in this process?

23. Did they do anything to hinder the process?

24. How do you think the process would have developed / unfolded without JWB's involvement?

25. Who else (from outside) was involved in this process? What role did they play?

- Other outside providers (such as Allegany)

Individual and Group Reactions

26. What were your overall thoughts and reactions throughout the process?

27. What about the other members?

28. What analogy would you use to describe this process, and why? (ex. Developing "The ASE Coalition" has been like getting a wisdom tooth pulled, because _____.) Explain.

29. What analogy would you use to describe the JWB and their involvement? (ex. JWB is like _____, because _____.) Explain.

30. How would you rate the overall process? Let's stick with analogies? ex. smooth as silk, rougher than a road with 3-ft. wide potholes, like climbing a mountain, etc. Explain.

31. With what you know today, what would you have changed about the process, and why? More support? Less "interference"? Not to have done it at all?

32. Overall, was this a good decision for your organization? For The Coalition?

Appendix B (Continued)

The NFCC Today

33. How would you describe the NFCC today?

- The organization
- The board
- The members

34. Give me another analogy: “The NFCC today is like _____? Why?

35. Overall, how would describe the organization’s culture and organizational climate?

Your Organization Today

36. How has the NFCC changed your organization’s practices?

- The benefits
- The challenges or drawbacks

37. How has the NFCC changed your individual role and function within your own organization?

38. Back to the challenges you initially listed that your organization is facing today, does/will the NFCC play any part in those challenges? Adding to...? Helping with...? Alleviating?

The Future of the NFCC

39. Where do you see the NFCC going in the future?

40. What would you like to see the organization accomplish in the next year? The next five years? Ten years?

Lessons Learned and to be Shared

41. Give me your top three lessons learned from this process?

42. How can your experience (and the NFCC’s experience) help other organizations?

Appendix B (Continued)

43. If the NFCC sent you out on a speaking tour, what message would you give to other organizations about this process? About your own organization's experiences? About the NFCC's experiences?

44. What advice would you give to a funder like JWB that is exploring this model?

Wrap-Up / Open Research Questions

45. What question(s) would you like to see this research answer? For you? For the NFCC? For JWB?

46. Is there anything you'd especially like to learn from the other members that you haven't already? (i.e. their thoughts about the process)

47. Is there anything you'd especially like to learn from JWB that you haven't already?

48. Are there any questions I haven't asked that you wished I had? Or that you would like to add to my mix of questions?

49. Are there any things we've discussed today that you might be uncomfortable having shared in the research results? Either with your name identified to it? Or shared at all?

What adjustments can we make to give you a level of comfort in this regard?

50. If I conduct follow-up interviews, to learn more about members' individual experiences, would you be interested and willing to participate in such an interview?

Appendix C

List of Interviews and Key Meetings with Timeline

Research Process and Timeline

Fall 2004	Initiated contact with site organizations
Winter 2005	Secured approval of my research proposal Began research
Dec. – April 2005	Conducted interviews and attended all NFCC board meetings (see below)
June 2005	Presented preliminary themes to the NFCC staff and board, and to JWB staff for feedback and revision; Met with main site contacts to review preliminary themes and NFCC recommendations
July 2005	Presented research report to JWB board of directors

Interviews and Meetings

Meetings to gain access to the site organizations

Paul Lackey, program planner, Juvenile Welfare Board; summer through fall 2004, several meetings to propose research and gain access

JWB management; fall 2004, meeting to propose research

NFCC board of directors; fall 2004, meeting to propose research

Appendix C (Continued)

Introductory and context-setting interviews

Paul Lackey; November 17, 2004, first interview session

Jim Mills, director, Juvenile Welfare Board; December 7, 2004 (retired)

Lounell Britt, executive director, James B. Sanderlin NFC, and president, NFCC board of directors; December 22, 2004, first interview session

Lounell Britt; December 29, 2004, second session

Keith Knowles, executive director, NFCC; January 12, 2005, first interview session

NFCC member interviews

Margo Adams, executive director, High Point NFC, and vice president, NFCC board of directors; December 28, 2004, first interview session

Margo Adams; January 25, 2005, second session

Mike Quinlivan, executive director, Lealman NFC; January 17, 2005

Victoria Schaus, executive director, Safety Harbor NFC; January 28, 2005
(resigned in 2005)

Bilal Habeeb-ullah, executive director, North Greenwood NFC; February 2, 2005

Tracy Hill, executive director, Childs Park Family Center, and former executive director, Garden Villa NFC; February 7, 2005

Judy Walker, executive director, Foundation Village NFC; February 8, 2005

Caroline Le, executive director, Asian NFC; February 14, 2005

David Archie, executive director, Union Academy; February 21, 2005

Lorina Padget, executive director, Campbell Park NFC; February 23, 2005

Appendix C (Continued)

JWB staff interviews

Browning Spence, research analyst, Juvenile Welfare Board; January 14, 2005

Pam Needham, contract manager, Juvenile Welfare Board; March 2, 2005

Lisa Sahulka, chief financial officer, Juvenile Welfare Board; May 25, 2005

Critical reflection process sessions

NFCC board meeting; June 2, 2005

NFCC board technical assistance retreat; June 6, 2005

Paul Lackey; June 7, 2005, second session

Keith Knowles; June 13, 2005, second session

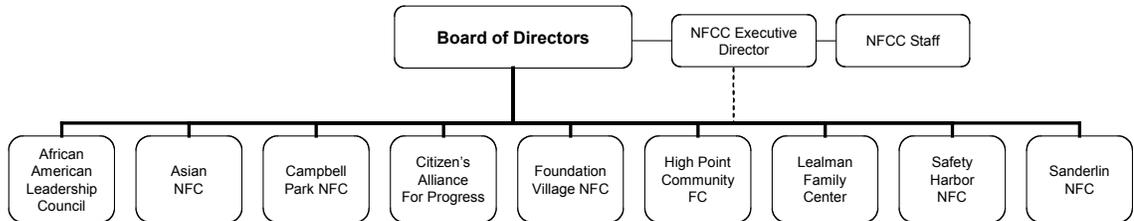
Site organization research presentation

Presentation to the JWB Board of Directors; July 14, 2005

Appendix D

NFCC Organizational Charts

Neighborhood Family Centers Coalition, Inc. Organization Chart



6/1/2005

Figure D1. Traditional NFCC organizational chart as prepared and adopted by the NFCC staff and board of directors.

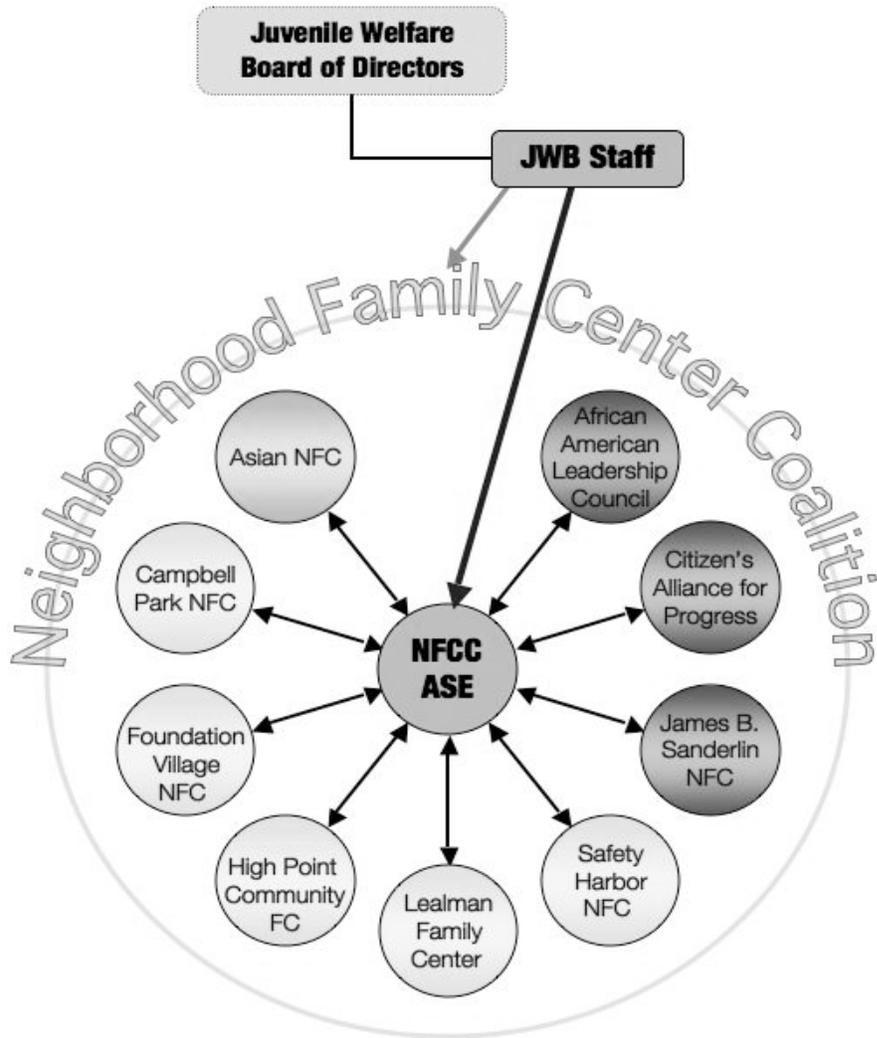


Figure D2. Researcher draft of an organizational chart showing the complex oversight structure of the NFCC.

Appendix E

Presentation of Interview Research Data to the NFCC Board of Directors – June 2005



Overall Questions for the NFCC Board (June 2, 2005 and June 6, 2005)

1. In reviewing the summary of comments shared on the following pages...
 - What is most directly on target?
 - What is most significant to be shared with others?
 - What is irrelevant, if anything?
 - What's missing?
 - What else is important that hasn't been covered?
2. What is most important to be shared with the JWB Board about this process?
 - Identify three key points that you think are important to convey?
3. How will this research/report help the NFCC, if at all?
4. How will it help JWB and the JWB Board?

In the table that follows (Table E1), **shaded rows with bold outlines** indicate sections to which special attention was drawn during the board meeting and retreat. Underlined items and ~~stricken~~ items (~~stricken~~) indicate areas where slight changes were recommended by the NFCC board of directors. Changes are noted: underlined text represents additions recommend by the NFCC board, and ~~stricken~~ (~~stricken~~) items represent deletions. These changes were made before presentation of the research findings to the JWB board of directors.

Appendix E (Continued)

Table E1. Overview of NFCC Board Member Interview Responses

This table provides a summary of how NFCC members responded to interview questions, with sample comments shared by members.

Interview questions & discussion topics		Consensus	Majority	Some members	One or two members
About the “Administrative Service Entity” (ASE)					
1	Movement to the current ASE model	<i>It was “forced” (Beth’s term) onto the group by JWB.</i>	<i>“The writing was on the wall.” (There were indicators from JWB Board meetings.)</i>		
2	Initial reaction from members	<i>There was strong resistance from a couple members.</i>	<i>There was some level of resistance from most members of the group. It wasn’t necessary; members could manage their own contracts.</i>		<i>A few welcomed the idea (mostly small organizations).</i>
3	More about reactions (continuing into early planning)	<i>Two members continued to resist throughout the initial planning for implementation.</i>	<i>Members accepted it because the funder required it. Members who resisted thought JWB would change their mind – that they could opt-out and still get funded.</i>	<i>In order to keep the JWB funding, members agreed to “go along.”</i>	

Appendix E (Continued)

During the process of developing the ASE					
4	Member cooperation and activity during planning		Two members <u>A few</u> members repeatedly disrupted the process by repeating objections.	There were some strong arguments among a couple members. Most members came around and participated in the planning process.	
5	What helped move the process along		Leadership of the board chair: The board chair kept things moving along. The board chair was able to smooth out tough situations and heated discussions.	Members cooperated; worked together to get the job done. The board worked hard and worked well together. The executive director was a great resource; served as an information liaison between JWB and the NFCC board.	
JWB's role in the process					
6	JWB's "plan"		JWB had a plan of what the ASE model should look like, but they didn't share it with the NFCC board.	JWB didn't dictate what the model should be. They wanted us to develop it ourselves.	JWB should have shared the plan. It could have saved the NFCC board some time and effort.

Appendix E (Continued)

7	Assistance with the process		<p><i>They provided assistance throughout the process, as needed. No one has ever done this before, so there were lots of questions to be answered. This is where JWB staff helped in the process.</i></p>	<p><i>JWB (Paul) provided lots of information about ASOs/MSOs; He shared information with us.</i></p>	
8	JWB staff roles	<p><i>Paul served as a liaison between the NFCC board and JWB. He would take information back to JWB to see what would work, be accepted, not work, etc.</i></p>	<p><i>Paul really advocated on behalf of the NCF. Throughout the process, there were questions with no answers – Paul worked with JWB to find or develop the answers. Paul was at all our meetings as a resource. He didn't butt into the process unless we were going in direction that would cause a problem.</i></p>	<p><i>Members didn't feel like anything was being held back from them. JWB was open and honest about the situation, forthcoming with information, etc.</i></p>	<p><i>JWB staff went out of their way to look out for the NFCs. Ensuring success of this effort was crucial.</i></p>

Appendix E (Continued)

9	JWB Board	<i>The NFCC and individual NFCs had to work to educate board members – this helped improve perception and credibility.</i>	<i>Members felt/heard negative reactions from the Board about NFCs. The Board's perception of the NFCs and NFCC is positive today.</i>	<i>JWB had problems with some previous NFCs, which <u>Some previous NFCs had problems with JWB and cast a negative perception on all the NFCs.</u></i>	
10	Would the ASE have developed without JWB's involvement?		<i>No. There was no real need for it.</i>	<i>Eventually – maybe. But far down the road.</i>	<i>Yes, but it would be different. We were already starting to head in that direction on our own.</i>
Knowing what you know today...					
11	Would you have changed the level of JWB involvement?		<i>The level of JWB involvement was good: They were a good resource, but there was not too much interference.</i>		<i>They could have just told us what they wanted.</i>
12	Would you have changed the process?		<i>No. The process developed well. Any controversy or slow parts of the process were necessary. We needed to have those disagreements and discussions.</i>		<i>It could have been done more quickly; i.e. if JWB shared a model at the start of the process.</i>

Appendix E (Continued)

13	Was this a good decision for your individual NFC?	<i>There will be/may be some benefits in the future – through our ability to apply for consolidated funding.</i>		<i>No. It hasn't made a difference at all, and we're paying 2%. We are able to learn from each other and build off of each others' strengths.</i>	<i>Yes. It has provided benefit; i.e. through help from the NFCC staff.</i>
14	Impact on individual NFCs...			<i>It's helped; it provides some stability or has provided specific assistance in certain areas. None. Everything is the same.</i>	<i>It requires more work and time, as it pertains to involvement in the board, committees, etc.</i>
The NFCC today & future...					
15	Overall...	<i>We're still figuring everything out. It will provide opportunity to bring in more/new grant revenue.</i>	<i>It's still in its infancy but strong. There's more cooperation and sharing among members. It will continue to enhance our reputation and image in the community.</i>	<i>There's more support among members. The Board works well together.</i>	
Lessons learned...					
16	Overall...		<i>Don't fight it. Take your time.</i>		<i>Don't do it.</i>

Appendix F

Outline of Presentation to the JWB Board of Directors – July 2005

Quick Overview of Presentation Themes

Impact of the ASE model – increased capacity

Cohesiveness

Coordination

Capacity

The Juvenile Welfare Board's role in the organization's transition

Allowed autonomy

Advocate

Accommodating

Outlook for the future

Support

Stability

Service

Cautions and limitations

Measuring cost effectiveness:

- Service Delivery
- Stress
- Sustainability

Funder's role

Appendix G

Thematic Categorization of Significant Interview Responses

Table G1. Table of Significant Interview Responses

Thematic Categories and Sub-themes	Significant Interview Responses
Considerations and Challenges	<p>“Developing the ASE has been like an elephant giving birth, because the gestation period is long. The birth experience is difficult, and things grow over time.”</p> <p>“It was, in fact, a life boat.”</p>
<i>Inducement to Integrate</i>	
<i>Protecting the NFCs</i>	<p>I know I felt very strongly from the get-go that we needed some sort of a collaborative arrangement if the whole network was going to survive. I pushed that very hard—the cooperative.</p> <p>I think they did not want to see us go down the tubes. I think it would have been a public relations disaster because we were functioning.</p> <p>From the JWB’s standpoint, it’s very important that it succeed for a number of reasons; certainly, politics is one. The other is that the NFCs fill a significant need in this community, and without them, those needs would go unfilled, and that would create enumerable problems at the neighborhood level.</p> <p>This was a means by which the NFCs could continue to function, despite the change in the JWB strategic plan. It was, in fact, a life boat.</p>
<i>The bottom line</i>	<p>Jim Mills met with us and talked about the fact that some of us would survive under their strategic plan and some of us would not.</p> <p>Yes, you have a choice. But that might be to not have any funding. (laughter)</p> <p>We have two choices: JWB has said...they’re going to give our money to the coalition, so you can either be a part of this, or you can choose not to be a part of this. That depends on whether you want the money or not. I would prefer to have the money.</p> <p>You also come to grips with reality; if I want any money, then I have to figure out a way to play on your field. So you learn to do that.</p> <p>You don’t find many funders out there that will fund staff and buildings.</p> <p>When you have one funder, who is your major funder, whether or not you are on the good side of that funder or not so good side of that funder can make a difference in your life. You are either on the poo-poo list or not on the poo-poo list. It depends.</p> <p>Do they want to play by JWB’s rules? If they didn’t, then we need to think about how we are going to fund what we do. And unless we can find a millionaire or some kind of way to fund what we do and tell JWB to take a flying leap into the middle of next week, then we have to make a decision about how we were going to do this.</p> <p>The bottom line was we want to do what we’re doing. So we figured out a way to get it</p>

Appendix G (Continued)

	<p>done...They chose to make it work.</p> <p>Well, we decided that, it was inevitable. There was nothing we could do about the single contract. That was a done deal.</p> <p>We fought the fight. We're not going to win the fight. Give it up.</p> <p>"It was this or nothing."</p> <p>I'm not sure that (one member's) on board, but the train left, and he has to get on it.</p> <p>Do whatever you want to do. The message is very clear. You will be on this train, or you won't be anywhere.</p>
<p><i>Resistance to Change</i></p>	
<p><i>Losing independence – "Taking my mule away"</i></p>	<p>This was not something that anybody sought out or wished to have happen. This was something that was forced upon people who had been functioning quite well and quite independently for quite some time.</p> <p>I'm the one who used to have the paper saying, 'You gave me forty acres and a mule,' and now you want to take the mule and the forty acres away?</p> <p>(It) was like a step down for some of the members. It's like saying to them, 'We're defunding you.' They lost face over it, a little bit.</p> <p>It's about independence. I thought, they've got a lot of nerve telling me how I will do business. And, what do you mean, I have to do it this way?</p> <p>The resistance wasn't the probability of operational interference. The resistance was, 'I've got this agency that I've been running very successfully, and I don't want anybody to screw around with.'</p> <p>I think it was just, they felt they were not being respected as executive directors of their organizations</p> <p>It's one thing to have a funder control your money, but then to have another layer in between there...What does that mean?</p> <p>There was a lot of resentment at first. "(Some members) had a fit. (They) did not want to see JWB's hands on OUR coalition. You know, it was like, wait a minute! This is ours! JWB's got nothing to do with it.</p>
<p><i>"It doesn't make sense."</i></p>	<p>All it does is take our money from JWB, send it to another entity, who then sends it to us.</p> <p>I think the board thought it was going to save money. And, but it doesn't. Not on our side of the fence, it doesn't save any money.</p> <p>"Keith Knowles has become a very expensive contract manager."</p> <p>"I was hopeful that we would be relieved of some of the paperwork aspects. That hasn't come about, to be honest."</p> <p>There was no valid reason to create a single contract. There were no cost savings. Maybe there will be some efficiencies later on, but at the time, there were no identifiable, quantitative reasons to make this entity.</p> <p>What do you mean, "I'm small and I don't have money to sustain myself?" Some of the big boys get in trouble fiscally, so that's not a logical argument.</p> <p>It wasn't really going to be based on how well they (the agencies) did or not did, but that</p>

Appendix G (Continued)

	<p>they were small agencies.</p> <p>They keep saying to us, they're going to monitor the coalition, and that the coalition will have to monitor the NFCs. And I keep saying to them, "But that's incestuous, because I'm monitoring myself. If the coalition is responsible for saying that I get an A+, and I am the coalition..."</p>
<p>"The tax"</p>	<p>I don't think they (NFCC members) would have ever stepped up to the plate and said, 'I'll give 2% of my budget to do this.</p> <p>It doesn't do anything for me except that it is my contribution to the running of the coalition to that office, that's all. But it doesn't bring me anything in that sense.</p> <p>You've got to give them the blood.</p> <p>(Members) went crazy!</p> <p>It really got hairy. But, hey, 2% is 2%.</p> <p>We'd come back to the next meeting and some of the arguments would start over again (about <i>the tax</i>).</p> <p>They got to calling it "<i>the tax</i>"...lovingly.</p> <p>"I'm not paying the 2% tax." You know, they love to say that.</p>
<p><i>Manifestations of resistance</i></p>	<p>EXAMPLE: Some members would not give their email, or refused to have direct deposit of their payments.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: Some members withdrew their presence from meetings to slow down debate.</p> <p>Well, my board's not gonna go for it.</p> <p>You mean, was there ONE TIME when that happened?! (referring to arguments at meetings). Were there an ENDLESS number of times when that happened?! An UNCOUNTABLE number of times?! Yes, there were uncountable times.</p> <p>Every board meeting was an exercise in contention.</p> <p>They were in a room here screaming and stomping and threatening to walk and sit-ins; I mean, you name it. They were threatening everything imaginable.</p> <p>Sometimes saying JWB's name around that table was like waving a red flag, you know, all over the place. So now, we are watching it go and seeing where it is leading us to.</p> <p>You know, having tempers flaring, and all that. And some organizations would say, "Well we don't care whether the small ones make it or not." You know, those kinds of things were hurtful, and people don't forget that. Even when things get good they still don't forget that.</p> <p>Then there were varying degrees of resistance which varied from, "Well, if we've gotta do it, lets do it." To "This is a terrible thing, and I'm gonna make it as difficult as I can for this process to unfold," hoping that somewhere along the line that it would simply disintegrate. It was NOT a happy, easy process, period.</p> <p>Some felt, one in particular felt, that he could fight this until the bitter end and prevail and not do it; not join the coalition, and retain his money and retain his agency and carry on. Well he was disabused of that fact.</p> <p>It's also hard for people not to do what they've always done. It's really hard for people.</p> <p>First of all, every one of these organizations is going to through the process like a person</p>

Appendix G (Continued)

	dying. They're going to go through denial, regret and all that.
Funder's Role	"They've been like the patient parent. They have worked with us through this process."
<i>Funder Pressure</i>	<p>There was a lot of negative discussion going on at the (JWB) board about NFCs, and they were basing it on history, not current conditions. So, that kind of really tainted their view of the NFCs.</p> <p>Some board members think it's a waste of time, money, effort...I think principally because they don't understand what we do. So, they were anxious to see that money that was being spent on us go to other programs.</p> <p>They felt like the impact would be greater for the community...They thought it would also be more efficient to do it that way. There are a lot of expectations from the JWB board about making sure we get every tax dollar back to the community.</p> <p>They were getting out of the business of funding small agencies.</p> <p>If the board doesn't like little agencies, then we gotta make these guys a big agency.</p> <p>Jim called us into a meeting. He said, "Okay, this is what we're going to do, and if we don't do it, then some of you that are sitting around this table will no longer be in existence."</p> <p>When JWB went through their big strategic plan stuff, they said little agencies would not be funded, and they encouraged, ENCOURAGED, some people to merge.</p> <p>They kept pushing and encouraging and pushing and saying, "We want you to create an administrative service agency."</p> <p>We were beginning to feel like, uh-oh, the train's coming down the path going 190 mph, and the light we see is not the end of the tunnel, it is the train that is coming at us.</p> <p>The message was to get on board or get run over. That's basically what the message was. It kind of felt like it was stuffed down our throat. I think, gradually, folks might have seen the picture, but it was all of the sudden.</p> <p>We sort of laid it on the line.</p> <p>I think that at first the feeling was, why do we have to do it this way? And I think the message was very strong: "It's this way or no way," because originally, when JWB started their strategic plan, some of the smaller centers I think, had already been written off because they were small.</p>
<i>Perceptions of the Funder</i>	<p>It went from a bunch of retired social workers to the big boys. The <i>Saylors</i> of Raymond James (<i>referring to the new JWB board president</i>) and the good republicans and folks like that.</p> <p>There was, and I think continues to be, some concern by certain board members about the NFCs. Some board members think it's a waste of time, money, effort...</p> <p>(JWB) staff has always been very supportive of the NFCs. Some of them had other pet projects; others had personal axes to grind; you know, that kind of thing.</p> <p>This wasn't what the staff decided; it's what the board decided. And I think they're willing to give you a chance to put something together. Now it's up to you to do it.</p> <p>The Juvenile Welfare Board is a different kind of board. They don't know you so they don't have the same kind of empathy or passion you have. Although some of the</p>

Appendix G (Continued)

	<p>decisions they make, there is not necessarily wrong decisions.</p> <p>You have to recognize that funders have their rules they have to follow, too. So sometimes when it doesn't feel too good, it is not necessarily that they are trying to be mean and nasty to you but they have to play by their rules, too.</p> <p>I think that it was a way to protect the family centers and to reduce the number of contracts that the JWB staff had to process. So, it reduced the number of contracts, and they're proud of that. They have reduced the number of contracts they have to manage by a great deal.</p> <p>I have to tell you, that I'm a JWB believer. You know, I think that there had been times when I've obviously been frustrated by the JWB. I think anybody who isn't is crazy. But I think that they have done an exceptional job in working with this with entity and this process. An exceptional job!</p> <p>I think there were times when the JWB felt that they were not being given credit for what they were doing, which by the way was true; they weren't being given credit for what they were doing; because they were taking stuff away from people.</p>
<p><i>Funder Support</i></p>	
<p><i>Flexibility & Logistics</i></p>	<p>We sort of wrote the book as we went along.</p> <p>They've been very supportive, and they've been very accommodating. They've changed policies and procedures that were literally cast in concrete to accommodate the differences with the coalition.</p> <p>When I use the word accommodating, I was understating it. You know, they've been very, very interested in working with us, and they have made some changes that, frankly, I would not have anticipated them willing to.</p> <p>Here at JWB, we're very, very flexible. I mean we changed policies. We have rules in place that were changed. We had to, because this was something new.</p> <p>That's why we implemented and tested for six months; we actually implemented the policies in a test phase for six months (financial policies, programmatic, data, etc.). But there were questions that came out that you didn't think about when your building this thing, you know. Because sometimes you can't think of every possibility. And thank goodness we had that six month testing period for every possible thing that would have (happened),</p> <p>Some of those things we do have to go back and renegotiate, because we had asked for it one way, and we got it approved, and then we got there, it was like, "Oh, you know what? This really works better this other way." And, thank God they were flexible.</p> <p>Well, when you start up a new business, it takes some capital.</p> <p>JWB did some things too to help ease the burden. We were able to give them a cost of living (increase), which really was the same as what the 2% was. So, it's the 2% they normally get for their employee raises. So they had to give up their 2% to pay the tax. But then they started to realize that they were going to save more. So they kind of started hushing up about it.</p> <p>That's when Jim...said, "You know, we've got to somehow capture this whole thing about technical assistance. Because the board does not understand. They think you can just throw people out to do this stuff and they should be able to do it. They</p>

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	<p>don't understand that, especially in the beginning, that organization needs a lot of TLC to get going and be successful. Sure you can back off after a few years, but you have to give them that time to make their mistakes and help them through them, and those kinds of things.</p> <p>By the time we got to October, it took over like that (snap?). It was incredible. I mean nobody even noticed that it happened, it was so smooth. I mean, it was scary, it really was. And we were holding our breath, but everything went perfectly.</p> <p>(Members saw) that this was not going to destroy us; that it wasn't going to interfere with their operations; that there really was very little change, subtle changes only, in how the funds were flowing.</p> <p>October 1 they had to fly all on their own, and they did it...They did. I think that I had a cardiac getting the first reimbursement in: Would it be right? Would it go through?</p>
<p><i>Autonomy & Independence</i></p>	<p>Community groups tend to very, very mission driven...If one of the ongoing problems is trying to do programs and trying to manage—and most of the problems come out in the management side—well, let's figure out a way to ease up the management demands and let folks concentrate on what they really love, which is programs.</p> <p>He said (to the NFCC members), "We're going to work with you to let you develop the model." And I thought, whew! Boy! And I slid those (plan documents) right off the table.</p> <p>✓ Sometimes you just try to do so much for people, and you don't realize that you're taking away from them things they really want to do for themselves. Because it means something to them, as far as being a leader of the organization. They're being included...they're not being told what to do.</p> <p>Jim tried to give them as much autonomy as he could in this process, which was helpful—(laughing) or a hindrance at that the same time. Because giving them autonomy allowed them to still try to work independently.</p> <p>It was a win-win for them, as well as for us, because they needed to make this work. So, they tried real hard not to get in the way. It was in that sense they tried real hard not to drive the train, not to get in the way, not anything. And so, it worked.</p> <p>I think another thing that really helped, is that everybody kept their board; everybody kept their corporation. And we didn't push for the wholly-owned operation. They could look at that, and they could hang on to that. It's still my board; it's still my corporation; I can still do these other things. I think that was very helpful in the process.</p> <p>I think the biggest thing that we did was to tell them that they're still the boss. They still run their programs the way they've always run them. They can collaborate on contracts; they can collaborate for funding; they can collaborate for all kinds of money-saving deals; or they cannot. We left it completely open.</p> <p>"The way we're going to do it is going to be a little odd to some people, but the way we're going to do it is going to keep you in control of your own destinies. The organization that will say "yes or no," will be directors of each one of the agencies on this board (all the NFCs). Each organization has one vote, and you all will make your own decisions. Keith will work for you."</p> <p>So, we got an opportunity to build this thing that WE wanted to build. There isn't</p>

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	<p>anybody else who can be in charge of the executive director who is in charge of their money. We are the board. So, we can build it to meet our needs. That is how we began to do that.</p> <p>They had decided to let us do our own thing, and so we had to kind of say, well, we need to figure out what it is they thought was going to be created.</p> <p>Overall, they said your money's got to go this way, but we were allowed to decide how we wanted to play that game, because they could have structured it in such a way that we had no control over our funds. So we were allowed to do that.</p> <p>I think that really helped them feel better about it. Because they realized we were not trying to stick this down their throat. Even though there were pieces of it that we said, "Look, you know guys, we're kind of in a problem here."</p> <p>That's why we created this board. This board will be, whoever is the leader, whoever is the chair, will be on the agenda to discuss or say, "Somebody's out of compliance." Them being out of compliance could lead to problems with the entire organization being funded that year.</p> <p>I told them, "I'm the one who wrote the plan. I based it on some models I had seen and based it on how I knew you all were operating, and trying to blend those things together. But Jim just is so committed to you as individuals that he could not do that to you. He could not say, 'Here's our end view.' He wants you to come back and work with Paul on developing this plan and be a part of it."</p>
<p><i>A Liaison of Trust</i></p>	<p>Dealing with the entire NFCC was an interesting challenge, because I got to also be involved in all of these problems. Because even though they had their own planners they worked with, I was at the Coalition, so I was readily available to them, and they would bring along their problems to me to work with. So, I got to know all of them very well, through the problems that they had.</p> <p>I suddenly became the person to go to and ask questions, you know, and find answers for those problems. So, it kind of just came to a natural progression when I started working with them, all of them, one way or the other.</p> <p>Jim told me, "They are your number one priority, over anything else that anyone gives you." And that helped. And Browning said the same thing. So knowing they could be my number one priority regardless, always allowed me to work them first.</p> <p>There was a time there, probably 6 months, that I (worked on) something EVERY DAY: insurance, systems, computers, policies...</p> <p>I think part of it is you have to really be committed to something like this to make it happen. Because if you just say, "You all got to do this," the chances of them really doing it and getting it the way it's suppose to be, it's going to be hard to do. Because you're going to have to have somebody that's going to be the leader of the project.</p> <p>It tempers you somehow, to the point where I think you're more available as a resource to them, then someone that's just going to come in and take it on as one more project 8 to 5. But I got very, very invested, in this. They would tease me...They would call me the director of this or that organization.</p> <p>There was still some skepticism; some feelings of not trusting. And, I knew that from the beginning, because some of these people really have been treated poorly in the</p>

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past, not by JWB but by other community organizations, so they were not real trusting of large organizations like JWB. They thought we were probably out for something other than what we were saying we out for.

Paul is retired and he's made his money. Paul's going to say what he's got to say. He'll say it to Jim or (other JWB management). He doesn't really care. And so it worked to have that kind of advocate to be there and to do some things.

I kind of made it real clear them, from the beginning, "Look, I'm working here; I can work somewhere else tomorrow. I'm not going to lie to you. I have another income. So, I don't lie to people for money. I'm not going to do it."

And I told Jim and them in meeting, I said, "You know, I won't lie to anybody for money. I won't do it. I won't change the color of this picture." And Jim said, "That's wonderful. You tell them ???, exactly like you told me." And, I did.

I think that kind of changed something over time—their feelings about me and trusting me, because they got to where they would trust me. If I tell them I'd do something, they knew I'd do it. I didn't say I'd do it and won't do it. I follow up and make sure it happened. And then I went way out on a limb trying to do things like helping them get more computers, helping them apply for other grants, doing things for them that would help them enrich the programs they had, which would also help our relationship.

I tried very hard to make sure that people were trying to cool their heels over that, and I think a lot of people did.

Get it done. Get them ready to play (laugh). Get them ready...Because they got to get there. He understood that, and he believed in that, both in terms of why he wanted to do it and the reality of having to do it.

I tried to prep them a little bit. I went out individually to talk to them (to let them know this was coming). Jim's going to talk to you and explain to you what we've got to do.

Paul Lackey, individually, has done a significant job in negotiating the needs that we have with the JWB and helping them to understand the accommodations that they're (making now).

He's always, if we asked him information or asked him to clarify some things, he would do that. He learned early that we need, and he learned from his own experience with his own agency, that we needed to make sure that THE horse spoke the words. And preferably in writing.

If we're headed off in the wrong direction, you need to tell us that and what's the basis for that. So we don't go off in this direction, create something that is not what you are looking for. You won't hurt our feelings. We just don't like to do work for nothing, so he would participate in that way. And would take information back and get clarification on things for us in a kind of way.

We developed documents and things, or as we asked questions and needed it back in black and white, he was the person who carried it and brought it back. he was kind of given the lead and kind of nursing us along and being the go between, between the two entities.

It was good to have Paul there because we could then bounce off what we were doing and send it back and make sure that what we were doing wasn't going to get

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	<p>thrown back in our faces: “Oh, no, you can’t do that.”</p> <p>I think that they have done an exceptional job in working with this with entity and this process. An exceptional job!</p> <p>The JWB has been an integral part of this process, and an important part; not just because of the (funding), but because what they’ve brought to the process.</p> <p>I think the JWB has been very cooperative throughout the process. Their role has been to advise and to support. They’ve been very supportive.</p> <p>That took a lot of handholding and smoothing and finessing and getting people jobs and things like that.</p> <p>I still meet with him weekly. We talk about all the issues—everything. And if there’s anything I can do to help him through them, I do. If I can do anything, or talk to somebody, or come back here and talk to somebody, or help get something done, I do it.</p> <p>I didn’t get involved. I was trying to set back and be quiet, unless I was asked for my input.</p> <p>I would like everybody to see how important it is to work together to gain the most they can get. And I’ve learned through experiences in myself, that if you work together, you get a whole lot more than working by yourself. So I wanted them to realize that.</p> <p>I probably put a lot more energy in it, and I probably took every setback personally. Every time that there was any setback, I probably took it more personally than I should have...I felt like I was going two steps forward and one back. But I still was going forward at a slow pace.</p>
<p>Management and Communication Strategies</p>	<p>“Like climbing a mountain. Because you start at the bottom and it’s easy and you go, “Oh, okay.” But as you, you get out of breath as you go up that mountain it gets steeper and you have to hold on to things and you have to find crevices and rocks and a way to get to the top. So it’s like climbing a mountain.”</p> <p>“It’s only a lifeboat if everyone’s rowing in the same direction.”</p> <p>“If someone is not pulling their oar as much as the others everybody else has to work harder, and it’s up to everybody else to pressure that person to pull harder.”</p>
<p><i>Allowing the time to change</i></p>	<p>“Well you know, while I’m at it, I mean, I can also do some miracles.”</p> <p>First, it was like, I only have a few months to do this, and I said, “I can’t do it. It’s just too monumental to do,” because there’s too many things to get done.</p> <p>It kind of felt like it was stuffed down our throat. I think, gradually, folks might have seen the picture, but it was all of the sudden.</p> <p>We’ve got to give them breathing time, first of all, and then we’re going to have to give them time to regroup. After that, I can say, “Okay, so here’s what we’re going to do.” Then they have to deal with those issues.</p> <p>First of all, every one of these organizations is going to through the process like a person dying. They’re going to go through denial, regret and all that.</p> <p>But you know, we’re human beings. We evolve. Our emotions evolve. We don’t go from one emotion to the other like that (snapping fingers); particularly something of this complexity. You know, we’ve got to go through the whole grieving process, if you</p>

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	<p>will.</p> <p>They had already done research and had a model in mind. They could have just shared that with us from the beginning and saved us a lot of time.</p> <p>You have to commit 18 months from the time you start the process until the time you turn the key that starts the whole thing going. If you don't have that period of time, you will not be able to go through the essential part of the process, which was the anger, the acceptance, the denial, the resignation.</p> <p>When I talk about 18 months, what am I talking about? Thirty six hours, is what I'm talking about. Think about it. That group meets once a month for 2 hours—36 hours. Okay, so there were other meetings in between—50 hours! Fifty hours of effort to create something of this magnitude is no time. NO TIME! So, what if you wanted to do it in 6 months? Well, 6 months times 2 is 12; so, maybe you've got 15 hours to do it.</p> <p>I think having as a long a time to do it as we had was positive. It was not one of those things where you can just throw the switch. Because, yes, they knew one another—some of them more than others—but they really need time to get through the emotional stuff.</p> <p>Sure you can back off after a few years, but you have to give them that time to make their mistakes and help them through them.</p> <p>It was just step-by-step, inch-by-inch, all the way through, until we got to the end...we're still working on it.</p>
<p><i>Leadership</i></p>	<p>MIXED STATEMENTS ABOUT LOUNELL: She has a lot of experience. She's been there.</p> <p>Lounell provided tremendous leadership to this; just really had the right mix of, "I've been there. I know why we have to do this. We've got to do it."</p> <p>She's really formed a community, and there's no question about her commitment to her community. I think that made a big, big difference.</p> <p>That's one thing about getting old: you can say things that you need to say that should be said.</p> <p>I don't really see any major challenge. The glass is always half full to me, and there's always a way to get things done. Even if I have to take off my glasses and put on my rubber pads and do it myself. But there is always a way to get it done.</p> <p>I kept them advised, all along the way, about the strategic plan the JWB had and their plans for the coalition, the direction we were going in, what it was going to cost us...</p> <p>Lounell—bless her heart, the saint she is—said, "I'm paying more than anybody in this room, and I agree with this. And I think this is the way we should go. And I'm willing to pay my 2%, and it's much greater than anybody else." That really diffused a lot of things. So, it was that kind of thing that really helped us through the hard times</p> <p>I said, "You can get more flies with sugar than you can with salt." And they finally figured out a way to work and not clash.</p> <p>Sometimes we just had to say, "Well look guys. This is the way it is. You can either ride</p>

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	<p>on the train or get run over by the train.”</p> <p>For a minute there, they were like two roosters in the barnyard ruffling each other’s feathers. So, I said, “Ya’ll can work it out. Just go work it out!”</p> <p>To have the support that Lounell would come up with: “I would survive, probably, over everyone.”—And she would have.—”But yet I choose to be part of this group. I choose to save everyone. Not just two or three of you. I choose to save everyone that’s willing to be saved.” Wow! You know, how do you fight that?</p> <p>I just love working with Jim. He tells you exactly what he wants, and he puts trust in you to do it, and he’ll stay that way unless you prove that you can’t be trusted. And he supported me throughout that entire time.</p> <p>He knew all about these centers. He knew all their old problems, all their new problems. He knew the personalities. And he kind of saw some of the things coming down the road that he knew might happen, and sure enough, they did.</p> <p>They first said, “Keith needs to be the leader.” Well, at that point in time, Keith didn’t want to be the leader, because he was new. It was hard, because some of them didn’t really want to follow him at that point in time, in that role. So, it really was hard for that transition to occur. It took a while for him to take on that leadership role. Once he did, he’s done great. But it took him a while to build up to the point of saying, “Okay, now, you’re going to have to respect me in this position.”</p> <p>He was accepted into the program. I think he feels pretty comfortable now.</p> <p>My role was that of keeping the ball rolling...Let’s keep this on track, and understanding the nature of the resistance.</p> <p>There were certain skills that I brought this process, principally political skills, that the position really, really, really, really required. Patience.</p> <p>He’s a good board leader. He’ll turn the tide, when people would get angry. We did a lot of angry discussion about something, that’d be irrelevant almost, and he would turn the tide and say, “Let’s move this on to something more pertinent or serious.” And you know, it makes you feel good to see people do that.</p>
<p><i>Autonomy & Participation</i></p>	<p>I think we kind of had a showdown meeting. We really had a realization meeting for everyone—of where we’re at, and what we’re doing—when (members) said, “All we want is to be part of the process.”</p> <p>It was like, golly and oh my God! Sometimes you think that you’re helping somebody by doing something for them. And to them, you’re doing something without them. And we didn’t even think...We thought we were trying to be helpful.</p> <p>Once they got included in that discussion, and they started getting every piece of paper that everybody got in the executive meeting and everything, then that starts subsiding and everything was happy. It really was. It was just amazing. The change that happened. And I thought, my God, if I had known that 10 months ago, I would have handled this so differently.</p> <p>✓Sometime you just try to do so much for people, and you don’t realize that you’re taking away from them things they really want to do for themselves. Because it means something to them, as far as being a leader of the organization. They’re being included...they’re not being told what to do.</p>

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<p><i>Relationships</i></p>	<p>The main purpose with being together was the comfort of knowing that together they were all JWB funded, but sometimes they didn't understand the funding. So coming together where they could share their experiences and commiserate a little bit about the funders...</p> <p>It was basically more like a club, at that point in time, because they really didn't get funding through it. It was just a way that they came together, once in a while, and talked about what was going on in the centers and discuss issues they had, which helped them start talking, start building the coalition.</p> <p>They were able to handle the stress of losing a member. Because they're kind of like a family, you know. And sometime they're dysfunctional, like most families, but they're still a family. It's that feeling of, "You've got to save the family as a whole," but it's very hard to cut somebody out. I think it made it easier when we found another job for Tracy and her staff.</p> <p>We're learning to not just care about ourselves but to care about each other. There's a lot of sharing going on. I think it's a positive place for all of us to be.</p>
<p><i>Personalities & Interactions</i></p>	<p>They have their troubles. I mean they do things to each other sometimes that's petty (bad), because people just do.</p> <p>Their perspective was just as important as the people who wanted to move this forward. I don't believe that criticism is a negative thing. It challenges us. It makes us think. It makes us consider. You know sometimes we change positions because someone has questioned that position.</p> <p>There was no other place where they could do it and get away with it. If you're majorly frustrated, and you're not able to (have a) place to vent that major frustration, what do you do with it?</p> <p>There are people who will resist it until their dying breath, and then there are people who will ultimately come around. Well, you gotta know that. And when you have people who are going to resist it until their dying breath, you say, "That's that person."</p> <p>I told Keith, "If you're gonna fight with somebody, give them what they ask for. Sometimes you find out what you ask for ain't really what you wanted. It's more work than it's worth." So, he got on board and decided to do it that way. Keith did a lot. He had to learn some folks.</p> <p>KEITH ABOUT HIS ROLE: Mollifying JWB on one hand and the directors on another, and very often contradicting in that mollification process one with the other, but ultimately resolving all of it...all the differences.</p> <p>It took him a while to build up to the point of saying, "Okay, now, you're going to have to respect me in this position." But he was accepted into the program. I think he feels pretty comfortable now.</p> <p>They've gone through an incredibly difficult process. It was difficult professionally, and it was difficult personally. It was difficult in terms of the interaction that they experienced, and they were not daunted by that process. They were often frustrated, but they were never daunted.</p> <p>I got to where I was, instead of getting upset with them being silly (about <i>the tax</i>), I just started laughing, and I'd call it <i>the tax</i>, too. And, we kind of got through that period</p>

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	<p>of time.</p> <p>We sort of laugh about that. (One member said): “I don’t know. Seems to me it’s bad cop and worse cop.”...but with a laugh, which really made me feel good.</p>
???	<p>Jim got in there and sensed in the room that (the message) was going to be interpreted as some kind of directive from JWB, to take it or leave it, and he didn’t want that, because that’s not how we work. And thank goodness, he was sensing correctly.</p> <p>I had it all on paper and everything, and I had it there for Jim, and he decided not to use it. Which was a wise decision. That’s why I say he’s a wise person.</p> <p>At first, he was just really paranoid about us saying, “We’re going to fund you.” He’d say, “No, your not! You’re going to fund the coalition, not me.” (They joked and teased him about it.) He still realizes he works for the board. What’s interesting about it is, he’s got that divided in his head, where he understands his role. His role is to function and support the board and be liaison to us.</p>
Lessons Learned	<p>“Like that baby elephant. Which is to say that, right now, it is small and growing, and some day it’s going to reach the stature of daddy elephant. I hate to keep going back to that. That’s kind of an interesting picture, isn’t it? (talk about elephants growing slowly) This is going to grow very slow.”</p> <p>“It’s like a toddler. It’s been born and now it’s gotta walk.”</p>
Increased Capacity	<p>I’m proud, in a way. I think that they’ve really come to a point where they can govern themselves, and they’ve proven that. And Jim’s just so proud of this, he didn’t know what to do. Because they have just transitioned so smoothly; and no kinks, no problems, no binds, nothing. Everything went as it was suppose to go. And even facing an organization crashing and burning (Garden Villas), they were able to handle it and smoothly.</p> <p>What that would mean, they’d come to the table, just like they do up there (pointing up to JWB administration), and say, “Okay, tell us where you’re having problems.”</p> <p>First of all, we can intervene in a far more productive ways than the JWB could intervene. We can intervene constructively. The JWB often has to intervene punitively. That’s their role. And I’m not saying that that’s a bad thing, that’s just their role. You know, when you do something wrong, you get put on “corrective action.” That’s punitive. We intervene at the level where you don’t have to be on corrective action. We guide you through. We haven’t had the opportunity to do that yet, but the day will come.</p> <p>It makes it actually easier for this group to go out and say, “Here’s the situation...and we’ll help you do whatever you need to do to get through...and get your act together. We’ll help you get your problems solved.” But if they persist, it’s going to affect the overall funding of the organization. Then they can bring the hammer down and say, “Look, you know, we’re going to insist on this, because it cannot affect the overall funding of this organization.”</p> <p>They can help each other when they start having problems. They can step in, help organizations that are failing and...bring them out of it before the (JWB) board has to get involved.</p> <p>EXAMPLE—An NFC needs more money: They’re going to have to do it through the</p>

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	<p>coalition. That's the downside of it.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: Garden Villas NFC, which is no more. We transitioned the money to a plan that everybody benefited.</p> <p>✓Community groups tend to very, very mission driven...If one of the ongoing problems is trying to do programs and trying to manage—and most of the problems come out in the management side—well, let's figure out a way to ease up the management demands and let folks concentrate on what they really love, which is programs.</p> <p>As the months went by, some of them were saying, “You know this is great. I'm getting to farm out all of my bookkeeping, my month-to-month, and I get a statement, and I don't have to write any checks; all I have to do is run my programs. This is wonderful.”</p> <p>I mean we had people that wanted to turn it over the second meeting. They said, “We don't want that piece of it.”</p> <p>They've let go of more than I ever thought they would let go of, and I think as time goes by, they'll let go of all of it. Because how could you not want that deal; I mean, not to have to deal with administrative problems. It would be one of the greatest things an administrator could ever get, just to get to run their programs and never have to worry about staying in your budget.</p> <p>They would come and they'd say, “We can't wait for this, because it's going to save us so much money. Because we don't have dedicated people to handle our books...and if we have to do that, we can't be working on the programs. So, by turning this over...we got the time given back to us.</p> <p>I was hopeful that we would be relieved of some of the paperwork aspects. That hasn't come about, to be honest.</p> <p>The unknown value is the resource development advantage of a combined entity, as opposed to an individual entity. I believe that there is a significant resource development advantage to a combined entity. I mean, I know there is, because people like Eckerd (referring to the Eckerd Family Foundation) say that there is. When you look at some of the funding opportunities, it's clear to see that people would be far more interested in funding a countywide \$3 million dollar entity than a citywide \$200,000 dollar entity. And the perception of stability...That's where the advantage is going to come.</p> <p>I think people are beginning to get possible with it. I think some of the folks are glad to be sitting where they're sitting, because there's some benefit to it, in terms of that. I think people are beginning to feel real comfortable with it.</p> <p>They've come a long way. I think (the JWB board) saw: We laid out a challenge and this group rose to it.</p> <p>I see them so strong now, I just can't imagine them failing. Because, actually, in our board meeting...There's been a lot of positive comments about the board of the NFCC, and the support part of it, and saying things like, “Well, why can't we give that program to the NFCC?” And to see (this change), is a huge, huge thing to me. I'm proud of that.</p> <p>Now they're looking at us as lessons learned.</p> <p>We went from being step children to being something that they take a lot of pride in.</p>
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Appendix G (Continued)

	<p>Two years ago, JWB wouldn't have had an inkling or a twinkling in their eye about coming to the NFCC and saying we have \$600K. How can we spend it?</p> <p>EXAMPLE: Pam and \$600K discussion.</p> <p>NFCC has established themselves as a viable force to be reckoned with.</p>
<p><i>Coming Together</i></p>	<p>I was determined that the small ones were not going to be given less by the board than they needed to have. That every organization had one voice.</p> <p>They've been governing themselves very well. I tell them...I try not to pump their heads up too big...but I tell how impressed I am.</p> <p>They had to do the work. They had to make the decisions. They had to negotiate with each other around that table.</p> <p>Boy, I wish you would've been here a year ago, you would've seen a completely different group than the group you see know. What you see now is a groups that is truly working together.</p> <p>We didn't kill each other!</p> <p>I think it's fairly strong. I think we still have some coalescing to do, and to get a little bit more sophisticated. But I think people are beginning to get possible with it.</p> <p>I think more importantly, what has happened is that this group has come together as a working group. I think that is the single biggest accomplishment: that this very diverse group of folks, all with very diverse perspectives, is now working together. And it has been a very difficult process, and one that I think they should be particularly proud of. "Here, here!"</p> <p>I think what you've heard from me, hopefully, is the high regard I have for both the JWB and the group of directors that made this possible. Because without those two functioning entities working together, we wouldn't be sitting here having these conversations.</p> <p>One of the things that came out of that—and this seems kind of minor, but was major—was that one of the members the Coalition complained about the way the money was dispersed, but another member, who rarely ever takes on the first—If anything usually they agree the same way—said, "You were not here to vote. You were given the opportunity to vote, we all had one vote. The votes were tallied. We approved the dispensing of this."</p> <p>I thought (excited and clapping his hands), we have come so far! I thought, my God! I was so proud, I didn't know what to do. Because, you know, for them to get to that point from the point where they were screaming, 12 months earlier—They were in a room here screaming, and stomping and threatening to walk, to do sit-ins; I mean you name it. They were threatening everything imaginable—to the point of making those kinds of decisions...</p> <p>I'm very uncomfortable with all of us sending individual emails, in terms of what we want to do collectively.</p> <p>We started having those kind of conversations going on at the table, and all of the sudden, things got a little better. They got better and better and better.</p>
<p><i>Lessons to Share</i></p>	<p>So, the work that we're doing now, and the system modifications that they're making, in all likelihood will be applied to others.</p>

Appendix G (Continued)

The systems that had to be built to process funds and to process reimbursements....Because that's routine stuff, but that's an integral part of the process. That's stuff that we can share

I think that the early transition team meetings are things that we can share. Those are things, we can let people know, "Here's what we did. Here's why we did it."

You know, we've got to somehow capture this whole thing about technical assistance.

I think there are some lessons learned here and transferability to other communities. Too often we learn by the mistakes; we don't learn by how things went. And not everything went swimmingly. There were tough times in there, but they got there.

People began to get interested in what we were doing, and that it had never been done before. Other staff members at JWB began to say things like, "We're watching what you all are doing. It's very interesting."

We got a lot of calls from different places about it—different children's services groups across the state wanting more information. I talked to them on the phone quite a bit, off and on. Some places have tried it and failed, for different reasons. Because I think part of it is—and I'm not trying to toot my own horn here—you have to really be committed to something like this to make it happen.

I remember Jim saying to me once, he wanted me to go to Ft. Lauderdale with him to some meetings and talk about what we did.

It's not like an administrative service organization is something new. I mean there are actually groups out there that do this for a living; so, I really don't know.

It was kind of funny that people didn't even realize that they had used those models, and they didn't know that until they saw this report I did.

The ironic thing that has come out of this, is that now there are board members who talk about: "Well, couldn't we do this through the Neighborhood Family Centers?" And I don't sit there and point and laugh and say, "See silly board! You wanted to get rid of these, and now you want to give them more responsibility."

I think, ultimately, small agencies in this community may want to become a part of what we are. That would come with a price tag on it. If they want us to do their administrative work, then we would charge for that.

My hopes would be that it, first of all, would be a resource for other neighborhood-based agencies to become a part of and to benefit. My hope would be that it would be a means of expanding the NFCs well beyond their current level of funding and programs. The only way they're going to expand is with additional resources. The resources are gonna come from places other than the JWB.

Have what we do "down pat" and open the doors for some other folks who might be little agencies. I mean, there's power in the collective body. You're one person, and in the future, JWB is not going to offer opportunities for small people to get grants. Some of the small folks can come together and get grants. And how do we collaborate with other folks out there in the world? Those are some of the things I think about and plan for.

Take the time with the process. Be very patient with the people in the process. Be flexible.

Appendix G (Continued)

	<p>Before they begin the process, the people who are involved need to be a part of the process. It needs to be a process that starts at the bottom and works its way up. I don't think a lot of that happens.</p> <p>People look at this as, "Well, we're just gonna do it." Well, no you're not going to just do it. There's some things you really, really, really have to be very mindful of—personal interactions.</p> <p>Don't fight it. When the handwriting is on the wall, don't waste your energy fighting for a lost cause, because you can tilt at windmills all you want, and you will waste your energy.</p> <p>I sit there, a lot of times, thinking about the other agencies out there, and they were so busy praising Herb Marlowe and his great strategic plan; and I'm stilling there thinking, "Hey, they're coming for you next."</p>
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Appendix H

JWB Board of Directors

JWB is governed by a board comprised of 11 members: superintendent of schools, county commissioner, public defender, state attorney, one juvenile court judge, and six members appointed by the governor.

	Gubernatorial Appointee Van Saylor Chair			Public Defender Honorable Bob Dillinger
	Gubernatorial Appointee Joseph A. Smith Vice Chair			State Attorney Honorable Bernie McCabe
	Gubernatorial Appointee John Milford Secretary			Juvenile Court Judge Honorable Irene Sullivan
	Gubernatorial Appointee Cecilia Burke			Pinellas County Commission Honorable Kenneth T. Welch
	Gubernatorial Appointee Janet Caramello			School Superintendent Dr. Clayton Wilcox
	Gubernatorial Appointee Beth S. Wilson			

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Beth Eschenfelder began her Ph.D. program while working as executive director of a nonprofit organization in St. Petersburg, Florida. Having spent her professional career in nonprofit management, nonprofit public relations, and government contracting, she recognizes the economic and environmental challenges facing nonprofits today, and empathizes with the nonprofit and community leaders who are confronting these challenges, motivated by their passion for the people they serve. Her scholarship and community service work are committed to supporting this area of social change.

She received her M.S. in Public Relations from Syracuse University, where she also received a B.A. in Public Relations and Psychology. While pursuing her Ph.D. in Communication at the University of South Florida (USF), she also completed a Master of Public Administration. While at USF, she taught as a graduate assistant and adjunct instructor at USF, USF-St. Petersburg, and Florida Southern College. After earning her Ph.D., she began her full-time academic career at The University of Tampa, where she currently is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication.