

COMMUNITY PARTNERING FOR LITERACY EDUCATION: EXPERIENCES OF
INTERORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION

by

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(Under the Direction of Thomas Valentine)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand the nature of ongoing collaboration among organizations that provide adult literacy education in communities. The research questions guiding this study were: 1) What is the role of resource exchange in interorganizational collaboration? 2) What is the role of organizational and community image in interorganizational collaboration? 3) What is the role of internal and external pressures on interorganizational collaboration? 4) What are the roles of interdependency and control in interorganizational collaboration?

The study was built around two existing data sets. The first came from a process evaluation of a statewide adult literacy initiative in which the state sponsored a network for locally-run literacy collaborations in over forty communities around the state. The second came from a single study of one of those participating communities. The evaluation team collected data through interviews, observations, and surveys of literacy teachers, advisory board members, and other community stakeholders. The second set of data was subsequently collected in one community using the case study method. This data set included in depth interviews with three members of one literacy partnership.

Qualitative analysis of the data revealed positive and negative themes related to ongoing collaboration within a framework of four major categories: resource sharing, image enhancement, pressures to collaborate, and interdependence and control. Resource sharing, coordination of services, and community and state support strengthened collaboration among literacy providers. Collaboration strengthened organizational and community image except where missions were incompatible or independence was an issue. Pressures, both internal and external, affected ability and willingness to collaborate. Issues of interdependency and control challenged collaboration.

Conclusions from the findings revealed three dominant processes: cost benefit analysis, power dynamics, and reciprocity among partners. The model developed from these conclusions offers a rubric to strengthen collaboration through an overarching local structure. The characteristics of this model are that healthy collaboration 1) helps partners identify and weigh the benefits and costs of collaborating; 2) is structured for organizations to recognize and negotiate power dynamics; and 3) is characterized by reciprocity.

INDEX WORDS: Adult Literacy Education, Adult Education, Collaboration, Community Collaboration, Community Development, Interorganizational Relations, Interorganizational Collaboration

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DEDICATION

With great respect and love I dedicate this dissertation to my family and friends who have stood by me, propped me up, and kept me going through way too many challenges over the past few years. My family (my heart) – Kip and Tara, who filled up this big house around me, and Kay and Debra and my sweet mother, who have always been there. My friends, you were the catalyst – Dougie, who loves me; Kate, who taught me I could stay on task; Cassie, who gave me generous time and space to get it done – you’ve made all the difference. And every bit as important are those who helped me stay balanced – Marie, Judy, Pam, Lisa, Rebekah, Liddell, Melissa, and Clare.

Tom, I wouldn’t have done this at all if you hadn’t inspired me to take the doctoral road and guided me through the byways. You’ve changed my life.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
CHAPTER	
1 THE PROBLEM.....	1
Adult Literacy Programming.....	2
Collaboration in the Community	3
The Literacy in Communities Initiative	4
Statement of the Problem	7
The Purpose of the Study	8
The Significance of the Study	8
2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	10
Interorganizational Relations	10
Community Collaboration.....	30
Adult Literacy Education in the Community	40
Implications for the Present Study	43
3 METHODOLOGY	45
Theoretical Framework	46
Data Sources.....	48

	Subjectivity Statement.....	54
	Data Analysis	55
4	FINDINGS	59
	Findings Related to Research Question 1.....	59
	Findings Related to Research Question 2.....	77
	Findings Related to Research Question 3.....	83
	Findings Related to Research Question 4.....	93
5	DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS	112
	Conclusions	113
	Implications for Policy and Practice	130
	REFERENCES	134
	APPENDICES	
	A DIRECTORS’ SURVEY: TELEPHONE INTERVIEW SCRIPT.....	142
	B STATE ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW SCRIPT	145
	C COMMUNITY SURVEY LETTER.....	147
	D COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS AND DOE DIRECTORS SURVEY LETTER	150
	E PINEVILLE INTERVIEW SCRIPT	154

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM

Adult undereducation is deeply embedded in American society, where such issues are closely tied to social and economic disparities. Although the current rise in high school completion indicates that the national literacy rate is improving, at the same time, changes in the workplace demand increasingly higher education levels and technological skills from its workforce. Most adult literacy education is designed to help those without high school diplomas pass the General Educational Development test (commonly known as the *GED*). In recent years, however, economic and demographic challenges have served to redefine the role of literacy education.

The growth of the immigrant population and a subsequent increase in the need for English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction has expanded demands for literacy and adult basic education. Workplace literacy, computer literacy, family literacy, and ESL have taken their place along with basic reading as aspects of adult literacy programming. Aside from the common goal of getting a better job, people need literacy education because they want to learn to read to their grandchildren, balance a checkbook, or get a drivers license. Scholars have noted that beyond the basic reading and writing skills commonly associated with literacy are those “skills, knowledge, and practices that are needed to function successfully in the society or culture in which the individual is situated or desires (and has potential) to be situated” (Askov, 2000, p. 248).

Adult Literacy Programming

To address the complexities of adult undereducation, literacy programming must employ a variety of approaches, both traditional and non-traditional. The resources that are available to address literacy problems vary from country to country and community to community. In the United States much of the literacy programming that occurs is financed through federal monies, distributed through the states to local programs. Some states rely on public school systems and others provide literacy through community colleges. Some states are more amenable to small scale local operations while others prefer large centralized operations. In the state where this study was conducted, the major provider of literacy was a state funded program at the local community college, and its primary curriculum was GED preparation.

There are also numerous community-based literacy programs serving segments of the community outside the reach of institutional education. They spring up wherever the need exists: ESL classes in church basements, workplace literacy instruction in factory break rooms, and one-on-one tutoring in neighborhood libraries. These organizations advocate their own brand of literacy and move independently of one another. In many cases these local efforts are severely under-resourced and too poorly coordinated to effectively cover the varied needs of the community. The result can be duplication of effort, inconsistent availability of services, and poor coordination of the community's resources. Organizations may actually find themselves in competition for the same clients and resources.

In recognition of these challenges, many areas have mobilized to bring their literacy organizations together. Communities have a stake in the literacy capabilities of

their citizens because literate adults are able to participate more fully in the life of their community and contribute to its economic, social, and educational health (Fingeret, 1992; NIFL, 2003). Some communities form partnerships to coordinate their adult education needs in a more comprehensive way. By cooperating, organizations can strengthen their efforts to meet compatible literacy goals. These interorganizational alliances between public and private agencies can be an important contributor to the delivery of educational programs (Beder, 1977; Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999; Gray, 1989).

Collaboration in the Community

Collaborative partnerships can be a way for groups representing various components of the community to address their concerns collectively. Such relationships bring diverse elements of the community together and provide a comprehensive means for the practice of adult education in the community. A collaborative partnership is “an interorganizational effort to address problems too complex and too protracted to be resolved by unilateral organizational action” (Gray & Wood, 1991, p. 4).

Over the last twenty years interorganizational partnerships have taken an increasingly important role in educational and community work (Beder, 1984; Bennis & Biederman, 1997; Campfens, 1997; Cervero, 1992; Christenson & Robinson, 1980; Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999; Gray, 1989; Queeney, 1997). These relationships can cover a range of interdependency levels, from occasional cooperation to formal collaboration.

Chapter Two discusses several models of interdependence and collaboration.

Community groups coalesce over social issues that are of concern to their citizens, such as environmental problems, crime, and education. This study is specifically

concerned with the issue of adult literacy. It continues to be a persistent social problem in many parts of the United States, despite recent gains in education levels.

The current study focuses the process of interorganizational collaboration within a community context. In communities, collaboration occurs among organizations that are “working together jointly and continuously on a particular project towards a specific goal” (Lindsay, Queeney, & Smutz, 1981, p.5). Because collaborative relationships are stronger and more interactive than those based on cooperation or coordination, collaboration is endorsed by some scholars as the ideal relationship for community agencies (Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999; Gray, 1989). The opportunity to share resources and coordinate services is a strong motivator for collaboration.

The Literacy in Communities Initiative

In recognition of collaboration’s potential to address the problems of adult literacy, one state in the Southern part of the U.S. developed an initiative to encourage and facilitate such local partnerships. This organization was the focus of my study. Created in 1990 and called Literacy in Communities or LitComm (a pseudonym), this is a state-local partnership that promotes literacy education in local communities. Founders of the program modeled LitComm after the Keep America Beautiful Campaign, which set guidelines but left communities the autonomy to set and pursue environmental goals specific to each individual community.

Through LitComm, the state provides a loose framework that communities can adapt to form their literacy programs into a collaborative partnership. This framework includes start-up guidelines and a certification process through which participating communities can set and reach literacy goals. The local programs retain their autonomy

and raise their own funds. The state provides technical assistance, evaluation, and a statewide networking structure.

Participation in this program is voluntary. LitComm is a community owned and community run partnership whose main function is to assess and meet the local literacy needs of its citizens. LitComm brings together leaders from business, local government, and education to ensure that necessary literacy services are identified and provided.

LitComm is overseen by the Division of Adult Literacy at the State Department of Education (DOE). The state, through a LitComm executive director, provides certification guidelines and technical assistance to communities from the time they enter the program and monitors the progress of each local partnership toward its goal by means of an annual reporting system.

The goal is for each participating community to serve a majority of its low literate population by the end of ten years. The target population is defined as adults 16 and older without a high school diploma or GED completion, based on the most recent census figures. Once a community meets its goal, LitComm evaluates and certifies it, awarding it the status of “Certified Literate Community.” After certification, a community may continue to participate and to act in a mentoring capacity to other communities.

LitComm is different from many government-sponsored programs in that neither the state nor the federal government provides funds to the participating communities. Each local program is completely self-supporting, with the state providing technical assistance and a statewide network for LitComm directors. The idea is to promote local collaboration through local ownership. According to an explanatory piece published by the LitComm state office:

Communities participating in the program analyze community needs, create awareness of the needs and opportunities for literacy improvement, ensure that learning opportunities are offered and evaluate progress so that the majority of citizens needing to improve their skills do so within ten years. A network is formed to coordinate business, church, volunteer, social service, local government and schools, media and other efforts in the community to reach, influence and support all adults who want to improve their education.

The DOE provides a full-time LitComm Executive Director who is responsible for providing technical assistance to communities as they develop the structure to attain certification. The eight criteria for becoming a certified Literate Community includes a numeric goal of serving 50% plus one of the target population.

The LitComm Research Studies

Working as a member of an independent consulting group, I carried out a process evaluation of LitComm's operations in 2001. The purpose of the statewide evaluation was to describe how the initiative was working in the communities and to analyze the perceptions of the stakeholders about its benefits and challenges. An intriguing finding of the evaluation was that experiences of collaboration varied greatly from one LitComm community to another. Local partnerships used many different strategies to raise funds and coordinate their literacy services. Results varied as well. Some groups reported more satisfaction than others with their efforts.

My interest was piqued by the evaluation findings that had not been thoroughly analyzed. Issues surfaced during data collection that were outside the scope of the evaluation, including problems of turf-protection, ideological compatibility, and personal conflict. Despite much speculation, the evaluation had no component to learn what this meant to the process and outcomes of collaboration. To pursue the issues of conflict and control that had surfaced, I decided the following year to conduct a single community study under the guidance of a qualitative research professor. I interviewed three of the principals in one of the LitComm communities, Pineville, about their personal

experiences of collaboration. Between the evaluation and the class project, I found myself with a large amount of data about collaborative experiences. I knew that I had not fully explored the data in either case. For this reason I initiated the current study to look at the data in new ways. A more comprehensive research design and a more extensive period of time for analysis have allowed me to explore this data in more detail and in a more theoretically directed way.

Statement of the Problem

For a number of years now, community development and adult education scholars have been advocating the collaborative approach as the best way to accomplish community goals (Beder, 1984; Christenson & Robinson, 1980; Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999; Gray, 1989). Their research shows an increase in use of the collaborative approach to address the social problems that communities face. Community-based partnerships offer a means for planners and practitioners from different organizations to work together toward compatible goals and a shared vision for the community.

Although scholars and practitioners speak well of community-based partnering, its success is not guaranteed. Adult education practitioners and community developers could gain a better understanding of reliable ways to work together. This understanding can lead to the more effective provision of services and the achievement of common goals.

The original analysis of the data used here focused on motivators and positive outcomes of collaborative efforts, primarily in an advocacy role. This earlier work was atheoretical in nature with a practical orientation and didn't examine the holistic *process* of collaboration. In the current study I focused on components of ongoing collaboration

and how these components strengthen or weaken the process. By applying a framework of collaboration sustainability, I was able to study how organizations attempt to achieve and maintain collaboration.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the nature of ongoing collaboration among organizations that provide adult literacy education to the community. The following research questions guided this exploration of collaboration:

1. What is the role of resource exchange in interorganizational collaboration?
2. What is the role of organizational and community image in interorganizational collaboration?
3. What is the role of internal and external pressures on interorganizational collaboration?
4. What are the roles of interdependency and control in interorganizational collaboration?

The Significance of the Study

In most community work collaboration is an ideal rather than a reality. Problems can arise and create roadblocks to the success of any collaborative endeavor. Issues of control, conflicting vision, and competition all affect the ability of partnerships to thrive. Because these are common problems, both practitioners and the community could benefit from a better understanding of the attributes and dynamics of collaboration among community groups. The application of theory to practice can lead to better preparation and response to the difficulties encountered in collaborative work. Research that applies theoretical frameworks to actual interorganizational structures and their processes can

give community developers and adult education practitioners insight into some of these puzzles.

This study has significance for state and local education planners who are considering a collaborative community program as a way to provide literacy and other types of education within a community. By examining closely the processes and outcomes of various collaborative efforts in the LitComm initiative, the study may contribute to an understanding of community-based partnerships in general, how they are structured and how they evolve.

The study examines experiences of conflict as well as collaboration in interorganizational work. Since the literature on collaboration in adult education focuses primarily on its benefits, insight into common problems that collaborative efforts experience could give community advocates a way to anticipate such problems and better structure their efforts to work together. On a broader level, this study could provide recommendations to address the dynamic structure of relationships within community-based partnerships in general, particularly those with state involvement.

Groups that are beginning new partnerships can learn from the experiences of those who have gone before them. The study should also produce guidelines that coordinating bodies such as states and local groups can use to foster community development through a collaborative process.

To the left and outside this continuum are other levels of operation that do not involve any coordinated efforts between agencies, although the organizations may be aware of and make decisions based on one another's existence. These are monopoly, parallelism, and competition.

Cooperation, the first level of interdependence, is defined as assisting each other on an as needed basis. Schermerhorn (1975) defines interorganizational cooperation as “the presence of deliberate relations between otherwise autonomous organizations for the joint accomplishment of individual operating goals” (p. 847). Farther along the continuum is *coordination*, described as a relationship in which agencies offer assistance to one another on a regular basis (Lindsay, Queeney, and Smutz (Lindsay, Queeney, & Smutz, 1981). Coordination can be mandated or it can evolve naturally when organizations offer different but compatible services to the same audience. *Collaboration* is the most intense relationship between organizations, and it occurs when they are “working together jointly and continuously on a particular project towards a specific goal” (Lindsay et al., 1981 p.5).

The relationship level among organizations can develop fluidly along the continuum, based on how much effort each participant puts into the collaborative effort (Tallman, 1989). Tallman, who studied continuing professional education providers, found that the intensity of their investment varied according to the type of organization and its goals. Higher levels of interaction were distinguished by a relatively equal sharing of responsibilities by each of the partners.

This literature review focuses primarily on the collaborative level of interdependence. This is the ideal relationship advocated in the literature (Donaldson &

Kozoll, 1999, Gray, 1989) for community agencies working together. This section of the review will look at theory related to collaboration. First is a consideration of systems theory, specifically, exchange theory, followed by a description of four theoretical models, two from the management and organizational literature and two from community development.

Systems Theory

Much that has been written about IOR is in the business management literature and relies somewhat on systems theory. Business models can shed light on collaboration among non-profit agencies as well, and so this section will briefly describe systems theory and its corollary, exchange theory. Systems theory is a way to look at the dynamics of interdependent organizations. Systems thinking uses analysis to study the individual organism and synthesis to look at how it functions within a whole system (Patton, 1990). A broad range of disciplines use this as a way to describe the structure and behavior of complex wholes (Cummings, 1998). From the perspective of organizational behavior, systems theory looks at the groups and organizations within a system and the relationships among them. This perspective also studies the synergistic behavior of the whole created by the interaction of its parts. How organizations interact with their environments is another concern of systems theory, whether they are open or closed to influences of the external environment. These are factors in how and why collaborative agencies function together as one organization.

One aspect of systems theory that explains how businesses in recent years have moved toward collaborative relationships is exchange theory. Exchange alliances between businesses are networks that have been built on personal relationships,

reputation and trust rather than on marketing factors (Larson, 1992). Such arrangements work through collaborative information sharing rather than a hierarchical administrative authority.

Larson studied the role of social control in exchange relationships among small entrepreneurial companies. She found that such alliances were characterized by cooperation and collaboration and were governed in large part by mutual expectations that grew out of social interaction rather than by formal contracts. Larson's findings showed that these alliances helped in the growth and success of small, resource-poor entrepreneurial organizations. Trust and a concern for reputation are important issues to partners in exchange relationships and must be protected if they are to thrive.

Limerick and Cunnington (1993) refer to exchange relationships as "collaborative individualism." Collaboration, they say, "is the act of the empowered person who empowers others and then combines with their power" (p. 231). It is essential that each agent's autonomy be preserved, as "autonomy creates energy. Voluntary collaboration both protects autonomy and harnesses energy" (p. 231). By forming strategic alliances and networks while protecting their autonomy, organizations can maintain this balance.

Management and Organization Models

Sociological Model

A strong sociological model is Ebers (1999, p. 35) *Conceptual Framework For Studying The Dynamics of Interorganizational Relationships* (see Figure 2.1). The model accommodates the perspectives of a variety of organization theorists, breaking down the dynamics of IOR into five structural elements. The first two are environmental preconditions and participant motivations that lead to the development of the relationship.

The content and form of the relationship itself comprise two elements, individual level ties and institutional ties. At the micro- or individual level is the flow of information and resources among the participants. At the institutional level is the system used to govern the relationship, where issues of property rights and resource allocation are negotiated. The final structural element is outcomes, which then loop back to influence adjustments to the organization.

Three learning processes, understanding, reevaluation, and adjustment, link the structural elements into a learning cycle. Understanding is the process through which partners assess the outcomes of the alliance and identify the factors responsible for the outcomes. Next the partners re-evaluate their expectations and motivations, and the relationship and design of the alliance. The third phase of the learning cycle is adjustment. This process involves renegotiating, redesigning, and evolving the relationship. Change occurs when partners act on what they learn about the environment and each other, their goals and their capabilities.

Ebers (1999) calls the interaction of framework elements “feedback loops”. They play an important part in the dynamic evolution of an interorganizational relationship. This evolution is influenced by external factors as well as internal ones and is an inevitable occurrence. To achieve desirable outcomes, alliance participants need the ability to recognize and understand those processes that produce change. Ebers’ model of dynamics illuminates the processes that explain change as well as the direction and patterns that change can take.

Two factors are necessary for change, participants’ willingness and capacity to learn from the collaborative process in which they engage. Capacity is the ability to

recognize new information and to apply it to the achievement of goals (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990, in Ebers, 1999). The factors involved in the direction of change are the interest and ability of the partners to learn from the relationship, symbiotic information and resource exchange, changes in external conditions and assurance that the cost of making adjustments will be offset by expected gains.

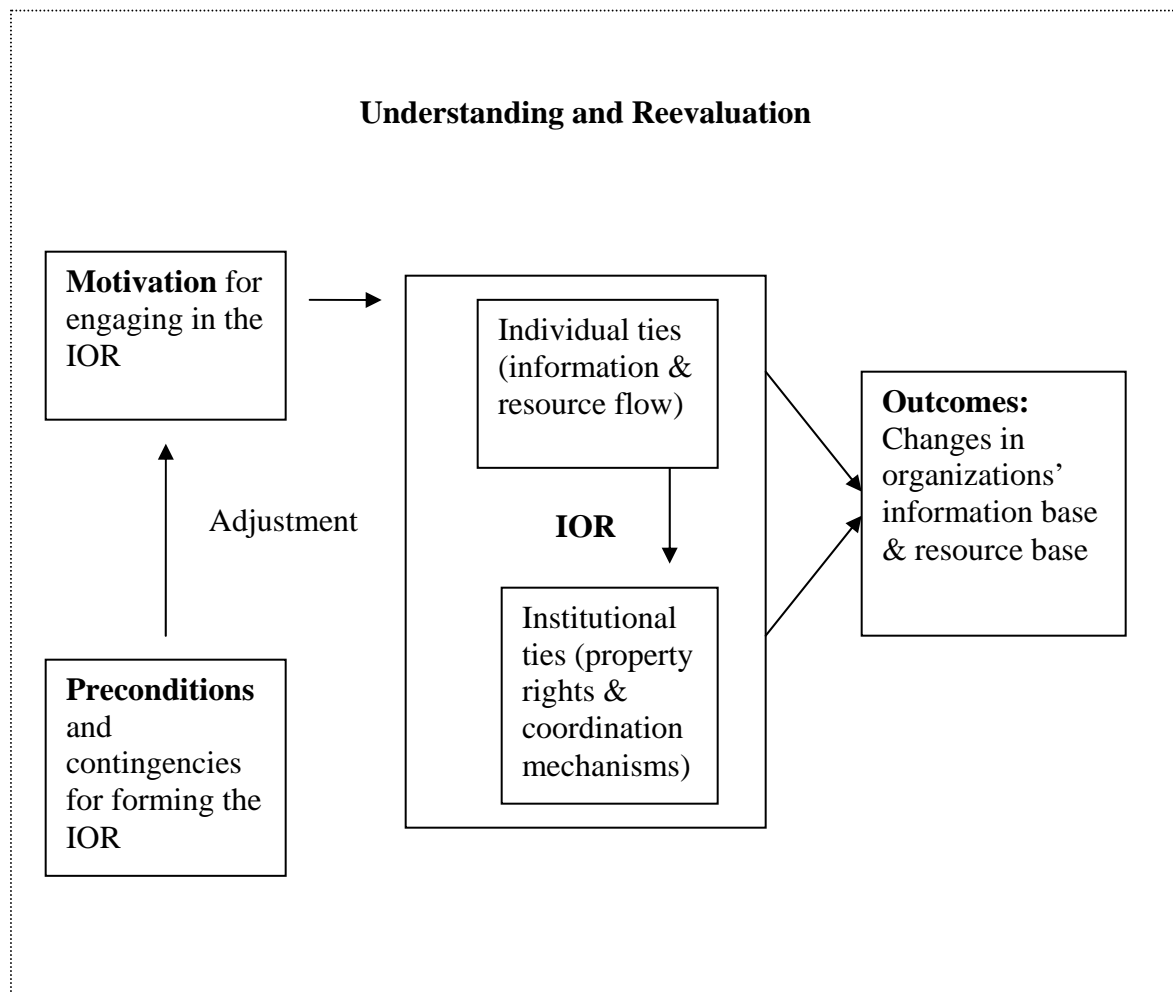


Figure 2.1

Conceptual Framework for Studying the Dynamics of Interorganizational Relationships

(adapted from Ebers, 1999)

Much of the organizational literature examines how the internal structures of individual organizations affect networking, giving little attention to the operational aspects of the interorganizational relationship itself. Ebers' model corrects this oversight by building a framework specifically around the structure and process of IOR. The internal structure of the model holds together well, with the components flowing logically. Lower level ties explain higher level ones. The learning cycle process fits well into the logic of the framework.

Despite its business orientation, this model has a framework broad enough to apply successfully to community-based alliances. For instance, the flow of information and resources among participants is equally crucial to IOR in both business and community environments. Some of the details on management and marketing strategy are less relevant to community development, although even here parallels can be found. The learning cycle built into this model is appropriate to adult education practice.

Political Model

Issues of power and conflict inevitably arise when organizations and the people in them choose to work interdependently. Power-sharing must be negotiated during all phases of the collaboration process (Bailey & Koney, 2000; Gray, 1989). Decisions must be made about what stakeholders to include in the planning process, how power will be distributed among them, who will make what decisions and through what forums (Gray, 1989).

Schermerhorn's (1975) *Determinants of Interorganizational Cooperation* (see Figure 2.2), incorporates issues of power and conflict into the study of IOR. Schermerhorn employs a decision frame of reference that looks at power as it is

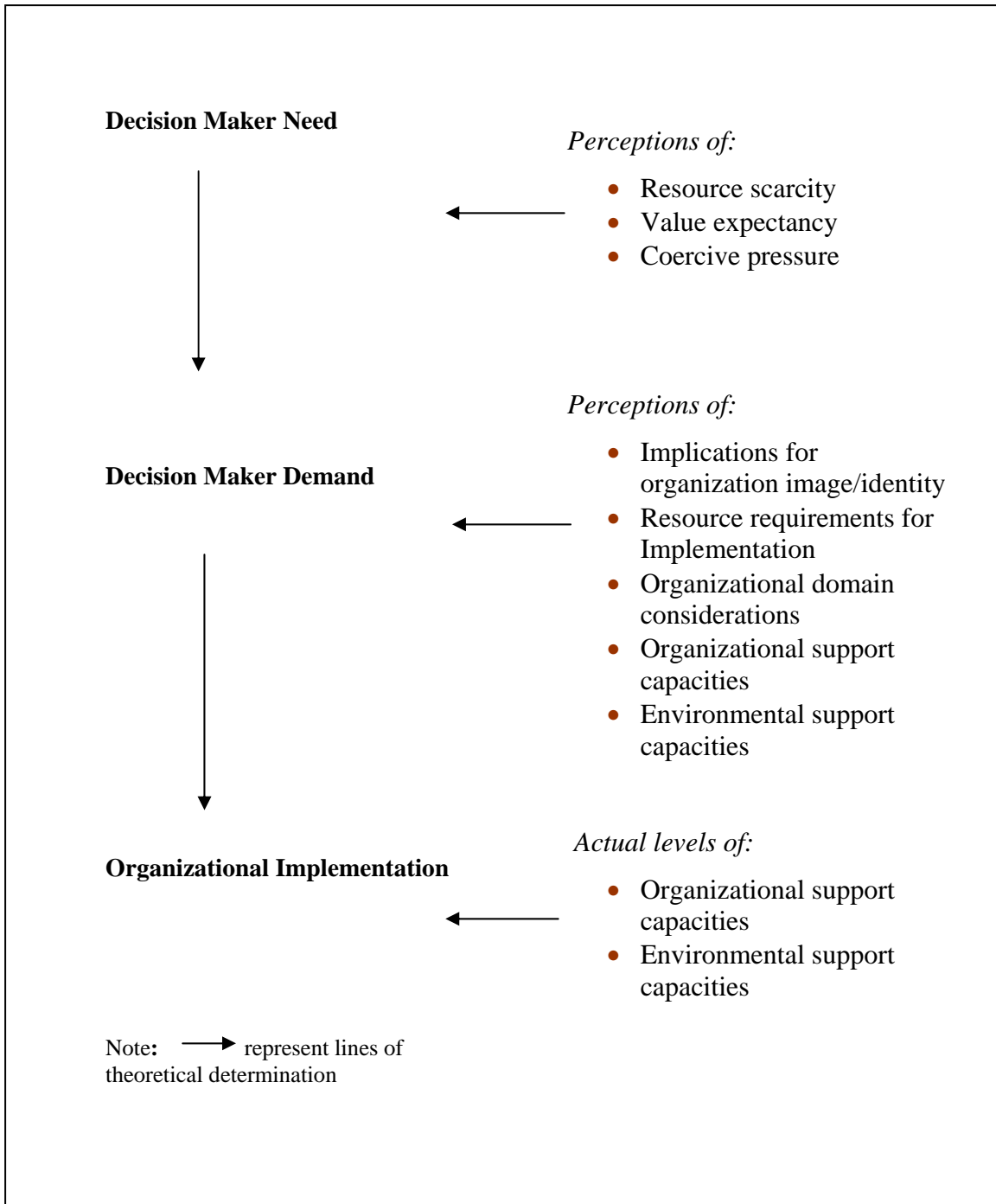


Figure 2.2

Determinants of Interorganizational Cooperation (adapted from Schermerhorn, 1975)

manifested by individual and organizational decision-makers, laying the groundwork for much of the IOR theoretical work that comes after him. Using Warren's (1967, in Schermerhorn, 1975) four contexts in which interdependence occurs, Schermerhorn demonstrates how power is situated according to the level of interrelatedness. Cervero (1992) based his continuum of interrelatedness on this work. In the *social choice* context, organizations act autonomously and without regard to shared goals and values. Any interdependence is accidental or competitive. In the *coalitional* context, interdependencies are intentional and cooperative, formed around specific issues. Participating organizations retain complete control over their involvement in the relationship. The *federative* context imposes a supra-organizational authority structure that controls and monitors interdependent activities. Individual organizations continue to control their participation in the relationship. The fourth context is *unitary*, in which the supra-organizational authority structure actually controls and governs the organizations under its control. Coalitional and federative contexts fall into the category of cooperative, as defined in the IOR literature. Schermerhorn defines interorganizational cooperation as "the presence of deliberate relations between otherwise autonomous organizations for the joint accomplishment of individual operating goals" (1975, p. 847).

This model integrates existing theories developed prior to 1975 into a framework of interorganizational determinants that continue to be referenced in the IOR literature today. The motivators lead organizations to move from competition to a coalitional or federative relationship. Determinants are based on one of these three factors:

1. Resource scarcity or performance distress. This could be a response to a crisis or environmental pressure. It could be an effort to enhance the organization's image.

2. Value factor. Organizations are motivated by a perception of cooperation as a positive attribute, through either an internal value system or external ideological influence.
3. External coercion. Demands from an external power force organizations to cooperate. This could be a governmental regulation or pressure from another third party source.

Potential costs of intensifying a relationship are loss of autonomy, negative image, and expenditure of scarce resources.

The determinants for forming interorganizational relationships are integrated into three categories, need, demand, and support capacity, based on the work of Turk (1973). These determinants become the three variables of the model. The theoretical orientation that Schermerhorn uses to integrate the variables into the model is the decision frame of reference. The organizational decision-makers, who determine need and demand, and who implement this strategy, are the key actors in the model. The outcome is interorganizational cooperation.

The framework hypothesizes conditions for each of the three determinants. *Need* consists of the conditions that lead organizational decision makers to consider IOR as an action strategy. *Demand* refers to the conditions under which the decision makers come to prefer IOR as an action strategy. *Support capacity* is determined by the conditions that make implementation of IOR possible at both the individual and organizational level, once the decision has been made to cooperate. Schermerhorn also refers to capacity as opportunities for cooperation within the organization's culture and in its external environment.

This model assumes that organizations actively decide to cooperate with one another and that they do it for a reason. It recognizes individuals in the organizations as mediators in the process. The decision frame of reference depicts “an organizational decision-maker influencing organizational behavior under constraints imposed by the organizational and environmental contexts” (Schermerhorn, 1975, p. 852).

This framework can be applied to alliances of community groups as well as those in the business environment. A similar framework was used by Dahl (1986) in a case study of community power in New Haven. Using a variety of methods, Dahl attempted to comprehensively identify the decision makers of that community and to evaluate the effectiveness of their policy-making decisions. Cervero (1992) built on Schermerhorn’s framework to theorize about continuing professional education, expanding the model to make a case for collaboration as “a political process in which costs and benefits must be clearly weighed” (p. 116). Subsequently, Cervero and Wilson (1994) developed their program planning model, which defines planning as “a social process of negotiating power and interests” (p. 12). This process involves the powerful responsibilities of deciding ethical and political issues as well as negotiating interests (Cervero & Wilson, 1994). In the context of planning community programs, these social activist and political organizer roles can have far-reaching effects.

A limitation of Schermerhorn’s model is that it examines only the initial preconditions and motivations stage of collaboration. It does not specifically address issues of power as they occur in implementation and in outcomes. Another limitation of the model is that, although it looks at the distribution of power in IOR, it doesn’t examine ethical issues of power distribution, in contrast to Cervero and Wilson’s model, which

has a strong ethical element. Schermerhorn (1975) does, however, identify this model as a theory building opportunity to integrate theories of power and conflict with theories of IOR, so it has potential beyond its scope. It is also open to adding other determinants of IOR.

Cervero's Framework of Interorganizational Relationships

Cervero and Wilson have asked, “Who benefits from adult education?” (1996; 1994). A new dimension is added to this question when the planning and provision of adult education involves IOR. If adult education is indeed a “significant site of struggle for knowledge and power” (Cervero & Wilson, 2001, p. 267), then efforts to provide adult education to an entire community through collaborative efforts carries this struggle to a much larger arena.

Collaboration is not necessarily driven by altruistic goals. One study of interorganizational collaboration in continuing professional education found that groups collaborated to promote their individual organizations' survival rather than to enhance adult education efforts (Colgan, 1989). “The formation of relationships is simply a means to an end in the organization decision-making process” (Cervero, 1992, p. 101).

Cervero's *Framework of Interorganizational Relationships* is useful to analyze the motivators that bring organizations into collaborative partnership (see Table 2.1). This framework applies Schermerhorn's decision making model specifically to adult education practice. It offers a lens for analyzing data by illuminating issues of interdependence and control in the decision to collaborate.

Motivators. The first determinant in Cervero’s framework is the motivators that lead communities to create and maintain partnerships. The framework addresses three areas of need that motivate organizations to collaborate:

Table 2.1

Cervero’s Framework of Interorganizational Relationships (based on Cervero, 1992)

Motivators	Adversity
	Positive value association
	External pressure
Disincentives	Loss of independence
	Image problems
	Increased expense
Support capacity	Organizational openness
	Mutuality
	Opportunity and Means

- Adversity – Scarce resources present a daily challenge to most adult literacy providers. Organizations turn to partnering as a way to gain access to additional community resources, to use existing resources more efficiently, or to free up over-extended internal resources for other purposes. Sharing resources is most beneficial between organizations that offer compatible rather than competitive services.
- Positive value associations – Motivation to collaborate can arise from an organization’s internal value system or from community norms.

- External pressure – Sometimes collaboration is imposed from the outside. This can take the form of a funding requirement or a mandate by the government or some other regulatory agency.

Disincentives. The second issue is the disincentives, or costs, that discourage organizations from participation in collaborative partnerships. Disincentives include:

- Loss of independence – Organizations that are accustomed to making autonomous decisions may find it difficult to participate in collaborative decision-making. Cooperative strategizing is required to settle issues of resource allocation, program location, cost, and content.
- Image problems – Entering a community partnership can have negative as well as positive effects on an organization's image, particularly when the partnership imposes constraints on the individual organizations. Issues of organizational domain may emerge among partners that provide similar services, along with the threat of losing one's strategic position in the marketplace.
- Increased expense – the cost of using organizational resources to maintain the partnership may outweigh the benefits.

Support capacity. Attributes and constraints that exist in individual organizations and in the environment affect the collaborative process. The three main components of this framework are:

- Organization openness – Some organizations are inclined to form cooperative relationships outside their boundaries, while others are more domain-protective (Smutz & Toombs, 1985).

- Compatibility of organizational goals – When goals are complementary rather than competitive, domain is usually less of an issue.
- Opportunity and means – For the external environment to be supportive, collaborating organizations need to be in the same geographical community, one with discernable boundaries (Beder, 1984; Cervero, 1984; Schermerhorn, 1975)

The areas listed above become factors in a cost-benefit analysis that takes place when organizations consider partnering (Cervero, 1992). The opportunity to satisfy needs is balanced against the cost of participating in an interdependent relationship, and the decision to use collaboration as an action strategy is based on whether the benefits will outweigh the costs. Organizations will only collaborate if decision makers determine that partnership will best serve their interests.

A limitation of this model is that it examines only the initial preconditions and motivations stage of collaboration. It does not specifically address power issues in implementation and outcomes.

Schermerhorn (1975) does, however, identify his model as a theory building opportunity to integrate theories of power and conflict with theories of interorganizational relations, so it has potential beyond its scope. I intend to use components of the framework and apply them to the ongoing *process* of collaboration, rather than specifically to the determination stage.

The balancing of cost versus benefit is an ongoing process that affects each organization's continued involvement in the collaboration. This framework was the basis for the one I developed to analyze the data in this study, to learn about day to day collaboration and to uncover issues of control and interdependency.

Issues of Conflict and Control

Much research in IOR takes a functional rather than a critical perspective of collaboration (Hardy, 1998). Collaboration isn't always the answer, according to Hardy and Phillips, especially if conflicting goals and unequal power exist. Collaboration can be used to control domains and to protect a powerful stakeholder's interests. When the process is controlled by powerful stakeholders, it leads to compliance rather than true collaboration. Other strategies of engagement would be considered in addition to collaboration.

Conflict can be intentionally introduced into a collaborative setting by less powerful stakeholders for purposes of redefining the problem domain and gaining legitimacy (Hardy, 1998). The level of analysis needs to extend beyond the particular collaboration to include the interorganizational domain.

Power is distributed in IOR by virtue of formal authority, control of critical resources, or discursive legitimacy. Discursive legitimacy is authority given to participants who can speak for organizations that are affected by the domain. Powerful stakeholders influence the domain in two ways, defining or redefining the "problem" of the domain, and influencing the participation of other stakeholders.

Contention is using intentional conflict to overturn the domain parameters and gain a space. Contestation challenges power within the domain parameters and is less effective. Collaboration and contention are the strategies of engagement that offer the best chance for synergy and innovation (Hardy, 1998).

Community Models

Community development is not a means to an end (Ewert & Grace, 2000) but a process of helping people improve their social and economic situations (Christenson & Robinson, 1989). This mission orientation leads community-based IOR theory to emphasize different elements from organization-based models. Another difference between the two types of frameworks is that the community models which follow are experientially based. Because community work is action-oriented, there is a need for practice-based theoretical models built on actual collaboration in the community. The first model in this section looks at community development strategies that have been tested in the field. The second compares actual group processes through an ecological theory perspective.

Open Focus Model

Implementation is neglected in many IOR research models. Patton (1990) suggests that sometimes implementation information is of greater value than outcomes information when evaluating a program. Coe's (1990) Open Focus Model is an implementation model grounded in empirical evidence of successful community-based collaboration.

Coe studied and compared four community development projects in downtown Denver whose planning, structure, leadership, and outcomes were very different. Two are described in her article. One project, to revitalize Denver's downtown historic district, built a strong collaborative alliance that included broad representation from the downtown community. Its leadership evoked and encouraged active participation and joint leadership from all the stakeholders. This leadership was highly visible and

negotiated a clear vision through collaboration. Communication was conducted openly through formal and informal networks. The outcomes of the project were successful. Another project, to build a convention center, followed a closed model and failed. The leadership worked behind closed doors, used one-way communication, primarily the news media, and only involved stakeholders late in the planning process. There was disagreement among the planners over basic decisions, apparently fueled by conflicting self-interests, and eventually a controversy developed that spread to city government and the general public.

Through research of these two projects, Coe (1990) developed an open model with three components that she determined were essential to the successful outcomes she observed. They are linking communication, evocative leadership, and collaborative vision; communication that links the participants in a network and supports their goals and interests; leadership that encourages widespread and active leadership by others; and collaboration that develops and refines a shared vision to guide the community.

Unlike the organizational frameworks, this community development model is centered on the implementation of collaboration. The primary limitation of this model is that it is prescriptive in nature. It identifies elements that are necessary to successful community collaboration without revealing underlying issues that need to be understood in order to make necessary changes.

Ecological Model

This framework, developed by Borden (1999) as a Sustainability Model for Community Collaboration, connects communication links, development of goals, and

identification of membership to the achievement of goals and the success of community interventions to solve social problems.

Borden looked at three communities that were tackling the issue of family violence through community-wide initiatives. The initiatives involved community representatives from diverse groups brought together to address family violence. Of primary interest to the researcher was the collaboration process, which she researched through both quantitative and qualitative means. Through triangulation Borden was able to view the collaborative process from multiple perspectives (1999).

The model of multilevel perspectives was based on Bronfenbrenner's (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) ecological systems theory, which sets individuals in the social and cultural context of their environment. Not only do the various contexts influence individual development in unique ways but, according to Bronfenbrenner's theory, the linkages among others who are involved indirectly affect the developing individual as well. In the same way, Borden theorizes that stakeholders involved with a complex social problem affect an intervention differently depending on their perspectives. Therefore it is important for all stakeholders to be represented in the planning process. Gray and Wood (1991) discuss social ecology models such as this one as portraying the benefits of collective strategy for collective problems. They pose a key research question, "How do participants in a collaborative alliance regulate their self-serving behaviors so that collective gains are achieved?" (p. 9).

The four mediating variables identified in this study are goals, internal communication, membership, and external communication. These four elements are well supported in the literature cited by Borden (1999) as being essential to the collaborative

process. Clearly stated goals help communities establish linkages and stay focused.

Internal communication allows the members of a group to feel they have been heard and to benefit from feedback. Membership influences the collaborative process because of the need for broad and diverse representation to address social issues. External communication is another means to establish community linkages.

Borden's study indicated a significant relationship between these mediating variables and the sustained progress of a group towards its goals. The group with the most sustained progress had a more formal level of coordination and cooperation than the other two. This group articulated clear short-term and long-term goals, whereas the goals of the other two groups were less clearly identified. This same group had open communication among its membership, who kept one another informed on individual projects and exchanged feedback. All three groups perceived diverse membership as a strength and each was able to identify those who should be members but were not. Borden found a significant relationship between external communication and the ability to make progress toward goals.

The study findings provide empirical support for the importance of community development strategies featured in Coe's (1990) open focus model (Borden, 1999). An additional finding was the effect of the level of interrelatedness of the groups on the mediating variables of the model. The closer a group was to a collaborative relationship, the more likely it was to establish clear goals, have effective external and internal communication, and clearly identify members. Borden differentiates between the levels of interrelatedness in three ways, purpose, structure, and process. In collaboration as opposed to looser relationships, vision is shared, an interdependent system is built to

address issues and opportunities, consensus is used in decision-making, roles and links are formalized, and leadership, ideas, and decisions are shared. Communication is highly developed and the trust level is high (Borden, 1999).

Community Collaboration

The second section of the review turns to practical issues of collaborative partnering in the community. Many definitions of community exist, reflecting various perspectives about its parameters. Christenson and Robinson (1980) bring together four common themes from the literature to create a simple definition of community: “(1) people (2) within a geographically bounded area (3) involved in social interaction and (4) with one or more psychological ties with each other and with the place they serve” (p. 6).

In community work, collaboration is a process through which organizations work together on a joint project toward a specific goal (Lindsay et al., 1981). Collaborative partnerships can be considered organizations themselves (Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999; Larson, 1992; Scott, 1992). They have their own social structure, environment and goals, and they are made up of people who contribute to the collaborative effort (Scott, 1992). They are different from other organizations, however, in that they are composed of people who come together while representing other organizations; they have a limited lifespan; and, within the interdependent relationship, each agency protects its own autonomy (Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999). Collaborative arrangements are usually informal in nature and gain their structure from psychological and social contracts negotiated through interpersonal dynamics. The success of collaborative partnerships depends on how members perceive they are being treated in terms of fairness, trust and reciprocity, as well as shared values and norms (Gray, 1989; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994).

As a process through which organizations negotiate an interdependent relationship, Gray (1989) attributes to collaboration the following characteristics:

1. The stakeholders are interdependent.
2. Solutions emerge by dealing constructively with differences.
3. Joint ownership of decisions is involved.
4. Stakeholders assume collective responsibility for the future direction of the problem domain.
5. Collaboration is an emergent process (p. 227).

Emergent is a philosophical term used here to refer to an evolutionary process by which agencies rearrange themselves at more complex organizational levels.

There are arguments for and against collaborating in the business world that focus on the well-being of the individual organization. In the community, collaboration is seen as a mutually beneficial relationship overall. It is an opportunity to develop new solutions to problems through synergistic action (Gray, 1989).

The literature offers several framework models for community collaboration, two of which I have already described. Another is linkages or reciprocity (Beder, 1984; Cervero, 1992). Beder, who studied continuing education programs, found that interagency relationships are a necessary part of planning any program. He argues that cooperation is a good strategy for overcoming limitations of flexibility, autonomy, and resources. He states, "The basis for establishing cooperative relationships is mutual, reciprocal benefit" (p. 15). Linkages are mutually beneficial connections between agencies that create a theoretical framework of reciprocity for community collaboration.

In addition to reciprocal benefit, Beder says there must also be real trust and commitment.

Beder (1977) names four levels of linkage relationships in adult basic education (ABE), referral, co-sponsorship, donor, and control-coordination. Referral relationships are just what the name implies; one agency refers clients to another to receive services. Co-sponsorship involves joining together to conduct a program. In a donor relationship one agency donates resources to another for charitable reasons. Beder describes a control-coordination relationship as one where an ABE expert serves in an advisory capacity in another community organization.

Opportunity and means are determinants of success in these frameworks. Agencies that share a geographical community are more likely to form alliances than those who do not. In addition, the internal structure of organizations needs to be conducive to interdependent relationships if they are to succeed.

Collaboration in the Adult Education Literature

One way to accomplish collaboration is by bringing individuals and communities into public-private partnerships where they can pool their resources (Ewert & Grace, 2000). These partnerships must be flexible and inclusive, composed of people working together for the common good (Ewert & Grace, 2000).

The increasingly complex world of adult education practice, in its need to adapt to challenges as diverse as fast-breaking technology and globalism, must of necessity find partners to pool resources and develop creative solutions to these challenges (Queeney, 1997). Queeney is looking at continuing professional education in particular, but she makes a point that can be applied to community adult education programs as well. She

encourages adult education organizations to work together to resolve problems of limited resources and accountability demands, to develop community outreach leadership, and to reach wider audiences of learners. Gray (1989) writes specifically about the need for collaboration among agencies dealing with the complexity of social problems. Because of the decline of federal funding for social programs during the Reagan years, partnerships between public and private agencies have sprung up to address a variety of social problems, including adult literacy. These local initiatives may be more successful than centralized government efforts because of the community investment that is involved (Gray, 1989). When interorganizational cooperation is developed and nurtured at the community level, individuals are better able to share their interests with one another (Kovalick, 1988).

Gomez (1999) uses a broad, learner-centered definition of literacy to emphasize the pervasiveness of literacy problems across the nation. She studied community college programs, which are usually sponsored by the state, and found that many adults with low-level reading and writing skills, the foreign-born who need to learn English, and those who lack computer skills often slip through the cracks in standard literacy programs. The study recommends that community college programs collaborate rather than compete with local programs that are based in the community. Local programs are better able to serve students who may not be a good fit in the state-sponsored programs.

Flexibility is a positive feature of local or community based organizations (CBOs). They are generally small, simply-organized structures with a board of directors, an executive director, and direct service delivery program staff. Because they are not controlled by large bureaucracies such as school districts, government agencies, or

corporations, they can respond quickly “to identify problems and develop programmatic solutions” (Hemphill, 1996). CBOs can adjust their curriculum and program structure quickly to address changing needs.

Rose (1994) also noted the importance of partnership and collaboration in the field of adult education. In recent years the government's effort has been focused on workplace literacy programs and the Job Training Partnership Act. This has led to cooperative arrangements between business and industry and institutions of higher education and is a major reason for the increasing trend in educational partnerships.

Practical Issues of Collaboration

Empirical studies of community collaboration in the adult education literature concentrate on its successes and use them to illustrate the benefits of collaborative effort (Beder, 1977, Gray, 1989). Nevertheless, all collaborative efforts involve the negotiation of interests (Gray & Wood, 1991), which surfaces issues of conflict and control. Organizational decision makers must pursue an ongoing negotiation process to protect their own interests within the collaborative partnership. Thus, the power of the decision maker is an important theme in any critical study of collaboration.

Beder (1984) does address some of the pitfalls of collaboration. He defines failure as the point when an interorganizational relationship costs more than it benefits a program. Common costs are loss of autonomy, time, goal displacement, organizational disruption, and termination of the relationship.

Sometimes “collaborative” partnerships never achieve a true collaborative status. One case study of a failed collaborative effort found a series of administrative errors on the part of the primary agency to be the problem. These included an unwillingness to

share control and information, poor selection of partners, lack of planning and evaluation, and poor implementation (Valentine, 1984).

Internal Structure of Organizations

A wide range of factors can contribute to implementation problems in the collaborative process. One possible explanation lies within the internal structure of the individual organizations.

Organizations are social units constructed around specific goals (Etzioni, 1964). They can be structured in many different ways and around many different purposes. No organization exists in isolation, as studies of community dynamics will bear out (Beder, 1984, Cervero, 1992, Gray, 1989). Whether they actually work together or not, all organizations are at a minimum influenced by their awareness of one another. One determinant of an organization's motivation and ability to interact significantly with others is its internal structure.

Many of the problems that organizations encounter in their efforts to work together rise out of each organization's internal system of operation (Gray, 1989). Organizations are structured in ways that will either encourage or discourage collaboration. The degree to which organizations use control is one factor that affects their ability to collaborate. "To be successful, coordination must be accomplished laterally without the hierarchical authority to which most managers are accustomed" (Gray, 1989, p. 9). Incompatible organizational structures adversely affect collaboration efforts (Beder, 1984). Beder finds that organizations that enjoy the most success working collaboratively have "fluid and flexible structures that can adapt to those of their partners" (p. 89).

There are different ways that organizational structure is categorized in the literature, but they usually fall under one of three areas: rational, natural, or open structure (Scott, 1992). Limerick and Cunnington (1993) call these frameworks *management blueprints* and classify them under four labels: classical, human relations, systems, and the collaborative organization. Organizational structure consists of the rules that are used to make decisions (Butler, 1998). Other concepts Butler applies to organizational structure are the ability to organize within the society in which the organization operates, the design and role of managerial authority, effectiveness of the organization as measured by a particular set of norms, and the ability to make choices as to structure and process.

The rational organization is deliberately formed to achieve specific goals. This is the kind of organization the sociologist Weber (Weber, 1969) meant when he classified authority in modern society as bureaucratic, the notion of an organization as a rule-bound hierarchy with a clear division of labor and delineation of power. Top-down organizational control of this sort ensures that “rules are obeyed and orders followed” (Etzioni, 1964, p. 68). Members of the organization are motivated externally to comply. There are varying levels of bureaucracy based on the degree of structuring and concentration of authority within the organization. An absence of direct authority and structuring results in a non-bureaucracy (Butler, 1998).

In a natural organization participants do not always follow formally defined organizational goals. They are internally motivated and work together more informally to insure the well-being of the organization. The stated goals of the organization are not

necessarily the only goals that are pursued. Analysts of natural systems look at what actually happens rather than what is planned (Scott, 1992).

Open organizations are “systems of interdependent activities linking shifting coalitions of participants; the systems are embedded in – dependent on continuing exchanges with and constituted by – the environments in which they operate” (Scott, 1992, p. 25). To be viable, according to Cummings (1998), open organizations must function in the following ways:

1. Transform energy and information into useful products
2. Transact with the environment to gain input and dispose of output
3. Regulate system behavior to achieve stable performance
4. Adapt to changing conditions (p. 651)

Rational and natural structures were the norm during the first sixty years of the twentieth century and represented organizations that were internally driven. Open organizations have grown out of a systems theory approach which looks outward from the individual organization toward its environment and other similar organizations, a phenomenon that developed during the latter part of the century. Of the three categories, the environments of open (systems) organizations are most conducive to interdependent relationships (Beder, 1984, Schermerhorn, 1975). In the case of the blueprint model, open organizations naturally gravitate toward the fourth blueprint, collaborative networks and alliances (Limerick & Cunnington, 1993).

Control and Conflict in Collaborative Partnering

A second practical concern in collaboration is control and conflict, inevitable issues that arise when organizations and people work interdependently. Power sharing

must be negotiated during all phases of collaboration including determining who the participating stakeholders are, addressing levels of control among these stakeholders, determining who will make decisions and through what forums, and organizing the collaborative (Gray, 1989). The degree of informality in collaborative partnerships affects how these issues are approached.

In informal partnerships, issues of authority, interdependence, and values are resolved through a variety of interpersonal and social processes (Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999; Gray, 1989; Larson, 1992). An important issue is how evenly power is distributed among the stakeholders (Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999). This directly affects the type of leadership needed within the organization (Gray, 1989). A shift in the balance of power in a collaborative will require renegotiating contractual agreement (Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999). More formal collaborative partnerships require more elaborate coordination efforts (Beder, 1977).

Collaboration and program planning are connected activities, with collaboration being one strategy that is advocated for program planning (Cervero & Wilson, 1994; Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999). Program planning literature focuses on the planning and development of programs and collaboration literature concentrates on the relationships, both interpersonal and interorganizational, among groups who plan together. The most common form of educational collaboration is co-sponsorship of programs (Donaldson & Kozoll, 1999).

Cervero and Wilson's (1994) program planning model can be used to look at power and conflict issues in collaborative partnerships. This model provides that "planning is a social process of negotiating power and interests" (p. 12). Issues to be

negotiated in the planning of an education program, whether it be continuing professional education or basic literacy, include goals, purpose, ethics, audience, resources, format, and location. The authors advocate a democratic process for negotiations in educational planning that take into consideration the interests of learners, teachers, planners, institutional leadership, and the community in which the program takes place.

Cervero and Wilson (1994) define three categories of theory for planning adult educational programs. There is a rational model, advocated by Knowles, which is based on the idealistic assumption of a well-defined problem with clearly defined options and context and unlimited resources. This is a prescriptive viewpoint, which Walker (1971) says is not used in actual practice. Walker's naturalistic model involves interested parties in the deliberation process to tackle the practical challenges of program development. This way the objectives and the design that emerge from the deliberation will address what really matters to the people involved. The critical planning model on which Cervero and Wilson's theory builds is set in the everyday world (1994, p. 11). Forester's (1989) critical model is constructed "to foster a well-informed democratic planning process" (p. 29). Critical planners accomplish this through critically analyzing the political environment, anticipating problems related to power structures, and, using this insight, controlling and managing information using a democratic process.

Adult Literacy Education in the Community

Community literacy services are usually provided through either a centralized model or a community-based model. Increasingly, however, partnerships are forming between state and local organizations that combine the two methods. The literature on all three models is examined here.

The Centralized Model

The centralized model provides for delivery of adult education services under the auspices of one principal organization, generally, a national or state government agency, a national volunteer group such as ProLiteracy America (the recently merged Literacy Volunteers of America and Laubach Literacy), or a private foundation. All publicly funded literacy programs in the United States operate under this model, and in this way federal mandates for accountability and curriculum are filtered through the states to the local programs.

Centralized organizations are positioned to bring comprehensive perspectives and resources to adult education and to impose national norms of excellence (Deshler, 1983). Deshler argues that higher-level organizations bring to community planning programs that “are more likely to address large-scale problems, to focus a critical mass of attention on problems, to protect the public interest, and to equalize educational opportunity than programs designed entirely at the local level” (p. 198).

A limit of this model is that it does not offer the flexibility and creativity needed to respond to unique local needs and changing demographics in a community (Ziebarth, 1999). Centralized programs tend to offer a prescriptive approach to curriculum regardless of the context in which the learners function. Another concern is that centralized programs tend to attract higher functioning learners, such as GED students and others who move comfortably within the traditional education system. In general, centralized programs are not designed to meet the needs of low literate learners (Zachariadis, 1986).

The Community-based Education Model

The community-based model describes community-rooted, independent programs that are locally supported and locally run. The community plays a major role in program policy decisions and curriculum. Community-based literacy programs spring up in church basements to tutor immigrants in English, in factories to teach workplace literacy, and at the public library to support beginning reader groups. SIL International (1999) , based on its service work in lesser-known language communities of the world, defines the following characteristics for community-based programs: they link education to community development activities, support a community development mission, are accountable to the people in the community, are sensitive to local cultural values and mores, and they integrate learning with the life and work experiences of the learner.

A study of the philosophies and practices of 24 community-based literacy programs (Zachariadis, 1986) revealed the following characteristics: programs saw themselves as having a broad mission, objectives were based on program outcomes and learners' objectives, they primarily served a disadvantaged, hard to reach population, different from those at institutional programs, and recruited through word-of-mouth. The study found that community-based programs offer familiar settings and informality and are generally free or low cost. They are cost efficient to the community as well because they use existing community resources.

Deshler (1983) identifies some disadvantages of stand-alone community-based programs. There can be problems of inefficiency, reinventing the wheel, unequal educational opportunities, and low professional standards.

State and Local Partnerships

Increasingly, adult educators at the national, state, and local level involve the community in planning their programs (Cervero & Wilson, 1994). This practice is supported by community development theory, which takes a holistic approach to community improvement. Community development theory asserts that participation from multiple sectors of the community is required to effect change (Cook, 1994). Through partnership, providers can give access to a range of programs that would not otherwise be available, “a seamless web of community literacy education for those most in need” (Chisman, 1990, p. 91). Partnerships take a variety of forms, depending on how they address interorganizational issues of domain, authority, resources, tradition, and values (Fingeret, 1984).

In recent years a number of states and communities have experimented with coordinating their literacy provision. In 1989 the Mott Foundation commissioned a comprehensive survey of such implementation in forty states. A model emerged which provided for community education to operate under the aegis of state sponsorship. In this model, leadership within the state education bureaucracy implements a community education plan, building a network of strong exemplary community-based projects throughout the state. The report said that “the stronger the locals, the stronger the state and national networks” (Decker & Romney, 1990, p.3). Common to the success of these local efforts were:

- Citizen involvement
- Provision of learning opportunities for all ages, backgrounds, and needs
- Broad use of community resources

- A strong volunteer program, and
- Collaboration among the community's agencies, businesses, and schools.

The survey findings indicated that the most innovative programs existed where state funding and technical assistance supported the local projects.

In New Zealand most literacy provision is provided at the community level and has historically been independent of national control. As one research project shows (Benseman & Sutton, 1999), the country is now experimenting with community-based literacy partnerships working within a national framework. Local programs maintain their individuality and styles of provision while working within government guidelines. The Federation's intent is to develop greater standardization and accountability among providers, which have been transitioning from volunteers to paid staff in recent years, and to enhance the quality of service while protecting local autonomy. Benseman's provider-level evaluation of the program noted that the program works under the assumption of "considerable commonality between national and local philosophies" (p. 23).

Implications for the Present Study

All of this literature can contribute to our understanding of community collaboration in the provision of adult education. There are many similarities between collaborative relationships in both the business and non-profit sectors, and much of the literature on business alliances and continuing professional education can be generalized to the provision of community adult education. Research indicates that at a minimum all organizations in a given field are aware of one another and generally have some kind of ongoing relationship (Cervero & Young, 1987). This is especially true in the field of adult education provision, where audiences and resources must to some extent be shared.

For the present study, however, I needed a specific model that would help to tap the *process* of collaboration. The most promising work in this literature was Cervero's (1992) framework that applied IOR work specifically to adult education collaboration. The model deals with the decision-making process rather than the ongoing process of collaboration. This is discussed more fully in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used to answer the research questions of this study. The purpose of this study was to understand the nature of ongoing collaboration among organizations that provide adult literacy education to the community. The following research questions guided this exploration of collaboration:

1. What is the role of resource exchange in interorganizational collaboration?
2. What is the role of organizational and community image in interorganizational collaboration?
3. What is the role of internal and external pressures on interorganizational collaboration?
4. What are the roles of interdependency and control in interorganizational collaboration?

Chapter One describes Literacy in Communities (LitComm), an organization created to encourage and support collaborative efforts in the communities of one southern state. While conducting a process evaluation of this program I learned about varying experiences of collaboration in over 40 communities. Some had built strong, thriving literacy partnerships while others had not been as successful. Much has been made of the positive outcomes of the program, but until now no analysis had been done to learn what these myriad experiences mean to the ongoing process of collaboration. The current study explored the range of experiences in those communities.

Theoretical Framework

Because I wanted to study the statewide evaluation data in new ways, I needed a theoretical framework that would address critical issues of ongoing collaboration. I began with two models that had been created to describe organizations' decision to collaborate. Cervero (1992) built a model of interorganizational relationships based on Schermerhorn's 1975 decision-making model. Cervero applied this model to adult education practice to illuminate issues of interdependency and control in program planning that emerge around the decision to collaborate. The decision-making process balances cost against benefit of collaboration within the capacities of the internal and external environment. Cervero's and Schermerhorn's frameworks are described in detail in Chapter Two.

A limitation of these models is that they examine only the initial preconditions and motivations stage of collaboration. They do not specifically address ongoing issues in the implementation and sustainability of collaboration. Schermerhorn does, however, identify his model as a theory building opportunity to integrate theories of power and conflict with theories of interorganizational relations, so I found that these models had potential beyond their scope. Shifting my focus beyond the determination stage, I took components of the Cervero framework and applied them to the ongoing *process* of collaboration.

Achieving healthy, sustainable collaboration is a different prospect from making the decision to collaborate. To shift the analysis perspective, I expanded Cervero's (1992) determinants and elevated the elements of interdependency and control to become another determinant, since this is a powerful aspect of the collaborative process. This

framework of collaboration sustainability has four major components: resource sharing, organizational image, internal and external pressures, and issues of interdependency and control. These components appear with definitions in Table 3.1

Table 3.1

Major Components of Theoretical Framework

ISSUE	DEFINITION
Resource-sharing	Gaining access to additional community resources and using existing resources more efficiently
Image	How an organization defines itself in the community as well as how the community sees it.
External & Internal Pressure	(External) Coercion imposed from outside the organization, e.g., funding sources or government mandates (Internal) An organization's internal value system or community norms
Interdependency & Control	Loss of independence and autonomy due to necessity for joint decision-making and cooperative strategizing. Competition and power plays can surface.

The first critical issue in collaboration is resource sharing and exchange. Through partnering, organizations can gain access to additional community resources; they may be able to use existing resources more efficiently; and they can free up over-extended internal resources for other purposes (Schermerhorn, 1975).

The second critical issue is image. Participation in a community partnership can have negative as well as positive effects on an organization's image. This can be a matter of perception as much as reality.

Third is the issue of internal and external pressures on organizations to collaborate. An organization's internal value system can support its collaborative activity, as can community norms. Additionally, funding sources, governmental regulations, and other outside agents may influence the collaborative process.

The final issue that I examined is that of interdependency and control. Organizations that prefer to work autonomously may find it difficult to plan collaboratively with others and share decision-making; others have a competitive history to overcome. Partnering can impose constraints on organizations and individuals. Issues of conflict and control arise and must be negotiated throughout the collaborative process.

Data Sources

The study was built around two existing data sets, the LitComm statewide evaluation data, and the Pineville community study, briefly discussed in Chapter One. Together these data sets represent a rich resource for understanding the collaborative process. I employed this data because of its potential value and the fact that it was under-analyzed previously.

In this section I will describe the data sets in detail. The first data set, which extended geographically across one state, I will refer to as *the Statewide Evaluation Data Set*. This data originated with the process evaluation of the LitComm program. The second set of data comes from the study of one of the LitComm communities, Pineville (a pseudonym). I will call this the *Pineville Data Set*. The four research questions will be answered using both sets of data.

Statewide Evaluation Data Set

From June to August of 2001, a three person research team collected data for the evaluation of the LitComm's first ten years. We conducted telephone interviews with directors and other leaders of local LitComm partnerships (Appendix A), held face-to-face interviews with state administrators (Appendix B), and mailed out surveys to directors in all of the LitComm communities (Appendix C), asking them to distribute the surveys to community stakeholders. Respondents included literacy teachers, advisory board members, and other community service providers. We also mailed surveys to all DOE directors and community college presidents (Appendix D). By contacting a wide range of people, we created a data set that allowed for comparative analysis of collaborative experiences. Archival data came from the program's files both at the state office and local offices, including annual reports and promotional material.

We were able to interview directors in 31 of the 44 established LitComm communities and interim directors in 2 others, bringing the total of in-depth director interviews to 33. Perceptions of program effectiveness came from those interviews, as did the demographic descriptions of local programs. The interview script (see Appendix A) was designed to determine directors' perceptions of the strengths, challenges, and future direction of the program. The communities varied geographically and demographically. They were primarily rural (19) or transitioning from rural to suburban (9). Only three were considered urban communities.

For the current study the state evaluation data set consisted primarily of data collected in these 33 communities, specifically the transcripts and notes from the telephone interviews with the local directors and community surveys (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2
Description of Data Set

Data Set	Item	Number	Number of Pages
Statewide Evaluation Data Set	Transcripts of interviews with directors	17	164
	Typed notes from remaining director interviews	16 interviews	68
	Community survey results – compiled and sorted by role of respondent (advisory board members, literacy teachers, other collaborative partners)	186 surveys	60
	Archival materials Certification package for one community that reached certification Application package for one new participant Evaluation manual <i>Georgia Trend</i> articles about LitComm Annual reports of participants LitComm newsletters Promotional book	7 documents	58
Pineville Data Set	Transcripts of interviews in Pineville	3 one-hour interviews	106
	Archival materials Documents Spelling Bee program, May 2000 Georgia Statement newsletter, July 2000 Carter Partnership Award application, 2001 Newspaper clippings, 1994-2000 Photos Offices for the Literacy Alliance and Adult Learning Center director New Adult Learning Center Classroom Neighborhood Mill	10 documents 8 photos	48
	Typed Field notes		4
Total Pages			508

Nineteen of the director interviews and all of the state administrator interviews were transcribed. For the remaining 14 director interviews, for which tapes were no longer available, I relied on the handwritten notes made during the evaluation. I coded the data and developed themes specific to this study and its research questions, using the determinants outlined in the theoretical framework. Although the evaluation interview questions were open-ended and provided useful information for the purposes of that study, the research design limited the exploration of interpersonal dynamics and issues of conflict and control. For this reason I included the second and more intensive data set gathered in a single community, Pineville.

Pineville Data Set

As a qualitative researcher I visited Pineville to better understand the world of collaboration in a single setting. Like most qualitative data, the Pineville study consisted of participants' words and accounts of their actions (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). This had a particular advantage to answer the final research question in that its design allowed the people interviewed to talk about relationships and to fully surface their subjectivities. Their input is pertinent to the present study in that it focuses on problems experienced within the collaborative process as expressed through the words of the actors.

The collected data for this section of the study has some of the characteristics of grounded theory as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), specifically:

- The data was collected in sequence, with the second data set collected to remedy a shortcoming of the first.
- Although the data is multifaceted, with two parts, it will be treated as a single data set, and it is all useful for the purpose of this study.

Following principles of grounded theory, I designed the Pineville Study around the findings of the evaluation study. I collected the second set of data several months after the first to learn more about interpersonal dynamics in collaboration. I chose Pineville, a community in its fifth year of LitComm participation knowing that it had recently weathered a power struggle within the partnership.

The case study method guided me in my data collection. Case study is the preferred strategy “when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin, 1984, p. 13). Case study research is particularly appropriate to understand complex social phenomena. In this method, research solutions emerge from within the study rather than being introduced from the outside. The holistic approach to a community gives case study another advantage over experimental research, its ability to understand unique aspects of a particular case. Patton (1990) advocates the case study method for evaluating local programs, where each program is unique in content, process, goals, implementation, politics, context, outcomes, and program quality.

My interview questions centered on participants’ accounts of how literacy is delivered in the Pineville community, specifically how the collaboration works. I used a phenomenological approach to the interviews, asking participants to talk about their experience of collaboration. Moustakas (1994) approaches phenomenological research as a way to find the essences and meanings of participants’ experiences, soliciting “personal and passionate involvement... and careful, comprehensive descriptions” (p. 105).

I collected data through a semi-structured hour-long open-ended interview with each participant. I used a simple interview script (see Appendix E) to prompt participants to talk about their experience of collaboration over time. I explained that I was interested in how literacy is delivered in the Pineville community, specifically how collaboration works. I asked each of them to talk about a time that they had experienced collaboration and then asked follow up questions to pursue this line of conversation. I encouraged participants to tell their versions of the same events and prompted them for the specific evidence that contributed to their perceptions. Transcription of the three interviews resulted in 106 pages of data.

The interviews produced expected discrepancies, as participants described the same events from different perspectives. I also collected LitComm documents from that period of time to see how the relationship of the organizations was being presented publicly. These included the program from a fund-raiser, newspaper articles about literacy projects, and a grant proposal response written by the two primary players in the Pineville LitComm.

Summary of Data

In total, this combined data set represents over 500 pages of data, which is described in Table 3.2. Because the data was collected prior to the current study, I began the analysis process by examining the data to determine whether it would answer my research questions sufficiently. I made a joint decision with my major professor and my methodologist that the existing data was sufficient to allow meaningful interpretation and that there was no need to collect further data.

Subjectivity Statement

As researcher and program planner, I developed a working relationship with LitComm that lasted for several years, from 2000 to 2003. I participated in two formal research studies within the organization and assisted in the planning and implementation of their first statewide conference. For the first research study, the statewide evaluation, I participated as a partner in an independent research firm. During this time I met with the state director and other administrators of LitComm and visited several local sites. I conducted the second study in Pineville independently of the evaluation and there I concentrated on the more personal aspects of collaboration.

Because of my relationship over time with LitComm and my role as an adult educator with an interest in community development, I bring a degree of subjectivity to the current study. I have an investment in the success of collaborative work such as this initiative and its efforts to address literacy services comprehensively in communities. This interest created a potential for bias in the collection and analysis of data in order to create a positive image of the program. Reinforcing this, the evaluation coincided with LitComm's ten year celebration, and there was some interest at the state level in using our study to showcase LitComm's accomplishments.

As it turned out, the two studies led me to a much more realistic understanding of collaboration in general and LitComm in particular than the evaluation intended. I began to appreciate the wide range of experiences, both positive and negative, that occur when unique organizations work toward collaboration. I pursued the Pineville Study specifically to further investigate the personal aspects of the collaborative process. My concern to understand these experiences of collaboration motivated me to be diligent in

my investigation of both the positives and negatives of the program. I sought to gain insight into factors that strengthen collaboration as well as those that weaken it.

Data Analysis

Following grounded theory, (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) I worked inductively through constant comparative analysis to arrive at the themes of the study. This technique combines the procedure of coding all the data and comparing incidents with an ongoing theory-building process. This allowed me to develop themes in a systematic way as I analyzed the data. The flexibility of this method allowed me to generate many categories for the data and their properties because it required comparing as many similarities and differences as possible.

The constant comparative method has four stages, as conceptualized by Glaser and Strauss (1967):

1. Creating categories, coding incidents, and comparing to other incidents by category. This step includes time for reflection and an opportunity to record theoretical notions. This is how theory-building begins.
2. Integrating categories and their properties. As knowledge of a property accumulates, it becomes integrated, producing a whole. In the same way properties begin to integrate with one another. As different categories and their properties become integrated, theory begins to emerge.
3. Delimiting the theory and the categories. Constant comparison refines the theory, clarifies the logic, and reduces levels of concepts. At this stage, it may be possible to generalize to a larger group. At some point in this process saturation will occur, as new categories no longer emerge.

4. Writing theory. With coded data, memos to describe the categories, and a theory, it's time to write.

I began by compiling data from the two studies into one unified data set. I imported all of my electronically-formatted data into *N6*, a software data management program. This included everything except some of the archival data. I began the deductive stage of analysis by developing a “tree” based on my four research questions. With this software I coded the text units as many ways as possible. This provided a system to group the data in multiple ways. In the early stages of coding, I put some incidents under more than one component; for instance, there was overlap between organizational image (Image) and positive value associations (Internal Pressures). In the later stages of analysis I was able to eliminate most of the overlap, except in situations where a concept belonged in more than one category.

Although the two data sets were combined for purposes of analysis, I labeled each document according to its source as I imported it into the software, so I was later able to track the origin of the data by component and category. For some of the components, the data came primarily from the State Evaluation data, and for others it came primarily from the Pineville Study data. Table 3.3 presents a breakdown of how the coding sources were used during the early stages of data analysis. It was the directors in the evaluation study, for instance, who talked about *resource need*, whereas nearly all of the discussion of *interdependency and control* occurred in the Pineville study. Interestingly, most of the concern about organizational *autonomy* came from state administrators in the Evaluation Study, not from directors.

Table 3.3

Data Display

Component	# Text Units from Evaluation Study	# Text Units from Pineville Study	Evaluation Percent	Pineville Percent
Resource Need	108	18	86%	14%
Resource Scarcity	38	3	93%	7%
Interdependency	6	17	26%	74%
Autonomy	21	24	47%	53%
Organizational Image	7	4	64%	36%
Positive Value Associations	14	6	70%	30%

I used the constant comparative method to code each text unit in multiple ways. This method requires comparing each incident with the previous incidents coded in the same category. Through this process, I was able to “start to generate the theoretical properties of the category” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 166).

As the categories and themes emerged, I moved text units around within each of the component areas to create the most cohesive answers to the research questions. From this organization and reorganization of the data, I was able eventually to create working tables, complete with quotations, to support each theme. These working tables were invaluable when it came time to describe each theme in the findings section.

The process of qualitative data analysis involves pulling meaning from the words and actions of study participants, framed by the researcher's focus of inquiry (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). I looked for units of meaning in the words of the study participants. Units of meaning are concepts from the data that stand alone and can be understandable to the reader without additional information other than my focus of inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I then collapsed these individual units of meaning together to form more comprehensive categories.

The next step was to conduct an inductive analysis for each research question. Most of my data came from interviews and so was not objectively quantifiable material but, rather, "meaningful relationships to be interpreted" (Kvale, 1996, p. 11). Kvale says that such qualitative analysis involves developing the meanings and bringing the participants' intended meanings to light, as well as providing new perspectives of the researcher's own. The eight themes that emerged from this process and their sub-themes are depicted in Table 4.1 in the next chapter.

The framework of collaboration sustainability helped me to develop the relationships and patterns that answered the research questions. Combining two studies, the statewide evaluation and the Pineville study, created a rich data set. Because the statewide evaluation data included interviews with people from a wide range of community settings, it allowed for a comparative analysis of the collaborative experience. The Pineville study gave me the opportunity to look closely at the experiences of one group of collaborators.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the major findings of the study, grouped according to its four research questions. The purpose of this study was to understand the nature of ongoing collaboration among organizations that provide adult literacy education to the community. The following research questions guided this exploration of collaboration:

1. What is the role of resource exchange in interorganizational collaboration?
2. What is the role of organizational and community image in interorganizational collaboration?
3. What is the role of internal and external pressures on interorganizational collaboration?
4. What are the roles of interdependency and control in interorganizational collaboration?

To answer these questions I reanalyzed existing data from two earlier studies, doing a separate analysis for each question as described in Chapter 3. Eight themes emerged from these analyses. These themes and sub-themes are outlined in Table 4.1. In each of the four major sections of this chapter I describe the findings related to one research question. Each section is organized by its themes and sub-themes.

Findings Related to Research Question 1

Across the state, both local and state level evaluation respondents acknowledged a need to better educate their low literate citizens. They expressed dissatisfaction with the

Table 4.1

Themes of Interorganizational Collaboration

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: What is the role of resource sharing?

Theme 1: Reciprocal sharing of resources strengthened interorganizational effectiveness.

- Resource sharing supplemented limited community resources.
- Collaboration created an information network.

Theme 2: Coordination of services made it possible to use resources more efficiently.

- Coordination improved the response to service demands.
- Coordination produced synergistic results.

Theme 3: State and local involvement supported resource sharing.

- State involvement provided a network for collaborators.
- Local involvement tailored collaboration to the individual community.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: What is the role of organizational image?

Theme 4: Organizations used collaboration to strengthen their image.

- Collaboration gave organizations public recognition.
- Collaboration gave organizations credibility.
- Incompatible missions created conflict.
- Loss of independence discouraged collaboration.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: What is the role of internal and external pressures?

Theme 5: Internal pressures affected organizations' ability and willingness to collaborate.

- Internal value systems drove collaboration.
- Compatible missions encouraged collaboration.

Theme 6: External pressures encouraged organizations to collaborate.

- Certain funders required collaboration.
- External social agendas encouraged collaboration.
- State involvement pressured organizations to collaborate.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4: What are the issues of interdependency and control?

Theme 7: Sharing control created challenges for collaboration.

- Shared decision-making was a conflict trigger.
- Incompatible goals conflicted with collaboration.
- Personal control issues prevented collaboration.

Theme 8: Competition among providers discouraged collaboration.

- Competition arose over similar goals and services.
- Turf-guarding was an aspect of competition.

level of resources available for this purpose, and most supported collaboration as the best approach to the problem. The first research question was: *What is the role of resource sharing in interorganizational collaboration?* A critical need for resources was the most common reason local directors gave for working collaboratively. In community after community, they described overflowing classrooms, a shortage of volunteers, inadequate funding, poor transportation, and too little community support. They saw participation in LitComm's program as a way to combat these problems.

As I organized the data, three broad themes surfaced that related collaboration and resource-sharing. They are:

- Reciprocal sharing of resources strengthened interorganizational effectiveness.
- Coordination of services made it possible to use resources more efficiently.
- Resource-sharing by the state and the community strengthened collaboration.

Theme 1: Reciprocal Sharing of Resources

The first and most common theme related to resources was that *reciprocal sharing of resources strengthened interorganizational effectiveness*. This is strong support for ongoing collaboration. In the case of adult literacy, the essential needs include a learning environment where adults will feel comfortable, teachers and volunteers with applicable skills and training, supportive services such as transportation and child care, and a public relations system to reach the learners. Collaboration, by bringing together organizations with similar needs, creates the opportunity for providers to pool limited resources. Most of the resource-sharing took place within the community, facilitated by technical support from the state office, however, directors also benefited from resource-exchange when they networked with one another. Communication is an essential part of

the process and collaboration models show that systems of communication directly affect outcomes (see Chapter Two). In this study I found that the availability of a communication network can strengthen resource sharing and exchange.

Resource Sharing Supplemented Limited Community Resources

Many communities are faced with inadequate staff and space to fill the demands for literacy services. Several community members who participated in the LitComm evaluation expressed a concern that literacy students were not being adequately served because programs couldn't handle the numbers. "You know we hate to turn anybody away...we are just absolutely running out of room," one LitComm director said and another echoed this concern, "The programs are out there, whether it's the churches running them or a LitComm group or the DOE. They are having to turn people away, which is really bad."

Pineville is in a doughnut-shaped corridor surrounding the state's largest metropolitan area, and its population is changing rapidly. Not only is the metropolitan area expanding in Pineville's direction, but industry there has attracted a large Hispanic community as well. "There is no way that one person in the size of this community could do it all," said Martha, Pineville's LitComm director. "I mean, you have to collaborate; you have to get together with the other directors of nonprofits and say, 'Okay, what are you doing? Is there something that we can do to help you?'"

The DOE program at Miller Community College is the primary provider of adult literacy services in Pineville, but the college provides limited space for classrooms. Several years ago, Logan, the DOE program director at Miller College, realized that he needed the help of a non-profit if his program was to reach Pineville's growing number

of learners. “As a state agency we can’t own property,” he explained. He decided to partner with other literacy organizations to create a non-profit collaborative, called the Pineville Literacy Alliance. When the partners later decided to participate in LitComm, they reconfigured the Literacy Alliance to meet LitComm’s requirements. “The Literacy Alliance is a wonderful vehicle for promoting services,” Lamar said, “for bringing together – sort of being the glue – and they have access to funds that neither Even Start nor Miller College has. So they could come in and do a building.”

Many of the state’s communities in the “doughnut” face similar challenges as the result of the metro area’s urbanizing influence. Several LitComm directors in these transitional areas acknowledged that by uniting their literacy agencies they could get support for new buildings and other costly resources. One said, “LitComm has helped boost the numbers of students that we have served per year. We have been instrumental in getting the facility that we are in currently donated through the county.” As many program directors in small towns have learned, one agency working alone does not have the clout of a community-wide collaborative, and this is even stronger when the collaborative has state credibility.

The ability to share and expand resources occurred mostly from neighbor to neighbor, but LitComm, being a statewide program, had the potential for resource sharing at the state level as well. The state executive director, Hannah, sent out a bi-monthly newsletter alerting directors to funding opportunities and news of activities in local LitComms. Because LitComm directors had little time or expertise to investigate grants on their own, they considered this pooling of information an important resource. One director suggested taking it a step further and hiring a grant-writer for all of the LitComm

programs in the state. Another recommended that LitComm and the DOE programs should share accounting tasks since,

One of the things that I find when I'm searching for other money is that large funders require, or try to require, expensive accounting procedures that the small, little non profits like us can't afford. And once we were to get [funds] donated we couldn't afford a full blown audit, an audit done by a CPA.

The role of the state in its support of collaboration is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Collaboration Created an Information Network

Collaboration makes possible a network for information-sharing and other types for service agencies who target a common audience within the community. Many stakeholders considered the LitComm network an important resource that helped them to provide better literacy services to their constituents. In LitComm, the network functions on both a local and state level. Locally, LitComm advisory boards bring leaders together from diverse service agencies around town, increasing literacy access to shared populations. "One good thing about having a program under the Chamber of Commerce," said a LitComm director, "is that when we hear about potential plant closure or downsizing, we have the opportunity to go into the plant and encourage them to go back to school, and most of the companies provide some of the financial assistance."

Bud, LitComm director for two isolated counties at the southernmost edge of the state, depended on his communication with social service agencies to reach potential students. He said,

Our lab is located within the Housing Authority and we are working closely with the Housing Authority because most of our clients are coming out of the poor areas of the town, so the Housing Authority has a big hand in working with the population that we are bringing into our labs.

A director in the northern part of the state spoke of working with the local Food Pantry to recruit learners into literacy programs. “I’m getting satisfaction when I see the people come through. I brought a fifty-one year old lady through the food pantry, brought her through the GED program and then requested that she would be their speaker for the graduation.”

A network that extends to the state level, as LitComm’s does, also allows literacy providers and administrators around the state to share information and support with one another. This is important because literacy providers often feel isolated in their work. One LitComm director described her situation this way,

I think for those of us who are in here by ourselves, like I’m up here in this little office by myself, it’s hard because there is so much you want to do but you have to depend on everybody else to do it for you...And when there is nobody else doing the job that you are doing, it makes it hard.

Hannah, the state executive director, maintained a statewide communication network through the newsletter, a listserv, quarterly meetings, and an annual conference. Many LitComm directors expressed gratitude for the ability to learn and to share information with others through this network.

The quarterly meetings provided directors the opportunity to network with each other as well. When directors came together, they not only shared best practices and brainstormed solutions to common problems; they were also able to observe program innovations in the host city and adapt them to their own communities. Through the directors’ meetings everyone learned of the *Books for Babies* program that sent volunteers into maternity hospitals to present new parents with a book and library card for each new baby born there. This program provided an effective outreach to potential adult learners and it later spread to other communities around the state. Some directors

did not participate in the quarterly meetings, however, because of geographical distances. Several suggested that regional rather than statewide meetings would be more effective.

Theme 2: Coordination of Services

The second theme was that *coordination of services made it possible to use resources more efficiently*. Literacy education is multi-faceted. It can be basic education, GED preparation, ESL, family literacy, and, most recently, computer literacy and workplace education. No one agency could effectively address the range of needs and services involved. There is a need to coordinate resources with specific literacy needs. Serendipitously, when resources and needs are brought together, they sometimes create a new entity, with unplanned benefits to the learners and the community. This was apparent in some of the communities who participated in the LitComm program.

When resources are limited, using them as efficiently as possible means reaching the most learners and matching them with the most appropriate service for their needs. Providing adult literacy services involves a range of considerations, from the type of literacy education needed to the cultural background of the potential learner. A member of one local advisory board explained, “By learning the focus of each provider, students can be referred to the program that can help them the best.” Martha expanded on this in her description of a joint project in Pineville,

The relationship enables each entity to provide for the community the specialized services that they offer. The Alliance has the ear of the community and is able to deliver volunteer and financial assistance to the community whether it’s their programs; Even Start has professional trained staff in early childhood development; and literacy programs are able to provide adult literacy opportunities.

Respondents to the community survey captured the basic advantages that the community gains from coordinating its literacy services. They described LitComm's role in the following words:

"A coordination of effort between the various literacy and alternative high school providers. By learning the focus of each provider, students can be referred to the program that can help them the best."

"To pull together resources for the county."

"Uniting of services available, less duplication, and more effort in establishing rapport and good working relationships with existing community service providers."

"To unify the leadership of the community in pursuit of established goals for the improvement of literacy rates within the community."

"Through collaboration with existing service agencies, the LitComm Program has actively tapped into available help and developed services to literacy students. This has helped increase the number of adult receiving educational services."

Volunteers are hard to come by for tutoring programs, particularly small ones with no advertising budget or well-known name. By pooling their resources, organizations can share volunteers and match their skills to the most appropriate posts. In Belleville, one of the earliest of the LitComm programs, a one-on-one tutoring program was able to coordinate its services with Belleville State and to gain access to people who had volunteered their services to the community college. The college itself had no volunteer reading program at the time.

A good public relations network is essential to the literacy effort, to inform potential learners about available services, to educate the community about literacy needs and the benefits of improving literacy levels, and to solicit resources.

Coordination Allowed Organizations to Better Meet Demands for Service

"I think LitComm kind of brings the programs together, because we have more than one site," said Bud, the director of the two-county collaborative, "So it's like all labs

are working together, depending on whether it's better for the student to go to one center or another because of transportation, because that's a big problem.”

In many communities, literacy organizations coordinate services so they can cover learner needs at all proficiency levels. Level One includes beginning reading and the scale goes to Level Five, the ability to handle complex tasks with text. Often, the strongest partner in a literacy collaborative is the community college, because it is the largest provider of adult education in the community. Primarily, these programs are intended to prepare high school dropouts for the General Educational Development (GED) test. Lower level learners and non-readers, however, have different needs and goals from GED students. These adults are also likely to be intimidated by a college setting because of early negative experiences in school. One example of this happened when the adult learning program at a rural community college decide to recruit low level readers. LeAnn, the LitComm director, said she began getting calls from people saying, “I don't want to go to school; I just want to learn how to read”.

When the various literacy providers and adult schools come together, they can learn the focus of each provider, and students can be referred to the program that will help them the best. Gaps in area literacy services can also be uncovered.

LeAnn, in response to her learners' concerns, established a one-on-one tutoring service. “My intent was to keep it low key,” she said. “The intent was to train volunteers to work with either non readers or very low level readers and once they got to about Level Three, we were going to assist them in the transition over to the Adult Education Center.” Similar stories came from across the state. Broad River LitComm had

volunteers who picked up students at their community college, tutored them in basic skills, and then returned them to the college program for GED preparation.

Placing low level learners in the college setting can be a poor fit from an administrator's perspective, as well, because of how funding goals are set for state-run programs. Numbers that are associated with moving a student through the attainment levels are meticulously recorded by DOE directors to justify their state and national funding. For this reason, state programs give little attention to low performing adults, especially non-readers, who are unlikely to move up through the levels and therefore don't contribute to their goals. This system of accountability can lead to competition among providers, an issue which is discussed further under Research Question Four.

Motivated by similar concerns, another community college partnered with a non-profit organization, Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA). Dr. Marvin, the college president, described the collaboration as a mutually beneficial one,

We, the college, support monetarily with whatever resources we can. In turn, they send us students. And they are successful at the tech college then. The person who is the director of LitComm is also an employee of the LVA. And so part of what she does during the day is teach these low level learners there at her center. She does a great job and gets them to the point that they are ready to come to us and move ahead.

When collaboration is working symbiotically, partners look out for one another.

The director of Grace County LitComm said, "Anything that any one of us needs or wants to do to support the other one, we do it."

The Combined Efforts of Organizations Produced Synergistic Results

Beyond the symbiotic ties that bind participants, such relationships can produce synergistic results. An example was given by Gail, who ran the Mulberry LitComm. She recognized the difficulty of raising money for adult education. "Generally speaking," she

said, “I’ve found that it was so much easier to get people to help me improve things for children....People will do anything for a kid because it is not their fault and they can’t help it.” She partnered her adult literacy efforts with a Family Connections program, and “started doing earlier and earlier interventions until we were working with a one month old, trying to make a difference then and try to improve things for their family at the same time.” Not only did the creation of a new image contribute to the public relations effort, but by combining efforts people were able to create a coherent program that offered something new to the community.

There were similar stories from other communities, particularly about the creation of family literacy programs through collaboration between adult and childhood educators. The partnership that Pineville forged between adult literacy programs and Even Start, which provides early childhood education and other services to low income families, made it possible to obtain grant money from a state regional commission and build a new center for family literacy. Logan, DOE director, was able to expand his adult education classrooms into the new building. He called it “one of the best collaborative efforts” in his Pineville experience.

In the western part of the state, Tracy, as LitComm director, was able to establish an emergency shelter and act as liaison with DOE to bring literacy classes to the shelter. According to Tracy, the local DOE director was restricted from direct involvement in this effort, “She has to stay away from that and she doesn’t always have the time, either, and I think we are able to help out when we provide things like that.” Because LitComm’s accountability was primarily to the community and its funding agencies rather than the

state, it had more freedom to respond to and develop solutions for specific community needs.

Theme 3: State and Local Involvement

The third theme was that *involvement of the community and the state supported resource sharing*. Collaborative relationships don't survive in a vacuum and need involvement from the stakeholders they represent. For LitComm, this meant both local and state level support. Although support from the state was limited by design, there was evidence in the data that the local LitComm programs benefited from their affiliation with the state. Even more convincing was the evidence that community support was an essential ingredient in whether or not local programs thrived. This support gave each program a markedly different appearance depending on the nature of the community.

LitComm experiences were different from those of many literacy groups because of the ongoing involvement of the state in the collaborative process. Participation originated from, was supported by, and answered to a state entity. The director, in addition to her role as technical advisor, functioned as liaison between LitComm communities and the state's DOE administration. Not one participant in the evaluation study questioned the state's involvement; in fact, most stakeholders asked for additional state support. With little exception, local directors were enthusiastic about the executive director's efforts, though many complained that because the number of LitComm communities was increasing, one person could no longer respond to all their technical needs.

The issue of financial support for local LitComm programs was a source of controversy throughout the evaluation. From the beginning, the state had not offered such

funding other than start-up money from the governor's discretionary fund. By LitComm's ten year anniversary, even this small grant opportunity had disappeared. An intended advantage of this limited support was that the communities would only be minimally accountable to the state. Directors were to report annually on progress toward their 10 year goals and, once notified of attainment, the state did a cursory certification inspection to determine that the goal had been met (based on successfully providing literacy services to the majority of the target population).

At the local level, however, there was widespread concern about the state's unwillingness to provide financial support. Most directors talked about the difficulty of raising money to pay their salaries and other expenses. Many were working without benefits. There were suggestions throughout the interviews that the state should offer some basic level of funding for the program. At the same time, the state administrators who participated in the study invariably defended the state's position not to fund LitComm.

Dr. Cogburn, State Commissioner of DOE's Office of Adult Education and one of the founders of LitComm, felt strongly that the state's involvement must be limited to technical support because this forced the community to buy into the program. To support his stand, he liked to talk about the significant increase in GED graduates in one of the pilot cities. "The year before they started that program (LitComm) their GED program produced less than fifty graduates. If you go down there today, it probably produces five hundred a year." he said. "I went to a graduation about three years after they started the program and we sat in an auditorium that would seat a thousand and there were people standing around the loft. It is just because the whole community got on board."

Another administrator at the State DOE office agreed that local control was essential, although she was sympathetic to complaints from the directors about lack of financial support:

I know there are frustrations at the local level, because it is a tough program - it is a volunteer community program. And the resources that it takes to keep up and running is – sometimes it is a frustration for a lot of the community people not to get what they see as support from the state to do this program... And how frustrating it was because you are more concerned with raising the salary than providing services.

Members of the State Commission on Adult Literacy, most of whom had been involved with LitComm since its inception, took a similar position. One said, “It is very important that the community ...when they have to go out and scrape for the dollars that it takes to put the structure in place and staff it properly, you know, that gives them some ownership that they might not otherwise have, than if something were just handed to them.” He went on to say, however, that once a community had demonstrated its commitment to the program, he’d like to see “more resources made available by the state.”

State Resources Provided a Network for Local Collaborators

These LitComm efforts are formed to get otherwise unavailable resources. According to the majority (52%) of directors interviewed, the most valuable service that the state provided to the local LitComms was the networking opportunities offered by directors’ meetings and conferences. “I think the fact that it (the state) is pulling all the LitComms together, the directors, and just bouncing ideas off of each other because I picked up a lot at those meetings,” said Bud. Technical assistance, including learning about grants and other resources, came in a strong second, voted most valuable by 42% of the directors. Mulberry’s LitComm director said,

Because we have LitComm and I was in that position, I heard about Even Start and I got a group of people together and we wrote a grant for an Even Start program in our community. That was a million dollars.

Another director's response was, "I mean, it just goes back to her (Hannah, the state executive director) just being available – to identify good points, bad points."

Specifically, the director mentioned a new project that Hannah had started for seasoned LitComm directors to mentor newer ones ("which I think is a great idea"). The Leadership Committee was in the process of planning an electronic bulletin board for directors.

A significant advantage of having the state involved with LitComm is that it gave local advocates a voice at the state legislature. The liaison work that Hannah did with the State Commission on Adult Literacy was valued, "because she really communicates our needs and our stories to them and that is what motivates them to support us and really helps them to understand the day to day problems we face, existing as a non profit. We have a little bit more cohesiveness (than other nonprofits)," according to one LitComm director.

In the past, publicity provided by the governor's office gave LitComm a statewide profile that has served it well. The first two governors to oversee the program were very supportive, and LitComm developed a high profile around the state. The First Lady took on adult literacy and LitComm as her personal project for eight years. Following administrations, though, turned their attention elsewhere and by the time of the evaluation, LitComm was no longer enjoying the public attention it had in the past. This was a concern that surfaced over and over in director interviews and accentuated the value of having state support at the local level, from fundraising to image enhancement.

Greenville, a medium size city with a large army base, became one of the first communities to participate in the LitComm initiative. When it reached its ten year certification goal in 2000, its director, Rebecca, volunteered to share her knowledge and experiences with new LitComm applicants, taking some of the responsibility off the state executive director's shoulders. Based on her own experiences Rebecca described the guidance a community needs when it is new to literacy collaboration, "We could use the (DOE) person there, but who is going to get the community to buy in, get them to write the application, help them with their statistical analysis; who is going to do all this kind of stuff?" Her community had gotten this kind of technical support to establish their LitComm group from the state executive director.

Local Involvement Tailored Collaboration to the Individual Community

As discussed previously, the LitComm concept described a community-driven program, unencumbered by state funding and the accountability constraints that would impose. Dr. Richards, a community college president, said:

The very nature of it is for it to be community based, in other words it has got to be a commitment that is developed among a core group within a community, to commit for the long haul and typically takes about ten years to actually gain the actual certified literate community status. There is not enough help available to try to expect either strictly business interest or government interest to fix what is broken.

Because LitComm depended on community commitment rather than centralized support, each program developed according to local conditions. When educators collaborated to provide literacy services, they could respond to unique community needs in ways that would not be feasible in centralized programs. Because of this flexibility, LitComm partnerships looked very different from place to place.

As the study respondents described the nature of their collaborative work, their emerging stories illustrated how the collaborative effort had produced dramatically different results in each community. In one community, the largesse of a wealthy family was supporting the refurbishing and upkeep of an abandoned health center into literacy classrooms; in another, an energetic commitment to revitalizing local business pointed LitComm partners toward GED and workplace training programs. Local conditions sometimes worked against adult literacy efforts instead, signifying a resistance to change. There was an accusation of racial bias in one community and a couple of indications that business owners wanted to keep their undereducated and therefore underpaid workforce intact.

Richly descriptive comments from respondents illustrated the very different pictures that stakeholders drew of their local LitComms. In each case, the image they described reflected a unique collaborative experience, shaped by local attributes and norms that contributed or detracted in specific ways to the literacy experience. Scott, State Advisory Committee member described the diversity from community to community as an essential aspect of LitComm's strategy and emphasized the need to respect community autonomy. "They know what they need, because they're day-in, day-out seeing what works and what doesn't work," Scott said. He told the following story to illustrate his point:

I think it was in Miller County, somebody was saying, "Well, you know, we put a lot of articles in the newspaper, but we didn't get any response!" Yeah, and so then they went to the radio, and they found out that the best place to put out notices for this stuff was in pool halls, because that's where the communication was taking place. Now, can you imagine [the state] trying to come up with some directive on exactly how to do the PR – "Make certain that pool halls and video poker rooms have-." It's *local*. And that might have worked in Miller County, where they have a very

large Hispanic and Vietnamese population, but that may not have worked real well down in Suwannee County.

Some respondents described the effect of local economic conditions on the literacy situation:

They are two of the five worst counties in [the state]: no hospital, no pharmacy, no doctor, no lawyer, no high school – none of the issues that create enough wealth in the community to be redistributed among LitComm partners. The smaller community that has the fewest resources is the community that is probably doing better per capita. The larger community has kind of set it to the side, as if it is something that they don't want to admit is an issue... I guess the frustrating thing is that so many communities do miss that vital function and they find themselves missing out on opportunities to have the growth that they would like to have. (Dr. Rollins, community college president)

We are a rural county and the lack of value for education that's been inherent in the area for decades is probably the biggest obstacle [to literacy work]. People can work in a carpet mill for \$25 an hour without a diploma, so they see no need for education – until the plant closes and there are layoffs! (Community survey respondent)

Some in the business community don't see the problem. They don't maybe realize the impact. Not all – just a small percentage – the older, smaller businesses. (Charlene, local LitComm director)

We have had one of the more prominent families here in town contribute thousands of dollars [for] fiscal plant type operations. For years they have funded tutors, caseload tutors. (Martha, LitComm director, Pineville)

Findings Related to Research Question 2

The second research question asked: *What is the role of organizational image in interorganizational collaboration?* For the purposes of this study, I defined *image* as how an organization identifies itself in the community as well as how the community sees it.

While analyzing the evaluation data to answer this question, I noted how frequently participants talked about the *community's* image and ways it had benefited from LitComm collaboration. They noted specifically that literacy collaboration had improved the community economically, by educating the local workforce, and socially, by raising

public awareness of adult education needs. Improving the community's image was clearly a positive outcome of collaboration.

Specific to this study, however, is the question of how an *organization's* image is affected, since the actual process of collaborating takes place at the organizational level rather than the community level. The one theme for this research question is that organizations built a stronger image through collaboration. Concerns also arose, however, about negative effects of collaboration on organizational image.

Theme 4: Building a Stronger Image

In most cases, study participants found that LitComm had improved their organization's image in the community, leading to the fourth theme, that *organizations strengthened their image through collaboration*. Adult literacy has long endured a low position on the nation's list of educational priorities, and increasingly more state and federal funding is being diverted to K-12 education. It becomes more critical than ever that adult education develop financial support within the community that it serves, and image is essential to this task. DOE sponsored programs at the community colleges are well funded and have something of a reputation in the community, but small grassroots organizations have little cachet. Not only do they lack credibility; in many cases the community has never even heard of them. This problem rules out any significant fund-raising or other support-building opportunities. By joining a community-wide partnership, such groups can build their image and wield more clout in the community.

Collaborating Organizations Gained Public Recognition and Credibility

One challenge to literacy's image in the community is overcoming a negative public attitude about undereducated adults. LitComm director Martha talked about the difficulty of promoting adult literacy work in Pineville,

It is a harder sell. You know, you can put a little child in front of people and say, "They need this, this or this" and people go, "Oh, my gosh, it's a child!" You put an adult (there) and say "These folks need some help," and it is like, "Oh, well, they probably, you know, had they done better when they were kids –". People just don't want to hear about adults as much as they do children.

Because adult undereducation is so often overlooked, it is very difficult for advocates to garner support. Overcoming negative community attitudes requires a concerted effort, and respondents in the study were very conscious of this. "If people don't know, they will not try to do anything about it," pointed out one director.

Overall, local literacy directors said their providers had benefited from the recognition they gained by joining LitComm. Much of this recognition resulted from a statewide campaign during the 1990s, in which the governor's office widely publicized LitComm as part of its emphasis on adult literacy. Respondents in the evaluation study generally agreed that LitComm's greatest contribution was the attention it brought to adult literacy efforts in their communities, spotlighting adult basic education (ABE), workplace education, and English as a second language (ESL).

Adult educators and community leaders alike talked about the need to increase awareness in the community. "Definitely it (LitComm) has brought recognition of the literacy problem," declared one director. "It has made a lot of people aware of the rate of illiteracy here in these two counties," said another. The majority of LitComm directors put this at the top of their list of benefits.

Advisory board members were key to getting the word out. According to one director, an important part of their role was to publicize “the statistics involving adult education...and to recruit students and volunteers.” Hannah, the state executive director of LitComm, routinely encouraged local directors to recruit newspaper editors and other influential business leaders who had the ear of the community to serve on their boards. The success of this practice was often noted by directors at quarterly meetings and at LitComm’s annual conference.

Scott, the chair of the State Commission on Adult Literacy, who was involved with LitComm from the beginning, had watched it spread through grassroots efforts over forty communities around the state. He observed that LitComm “gets involved with communities that don’t have any initiatives in place and creates an awareness and then a sense of excitement with the community about the program and the benefits to the community of the program.” The LitComm director in one small mountain community described her experience getting the message out,

I do have funds available to pay for the advertising that I’m doing for our GED program. I’m running a full page ad for three months in regard to the different dates that the GED will be given here at Blue Mountain Tech. And I’m picking it up and I had my PR person also get the paper to run it one time for me free of charge. So, I have different people working on different levels that are on my board but it has really been the last year that I’ve gotten them all to communicate.

Collaboration Gave Organizations Credibility

Eighty of the 162 respondents to the community survey listed credibility or legitimacy as an important contribution that collaboration was making to literacy providers in the community. “It has opened the eyes of business and community leaders and the general public to the need for adult literacy,” wrote one community resident. This appreciation of literacy education made fundraising easier. Martha, LitComm director in

Pineville, said, “When I talk about our literacy program or apply for grants, it is a plus to be able to add that we are a member of LitComm. It gives us a seal of approval.”

Community-wide collaboration was also giving literacy work credibility in the business sector. “I think that this program has gained the recognition now, it is being adopted by several economic regional groups,” said Claire, state administrator in the DOE office. Listing the combined accomplishments of the literacy organizations in his community, another director, Sam, said,

We have established Imagination Station incorporation with the County Housing Authority. We have provided a library for the Head Start Programs, we provided Books for Babies at Memorial Hospital long before there was a state program. We provided an annual Book Swap for children at the Christmas parade. So, if you are looking for a project or a program, any of those that I named would be sufficient. And when you use those names anywhere, you know, people identify where that came from.

Sam was making clear that the community saw each of these activities as a LitComm accomplishment, giving the literacy effort a cohesive image for the whole community.

Logan, who ran the DOE program for Pineville, recognized distinct advantages to being a part of LitComm. Often the DOE programs were seen as extensions of the state, while LitComm was based in the community. He saw the benefit as an issue of credibility:

Our money can't buy what Martha (LitComm's local director) can deliver. If you can bring advocates to my program, you bring me strength. If you bring me - if you sell my program to the community at large - you bring, you make my institution a respected institution. I can go out and sell myself and my program day after day after day. And one of her volunteers can go out in a one hour presentation and validate me like no other person can do. Because they're someone who is respected in the community and they're deriving nothing from us except that they believe in us.

LitComm's favorable reputation had a personal aspect as well, made clear by a LitComm board member in this way:

It appears to me, and I don't know how this is in other LitComms, but concerning our local LitComm, being on the board of directors is a resume builder. It looks good that I'm a part of this entity and if I need to drop a hat or drop a name or if I'm looking to promote myself in a bio, it looks good to put that down.

Mission Incompatibility Caused Conflict

One of the ways that a community organization identifies itself is through its mission statement. The unsuccessful efforts of LitComm directors to bring church literacy programs into their partnerships were one example of the conflict that can arise when organizations try to collaborate without a common message. LitComm directors were unsure of why the churches did not join LitComm, but their comments indicated that it could be related to image, a perception that partnering with outside organizations would inappropriately reflect on their position in the community. This issue of the churches is covered more thoroughly in the next section of this chapter, in the discussion of internal pressures.

There was a time in Pineville when the DOE partner, Logan, and the LitComm director, Lisa, were in conflict over their collaborative mission, manifested through issues of personal control. During the period of conflict, Logan began to believe that collaboration was having a negative effect on his organization's image:

I was getting to the end of my career and I thought, I have worked thirty something years to form a program and it's being destroyed right in front of me. My integrity is being totally destroyed and there was nothing I could do. There was no way I could throw the towel in, because then I'd be saying, "What we've done is wrong, what you're doing is right".

Logan struggled with a classic cost-benefit decision: was collaboration worth the negative effect it was having on his organization and his own reputation? Such issues can create situations where a decision is made to end the collaborative relationship.

Loss of Independence Discouraged Collaboration

Loss of independence is a concern for many organizations that collaborate, and one aspect of this loss is the issue of image. A literacy organization's image reflects the individuality that sets it apart from other providers. Collaboration, particularly in an initiative like LitComm, muddies that line between providers' individual images. This was a particular problem for the Department of Education (DOE) programs in LitComm counties, because they had long enjoyed the status of being the largest and best-funded literacy provider in the community. In Juniper County, the DOE program and its advisory board, the Literacy Council, decided after a tenuous relationship of five years, to break away from LitComm. Leslie explained:

I have just gone through the last six months of trying to convince them that we need to be one organization. It is not going to happen...With both budgets we could have hired another person. And they won't do it; the Literacy Council will not give up their separate identity. They say it is because they don't want to give up their identity, but I tried to explain that in this community nobody really knows the difference.

Findings Related to Research Question 3

The third major finding was that many of the collaborative groups in the study dealt with pressures which affected whether and how they collaborated with one another.

This relates to Question 3: *How do internal and external pressures affect*

interorganizational collaboration? The findings are divided into two themes:

- Internal pressures affected organizations' ability and willingness to collaborate.
- External pressures encouraged organizations to collaborate.

Organizations at times felt pressured to collaborate either because of internal factors or because funders or other external entities imposed collaborative relationships on them. There was a reverse aspect as well, that pressures both internal and external

sometimes discouraged or prevented organizations from collaborating. An outline of the themes related to these issues is included in Table 4.1.

Theme 5: Internal Pressures

The fifth theme to emerge was that *internal pressures affected organizations' ability and willingness to collaborate*. Internal conditions create pressures that influence organizations to collaborate or to work independently to provide their brand of literacy.

There were two aspects to internal pressure:

- Internal value systems drive organizations to collaborate.
- Organizational structure affects the capacity to collaborate.

Internal Value Systems Drove Collaboration

Organizations tend to collaborate only if partnership fits with their core values. Participation in LitComm (Gray, 1989) meant that an organization valued inclusion, for instance, since LitComm's mission was to reach out to diverse parts of the community. Community survey respondents supported this when they wrote that LitComm's purpose was "to meet the majority of those in need" and "to reach those in need in the county". LitComm's partners were those literacy providers whose internal values were compatible with its mission.

Explaining what made collaboration work for him, Logan said, "The keys are having the partners that have a common goal, a common commitment." Logan prioritized this over interpersonal relations, adding, "You can have common program goals, you can be committed to meeting the goals, but not necessarily be committed to the people that promote the goals."

One community survey said that “educating its constituency speaks volumes about that community's values”. The general sentiment of the community survey responses was that LitComm organizations were driven by a commitment to community betterment.

Organizational Structure Affected the Capacity to Collaborate

Organizations with open structures are more receptive to influences of the external environment than those with closed or bureaucratic structures (Scott, 1992). They are more likely to seek out collaborative partners (see Chapter 2 for a fuller description of organizational structure). Organizations in a collaborative group with the broad goals of LitComm tend to be open and outwardly-focused, whereas closed or inwardly-focused organizations are less likely to collaborate. Gray (1989) says that “To be successful, coordination must be accomplished laterally without the hierarchical authority to which most managers are accustomed.”

At inception, each LitComm partnership was given a charge to reach out to the community at large. “LitComm has made education more accessible to members of our community;” wrote one community survey respondent. The following comments drive home the most consistent message of the survey, that the providers of LitComm worked collaboratively to serve the varied needs of the entire community:

- “This has been and continues to be very beneficial to educating and training the workforce. It has also been instrumental in the ongoing project to revitalize the downtown area.”
- “LitComm has brought community leaders together to address the issue of education in an open, collaborative manner.”
- “I think it is made the minority [Hispanics] feel more a part of the community.”
- “We have people who do not have to go 25 or 50 miles to study for a GED.”

- “In the correctional facility, it allows them an opportunity to get something positive from their experience and benefits them in the workforce when they get out.”

Not all LitComm communities were successfully fulfilling this mission, however.

One community survey respondent wrote, “The White people, who don't need the program, are in charge and haven't made any connection with the Black people, who need the program.”

In contrast to open organizations were literacy providers with an inwardly focused structure who tended to target their services more narrowly. An example was given by Anna, who had volunteered for her church literacy program before becoming a LitComm director. “We have some in the congregation that did not graduate or did not have high school diplomas,” she said. The church program “tried to reach those that were less fortunate...in the congregation, that did not graduate.” This is an example of literacy work that is aimed internally, at the church membership, rather than the community as a whole.

The role of churches was often a subject of concern for LitComm directors. A recurring observation was that church-sponsored literacy programs did not want to work with LitComm. Rebecca, LitComm director in Grayson, said:

We are finding out that probably the church one, they do their own. It's very hard to get communication going with them...I would say that would be the most difficult group that I find to get information out of because, I don't know, I'm not sure why. Churches are more difficult because they do their own thing.

Judy, director in Ridge County, described a similar experience:

We tried to work with one of the largest churches in our county and help them formalize their job placement program, the literacy part of that. And our full time instructor put a lot of effort into that. She trained people and we gave them materials and everything, and it fell flat within three months because they just weren't willing to work within a system. Working within a system did not fit

with providing ministry from church so that is what we found in that circumstance... I just don't see any point in going out and beating the bushes with the churches.

For their annual report to the state, LitComm directors compiled the literacy activities of all their partners. Susie was among several directors that excluded church-sponsored activities from this report. She explained, "I know in particular there is a Pentecostal church that provides literacy and ESL with a religious foundation. We do assist them, but I'm not sure I should include it. My hesitance involves asking them to turn in a report."

In a similar vein, Martha noted that Pineville's large Hispanic population did not participate in LitComm sponsored activities in any significant numbers. For instance, providers had not been effective at recruiting Hispanics for the new Adult Learning Center:

We had not been able to reach those folks at our facility, for whatever reason, whether they did not have transportation, whether it was their home church, and they feel more comfortable. You know, culturally, I certainly don't claim to know a whole lot about the Hispanic culture but I do think that they like to stay well within their own comfort zone, which is understandable since they've come to a strange country and strange city.

Because the study did not single out church directors and Hispanic groups specifically, I cannot speculate about the role internal values and structure had in their decision not to collaborate. It was clear from the above comments, however, that churches in particular preferred to provide their literacy work independently.

Theme 6: External Pressures

The sixth theme in the data was that *external pressures encouraged organizations to collaborate*. External pressure may come from the federal or state government or from other third parties that coerce organizations to work together. Additionally, government

and other funding sources sometimes require collaboration among agencies. Logan, Pineville's DOE director, was clear that he and his collaborative partners worked under myriad external pressures:

I have requirements from state and federal sources that say you gotta have this and this and this. Even Start has requirements that they've got to have this and this and this. The Alliance has funders who say if we're going to give you money, you gotta do this, this and this.

There were three aspects to this theme:

- Certain funders required collaboration
- External social agendas encouraged collaboration
- State involvement pressured organizations to collaborate

Certain Funders Required Collaboration

Often community development funders require that organizations collaborate in order to qualify for grants and literacy funding is no exception. At the time of the Pineville interviews, Martha told me about a grant application she and Logan had recently submitted to an educational foundation. Some of the questions they had to answer were:

- How do the two individual entities partner and collaborate together?
- How are the powers and decision making shared in the partnership?
- How is the data used to plan and make decisions?

“It was a very eye-opening learning experience,” Martha said, “compared to other grants that you write where they want to know very specific projections and outcomes and strategies for programs.” This funder was more focused on “How do you guys relate and what can you do and how do you help each other?”

External Social Agendas Encouraged Collaboration

Lisa, who directed Pineville's LitComm before Martha, talked about government pressure for literacy collaboration and how it had increased since she left. She felt that this had motivated Logan to partner with Even Start. "Part of it is that the climate of literacy has changed and that there's more pressure on Logan to do family literacy than there was then," she said. "If you want to keep your level of funding, you must do these things."

Lisa's point about family literacy brings up the issue of social agendas being imposed on educational programs. Literacy providers feel the effect of government policy trends at both the adult and public school level. Logan's reversal on the issue of family literacy was likely influenced by federal and state regulations, as Lisa suggested. In fact, family literacy was a growing component of adult literacy across the state according to the evaluation data. At the time I was collecting data, the field was going through a transition period and there was some controversy about family literacy's fit with adult education programming. The evaluation data showed that by 2001 many LitComm locations had begun to include family literacy providers in their collaborations.

Another trend beginning to affect LitComm providers at the time was that the average learner age in literacy classrooms was growing progressively younger as new federal requirements mandated welfare recipients and high school dropouts into the classroom, welfare clients to keep their benefits and dropouts to keep their drivers licenses or meet probation requirements. This was a growing concern and many adult programs were being affected. Anna, LitComm's director in Conley, described how

Communities in Schools, a drop-out prevention program, was influencing her literacy work:

You know that there is a big push from our political officials, state and national, that they are wanting every child to be reading on third grade level by the time they reach third grade or above. So, what we are working with them is the America Reads Program and we try, through business, to help us to do this.

Ways that this trend affected collaboration can only be speculated upon, as the evaluation protocol did not pursue this line of questioning. At least one LitComm director, however, did say that two of her top partners in the collaboration were the local public school system, with whom they collaborated on a dropout prevention program, and the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Bringing attention to social needs can backfire on well-meaning community collaborators, as groups can also be discouraged from collaborating by community norms. A state administrator told the story of a LitComm recruiting visit the state executive director made to one rural county, “and they just blasted her out of the room, saying, ‘We have a hard time keeping our work force, and if you start coming up here and educating them, they’re gonna be gone. I’ll lose my work force.’” A former literacy teacher from another part of the state told a similar story about experiencing resistance from local business people. She concluded that they wanted to protect their undereducated workforce to keep wages down. In that teacher’s opinion, this was a legacy of the South’s agricultural racism.

In the community survey a DOE director revealed another concern, that literacy promotion could be bad for future business. The director wrote, “I would eliminate this program. All it does is show prospective industries that our state has a serious illiteracy problem”.

Businesses in many communities, however, saw the advantage of identifying educational gaps and improving the workforce through a community effort. Many of the rural communities in the state are shrinking, losing their economic base to plant closings and their youth to urban job markets. Economic renewal is a driving concern in every rural community I have visited. One director described her strategy to win over civic leaders by emphasizing the economic advantages of having a literacy initiative:

We have...brought some literacy perspectives to the Chamber of Commerce as they are recruiting businesses into the community. If you are recruiting a company in the community and tell them that twenty-five percent of your adult population doesn't have a high school diploma, it's much easier to swallow when you are able to say, "But we have this program that they can go to and fix that problem".

Businesses that "have discovered the value of having employees who can read and write and have their GED" will support community literacy work.

LitComm directors were acutely aware that their financial health depended on the local business sector's support. The necessity of raising their own funds was reinforced by LitComm's state guidelines requiring that each local LitComm include the collaboration of the business community as well as educators and other leaders. A number of directors accomplished this by courting prominent business leaders for their advisory boards. Grayson's director, Rebecca, described how she had successfully gotten attention and support for LitComm within their business community:

We have an award that is called the Tommy Bolen Award, and we recognize a business that furthers excellence in education services to their employees. And we do that, which couldn't be better, and that's the annual meeting of the Chamber of Commerce and so they are recognized in front of all of their peers.

State Involvement Pressured Organizations to Collaborate

Because LitComm was a state-sponsored program, the state had a more direct role there than in most community collaborations. Although participation was voluntary, the state did recruit communities and pressure those that joined to follow its program guidelines. These included reaching out to all literacy providers in the community to participate in the LitComm partnership and having an advisory board that represented the diversity of the community's leaders. For this reason all start-up LitComms went through the formality at least of being inclusive.

Inclusivity was hard to maintain for a number of reasons, however, including issues of control. It was most noticeable in the makeup of the advisory boards. One director (Tracy) complained about the difficulty of maintaining a diverse board. "It seems like I'm asking people that may not be active and that would just serve on the board and not participate." Martha had trouble getting Pineville's Hispanics to serve on her board.

The problem in Pineville as far as getting Hispanic folks on the board – everyone wants one – and the movers and shakers within the Hispanic community are so overwhelmed right now. They couldn't put another board on their plate if you paid them.

Claire, a DOE state administrator, defended the state's role of exerting pressure on LitComm participants, particularly those who were not meeting the certification goal of reducing illiteracy by 50 percent:

If you don't give those that aren't doing anything some type of warning or citation, then it is going to be an embarrassment to our board and the community if they don't come around. And I think that is part of what the [state] assistance needs to do, not to brow beat them but, yeah – and let them know that you are aware that there is a problem and that they are not producing and that there are consequences for – you know – it is a certification granted by our board and if you are not holding up your end of the deal, then there should be some consequences.

A danger of the state's pressuring of local providers was the potential to redirect literacy efforts inappropriately. Sam, a LitComm director, presented a good scenario for this:

Consider these things, *Books for Babies*, that people that are doing a good job in other areas may think, "Oh, I'll get a black mark if I don't start a *Books for Babies Program*." They may refocus energy and effort that is being well spent and put it in [another] area just because the state said you ought to do a *Books for Babies Program*.

Scott, who chaired the State Literacy Advisory Committee, also weighed in on this issue.

An architect of the program ten years earlier, he remained a strong advocate of local control:

I've always been one to decentralize on this type of stuff. The more you force things up here (at the state capital), the more restrictive you become, the less enthused a local community can become, because they feel like they're being dictated to as to how they're supposed to address their issue.

Many comments from stakeholders illustrate the variety of local ways that communities were implementing the LitComm initiative.

Findings Related to Research Question 4

The final research question of the study was: *What are the issues of interdependency and control in interorganizational collaboration?* The findings related to this question revealed two major themes.

- Sharing control created challenged for collaboration
- Competition among providers discouraged collaboration.

Issues arise when organizations accustomed to autonomy become interdependent. Joint decision-making, goal conflict, and personal control are all issues that surface when organizations enter a collaborative relationship. Competition over resources, goals, and turf also throws up strong obstacles to successful collaboration.

Theme 7: Sharing Control

The primary issue to emerge under Question 4 was that *sharing control created challenges for collaboration*. Gray (1989) writes that “collaboration is a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible” (p.5) To accomplish synergistic results such as Gray describes, however, individual partners have to relinquish some control to the group. Decision making must be shared, individual goals compromised and personal conflict put aside. This is harder for some organizations than others, depending on their leadership, history, and mission. An organization that is used to functioning autonomously may not readily share control, while one with limited leadership resources may welcome the opportunity to share leadership. Theme 7 has three aspects:

- Shared decision-making caused conflict.
- Incompatible goals interfered with the collaborative process.
- Personal control issues prevented collaboration.

The theme of control-sharing first surfaced in the statewide evaluation study but was not fully explored. The findings described here came primarily from the Pineville study, which I designed specifically to illuminate issues of interdependency and control. I have used the Pineville participants’ own words rather extensively to describe the findings in this section. Because the Pineville data was so critical to this part of the study, I begin with additional background on Pineville’s story.

In 2000, as LitComm approached its ten-year anniversary, Pineville’s literacy partnership became embroiled in a crisis growing out of an inability to share control at

both the organizational and personal level. Conflict escalated primarily between Logan Reed, longtime director of the DOE literacy program at the community college, and Lisa Nichols, the new LitComm director, who had previously taught K-12 special education in another state. Lisa wanted to expand LitComm's mission and embrace family literacy, which would mean partnering with public schools and other childhood education programs such as Even Start. Logan wanted to keep the partnership's focus specifically on adult education as his Adult Learning Center was providing it. As he saw it, his job was to serve adults. The conflict came to a head as the partnership started planning its grant application for United Way funding.

Shared Decision-Making Caused Conflict

Collaboration is a process of decision-making, and decision-making invariably surfaces issues of power. The DOE programs received virtually all of the federal money targeted for literacy in each county and enjoyed the status of official adult literacy provider for the community. Consequently, in most areas DOE was the dominant partner in LitComm, and other partners were smaller, less stable, independent organizations. Because this was not a collaboration of peer organizations, there was an unequal distribution of power.

In Pineville a decision needed to be made about the United Way grant proposal. The partnership had decided to request funding for a new classroom building but LitComm's advisory board members couldn't agree about how to describe the building's purpose. Lisa's recommendation to the board was "that we would work with moms on computer skills while we worked with children, and got families working together." Logan's strongly advocated view was that the building should be used for adult literacy

classes alone. “I can’t get anything in the way of money by serving children,” he explained, referring to the state and federal funding that supported his program.

A year after the conflict, Logan still seemed agitated. Haltingly, he told me:

With limited resources, uh – we were - we were - we were - we were getting more involved in children’s literacy – and the public school system....Those funds were raised for those undereducated adults and it was just driving me bonkers because those funds were being siphoned off to do a little art project in one of the school systems.

In time the advisory board split over the issue. “It got to be an ‘us and them’ kind of thing,” said Lisa. “There were the Logan cronies and there were our cronies.” Because the partnership could never agree on how to describe its funding request, Lisa and Logan made separate presentations to the United Way that year. Both Lisa and Logan mentioned in their interviews that dissension within the partnership was so obvious that it caused the United Way to deny funding for the building project.

Finally, the situation became intractable and the head of the advisory board brought in an arbitrator to talk to Lisa and Logan. At that point, Lisa resigned as LitComm director. She said, “That’s when I knew I had to get out, because it was getting to the point where it was very personal and it didn’t have to be personal.”

It was a year later when I visited Pineville, and by that time a lot had changed. Lisa’s replacement, Martha Pearson, was working compatibly with Logan and the other board members, and the partnership had just completed its new building with United Way funding. I asked Logan what had changed. The key, he explained, was his ability to work through problems with the new LitComm director and make compromises. He said that he and Martha had developed the sort of relationship,

Where you can pick up the phone and you may yell at each other but at least you clear the water. You don’t let it build up; you don’t let it fester. So it’s got to be a

very open relationship. It's got to be one that – where you can discuss your differences and you can put on the table what you have to have.

Incompatible Goals Interfered with the Collaborative Process

Many of the decision-making difficulties that hinder collaboration have to do with goals and mission compatibility. The issue that tore the Pineville partnership apart was whether its literacy mission should be broadened. Personal issues aside, Logan and Lisa agreed that this was the center of the conflict. Logan explained, “If you’re going to have a collaborative, you’re going to have to have people with a single purpose.” Lisa said, “We just clashed so badly on what the mission of adult literacy, our mission of literacy, ought to be.” The way Logan saw it, Lisa was “siphoning off” funds raised for undereducated adults and redirecting them for what he considered inappropriate programs in the public schools. He was concerned that she had “no interest in the adult”. Lisa, for her part, accused Logan of taking all the LitComm funding for his program and leaving nothing for other aspects of community literacy.

When Martha replaced Lisa, she was a newcomer to Pineville and to the field, and she brought along no personal agenda for literacy. In this position she was able to neutralize the rift within Pineville’s partnership. Martha began a dialogue with the board, which seemed ready to refocus on literacy work and the community. She looked to Logan for advice and direction. “Oh, he was just wonderful!” she said enthusiastically, adding:

He gave me all of the background, lots of information, and then once I felt more comfortable I was able to pick the brain of more of the folks that had been with the partnership for a number of years and try to figure out the direction.

Within Martha’s first year the partnership, including Logan, finally agreed to include family literacy and invited Even Start to become a partner. When I visited Pineville, the Adult Learning Center and Even Start had recently moved together into the

new building and LitComm had purchased a trailer that would become a children's center. Logan talked about his new-found compatibility with family literacy:

If I have someone that has a wonderful project but their project director has no compassion for the undereducated adult or the poor family, then I can't do much of a collaborative with them. I feel like the people in Even Start have a compassion. So I think that's one reason that we have got to where we have, because we all have like-goals for what we want to see happen in Pineville and Miller County.

I encouraged Logan to talk further about lessons learned and his decision to collaborate more broadly:

You've got to be at a point that you're willing to say "I'll risk it". Even after we had the money; we had the commitment; the trailer was ours; there's been times when I thought one of the parties would just take their toys and leave – because it wasn't going their way. And then you say, "We're here and you can't have it your way 100 per cent, because there's three players." It's like a marriage.

Lisa theorized that Logan's change of heart about family literacy had in fact been prompted by outside pressure. She was referring to the increased attention to family literacy at the state and national level that had taken place after she left LitComm. The link between family literacy and adult education was becoming more obvious at the both the research and practice levels. According to the National Center for Family Literacy (2005):

In a recent report by the National Center for Education Statistics on "America's Kindergartners," researchers found that children's performance in reading, mathematics and general knowledge increases with the level of their mothers' education.

Considering that a number of recent federal programs are emphasizing family literacy and its link to adult education, (No Child Left Behind, Head Start, the Workforce Investment Act, and Community Services Block Grants) many adult education programs are now developing joint adult and family literacy programs.

Nevertheless, Lisa was bitter about the way that LitComm had brought family literacy and adult literacy together after her departure:

That was *my* idea. It was shot all down. It was presented to the board. There was talk about it was the worst idea in the world, “We don’t work with children; we don’t work with families; we work with adults over the age of 16. How can you suggest – that’s the dumbest idea you’ve ever had.” On and on and on. I leave – all of a sudden it’s *Logan’s* idea and it’s going forward.

Personal Control Issues Prevented Collaboration

Organizations don’t collaborate, of course; people do. Moreover, people who collaborate tend to be established leaders within their own organizations. Collaborative issues that arise over control-sharing can easily be the result of personal conflict among strong people used to having their own way. The Pineville data illustrated this precisely. Lisa described her relationship with Logan, “We just rubbed the wrong way from the first day.” Logan echoed this with “She and I were oil and water.” The conflict escalated as they began to work together. Lisa blamed Logan’s refusal to respect her position:

I saw myself as someone who Logan should be coming to and asking *me* for funding for his programs and should be collaborating and working with me on how my agency could help his agency and how his agency could be helping my agency. And instead, it was “This is my fiefdom. This is my kingdom, I own it. And you will bow down before me.”

Interestingly, Logan used a similar metaphor to describe Lisa. “It was like her whole mission was to destroy Miller Tech’s literacy program, so that she could build her own empire,” he said.

It was clear that a power struggle was in progress. The LitComm advisory board was nominally in control, but no one talked about the board as a source of power during that time. The impression all three gave was that the board meetings were a battlefield for Logan and Lisa’s skirmishes with the other members their pawns. Lisa aligned herself

with the advisory board against Logan when she said, “So we were nothing but a mouthpiece, we were nothing but a funnel for him to get money from United Way.”

Logan, for his part, told me that he believed Lisa had intentionally turned board members against him.

Martha, coming in after the battle smoke had cleared, was more circumspect. “The past executive director (Lisa)...had a personality conflict with members of our board and with the director of the Adult Learning Center (Logan), and it was a very difficult situation that I walked into,” she acknowledged. She described a board that was basically shell-shocked when she arrived and the months she had to spend doing damage control. “We kind of like almost started over.” Fortunately, Martha and Logan’s personal relationship was markedly different from that of Lisa and Logan. “I don’t know that we’ve had any disagreements about anything,” said Martha. Logan also noted the improvement. “Martha comes in, she’s a very warm person,” he commented. “She has the compassion for what she’s doing.”

The personal conflict in Pineville made it impossible for the partnership to achieve its goals. LitComm lost the grant from its major funder, United Way, during the period of conflict, and the relationship with United Way deteriorated. All three interviewees complained about the negative effect on the advisory board. People didn’t want to come to board meetings anymore and lost interest in its activities. Projects moved slowly or were put on hold. Lisa claimed that she was reduced to funneling the partnership’s dollars to Logan. “Collaboration wasn’t there,” she said, “because we just wrote him a check and he did what he wanted with it.”

There was a strong personal toll as well. Logan felt during the conflict that his integrity was being destroyed. He admitted that he started thinking about early retirement during that time. Lisa's stress at work, she felt, interacted with problems at home, where she was going through a painful divorce. Board members, according to all three respondents, experienced personal distress as well. Logan did show signs of having learned from the experience, though. He told me when we talked about the recent partnering with Even Start, "The keys are having the partners that have a common goal, a common commitment. You can have common program goals; you can be committed to meeting the goals, but not necessarily be committed to the people that promote the goals."

Discussing a grant proposal she wrote with Logan after the conflict was over, Martha observed how different life had become for LitComm,

We kind of joked about the fact that six months' prior with the other director there was no way you could have done this because they couldn't have sat across the desk and had a civil conversation – it got bad.

Before moving to Pineville Lisa had also experienced a much happier collaborative relationship than the one she experienced with Logan. In the school district where Lisa taught, a project was created between the Department of Special Education and the public schools to mainstream mentally retarded children into the regular classroom. Her experience showed what could be accomplished when personal control was not at issue:

For a couple of years I taught in the classroom and then the superintendent asked me if I would be a consultant. And what we decided in that school district in (other state) was that no child, no matter how disabled they were, was going to go into a regular ed classroom in kindergarten. My job was to calm the fears of the regular ed teachers, who were terribly frightened, and understandably so: "We're

going to give you this Downs syndrome child who can scale vertical walls and crawl across the ceiling, but don't worry" you know, kind of thing....

Well, of course it was frightening in August and with every teacher hating me, and I was afraid of my house being fire-bombed. By Christmas I was getting gifts from every teacher, "Thank you, we love this. It is so wonderful. It has been so good on both sides. Children are learning tolerance and children who were climbing walls the first few days can now sit in a seat." And that's what all the teachers were saying. It was the most wonderful collaboration between regular ed teachers and the special ed dept and me, who interfaced between the two and the superintendent. It was a wonderful collaboration of people working together to involve some really severely disabled children in regular education class. By then, they'd learned to be with other kids and other kids were being tolerant. So it was a wonderful collaboration.

I asked Lisa how that collaboration differed from her Pineville experience. She said, "The difference was that [in Pineville] one of the collaborating agencies held all of the power, both real and imagined." In contrast, when special education and the public schools collaborated, power issues were resolved easily because power was equally distributed:

Every other collaboration I was involved in, we all came in on equal footing. And power things broke out. We'd find that there'd be one person who had a little more power in different areas, but in this [Pineville] it was clearly, "This is the person with the power". And it was not a collaboration. It should have been but it never was a collaboration.

Clearly, despite their problems with one another, both Lisa and Logan were capable of collaboration.

Theme 8: Competition Discouraged Collaboration

Competition and collaboration are at opposite ends of the interorganizational relationship continuum. Competition is not considered a form of IOR, in fact, but rather an awareness of other organizations that may affect decision-making (Cervero & Young, 1987). Nevertheless, competition often arises among collaborators. Although partnering

is intended to minimize competition, issues do emerge within the collaborative process, particularly among organizations that provide similar services. The three aspects of competition that arose in this theme were:

- Competition discouraged those with similar services from collaborating
- Competition arose over similar goals
- Turf guarding was a Aspect of Collaboration

Competition Discouraged Those with Similar Services from Collaborating

The issue of competition came up often as a deterrent to collaboration: competition over resources, turf, and gaining recognition from in the community. Although LitComm could minimize many issues of competition by offering ways to share resources, there were other areas that it often did not resolve. Because the DOE programs were well established as the primary literacy provider in the community, they had the most to lose from full collaboration, which would strengthen other, smaller partners. From an adult education consultant in the state I heard about DOE director resistance to LitComm's entry into their communities. "How little must I collaborate to get the state recognition, and who do I want in?" was the attitude of some, he said. After sitting on an advisory committee to bring LitComm into one community, the consultant observed,

Fred worked hard to be on the right committees, to make sure that essentially any other organizations got itty bits. And everything came to him. And he did it in ways like not inviting people to meetings.

This environment of competition extended to the state Department of Adult Education, where the executive directors of LitComm and the DOE literacy program had an uneasy relationship and cooperation was almost non-existent. In many local programs,

however, such as Wheeler and Grayson, the DOE program became a true collaborator, often cited as LitComm's strongest partner.

Where collaboration worked well, the key seemed to be finding a way that partners could complement rather than compete with one another. The best example of this, which I heard more than once, was the coordination of services to prepare low level readers at one agency, usually through tutors, and then send them to the DOE program for more advanced work such as GED preparation.

In some communities, however, no such arrangements were in place and LitComm directors found the DOE to be more of a competitor than collaborator. Sharon, director of one rural program, described a typically competitive situation,

Mostly, I find that DOE programs almost are detrimental because of the efforts for us to duplicate so much that our full time teachers and our community colleges are already doing.

For Gail, another LitComm director, the animosity between DOE and LitComm was palpable:

There is a lot of competition like within our local DOE for the money, which I don't want to go anywhere with that, but – I asked my DOE director, I said, "Well, what is our adult ed budget for Mulberry County?" and she said, "Oh, I'll have to get back with you on that." I mean, it was like, "How *dare* you?"

In general LitComm directors fell into one of three camps: those who considered the DOE programs competitive, those who had learned to work cooperatively with DOE directors, and some who were actually planning and developing programs collaboratively, e.g., Logan and Martha in Pineville.

Those involved with the DOE programs had their own perspective on literacy competition. These were local DOE directors who oversaw programs for a multi-county area and the presidents of community colleges where the programs were housed. One of

the small number of DOE directors who responded to the survey expressed her concern about competition between DOE and LitComm. The director wrote:

In several counties, we have LitComms actively working. In theory, having a LitComm sounds like a great idea. In fact, they compete with the DOE programs as opposed to supporting us. They are a lot more trouble than they are worth.

The four college presidents interviewed for the evaluation were all LitComm supporters who were directly involved at the state level, but Dane, a State Advisory Board member, told us of a negative experience that Dr. Johnson, another college president, had shared with him. Dr. Johnson's college had initially encouraged the community to adopt LitComm and had agreed to fund the salary for a LitComm director. As Dane recounted the story, the newly hired director approached Dr. Johnson, demanding, "Well, we need this, and we need that, and we need our own foundation." The president told Dane, "My foundation already raises money for adult literacy. I don't want her competing out there." In many communities the "collaborative" relationship between stakeholders of the college program and LitComm directors, representing the other literacy partners, was an uneasy one.

Besides the DOE, other government programs were increasingly providing literacy services to adults to supplement their primary missions. A LitComm director named Kathy considered this direct competition to LitComm and its fund-raising capabilities:

There are a lot of programs doing the same thing. You have your Head Start Program. Now you have a new program called the Fatherhood Program. Basically you are bringing the fathers into an area where they need to be educated, so that's another organization within the same realm. You have First Step, you have a program through Family and Children Services; there are so many programs out there that are funded by the state. The LitComm program is not.

There was no plan to coordinate among these state and federal programs so that they could pool resources rather than compete for them. The Fatherhood Initiative did send a representative to a quarterly LitComm directors' meeting that I attended shortly after the evaluation. Mildly received, he gave a brief talk about his program and handed out t-shirts, but no one brought up the topic of bringing the two groups together to accomplish common goals.

A former LitComm director and board member who responded to the community survey did, however, address this issue, writing, "Various organizations that are all trying to raise funds for the same type of programs, such as Housing Authority, LIFT, and the community college, could work together better and pool some of their funds and combine efforts."

Sharon was another director with ideas about how to reduce competition among literacy providers. She pointed out that funders prefer to bestow grants to large groups of collaborators. "I think we'd have a much better chance of getting grant money if it was done at a higher level and then distributed out," she suggested, alluding to LitComm's statewide network. "So, we would not be in competition for funding and we would not be in competition with each other and all secretive about where we are getting our money."

Competition Arises over Similar Goals

Another aspect of the competition among similar partners extended to overlapping organizational goals, in this case, counting heads. In many aspects of adult education, competition among providers exists primarily over learners (Cervero, 1984). In this study, it was definitely the case, and it invariably involved the DOE programs, whose.

goals were measured in numbers of students, both for enrollment and level attainment. These goals determined how much funding a DOE program received from the state. Other partners had goals set by various funders which also included counting numbers of literacy students served. Additionally, the LitComm partnership had an overarching ten-year goal, to reach more than half of the community's low literate adults. This potentially involved counting all the literacy activity in the community. The literacy field is used to being accountable to more than one master – funders, government agencies, the public – and this often brings up the issue of multiple counting of students. Was it suitable for LitComm to count DOE achievement when the DOE was already reporting these numbers to the state?

This was a contentious issue that cut across many LitComms in the state. The original concept for LitComm was that it would be an umbrella organization, bringing all the literacy activities in the community together into one cohesive unit. By gathering the numbers from all the literacy activities across the community, they could get a comprehensive picture of how well students were being served and track their literacy progress. Unfortunately, in many areas combining the numbers muddied rather than clarified the work that individual agencies were doing and diffused the credit they got. The problem came when LitComm appeared to be taking the credit for the literacy provision.

Understandably, there was confusion among LitComm directors about how to track the long-term community goal, and the state LitComm office offered inadequate guidance in this regard. The most detrimental aspect of accountability was the environment of competition that rose out of goal overlap. I heard about one LitComm

area where the local newspaper printed a photo of a DOE teacher and her literacy classroom with a caption that read, “LitComm Students at Work”. The DOE teacher’s angry response was that LitComm had never been involved with her classroom and should not be getting the credit. It had been clear to the evaluation team that confusion over goals and LitComm’s role was a weakness of the LitComm program.

In places where collaboration was not strong, DOE directors made it hard for LitComm to get reporting information. Like the director who found her picture in the newspaper, they felt that LitComm had done nothing to get those numbers. Samuel, who was a LitComm director, went so far as to speculate:

Our assumption and maybe falsely, as we would talk with the DOE, was that DOE was providing annually numbers to the department (the Office of Adult Education), and we felt those numbers were being credited or marked or whatever you want to say – you know, against our activities.

The concern over goals extended beyond reporting numbers. DOE directors were also concerned that competition from other LitComm partners would detract from their ability to reach these goals. Logan, as a DOE director in Pineville, felt that Lisa, as LitComm director, had worked in opposition to his efforts:

She had no respect for what we were doing because she wanted to have a program where she had numbers. And you’re trying to work with an advisory committee that’s supposed to be supporting the program you’re working with, but yet at the same time, they’re trying to compete.

Distrust between partners even tainted one of LitComm’s valued contributions to community literacy, its public relations work. Gail in Mulberry said,

We have a problem with adult education programs here at the community college. They consider us competition. LitComm has helped by getting the word out, publicity, but when we put out something, the DOE worries that they aren’t getting credit.

Turf Guarding Was an Aspect of Competition

Competition creates an environment of perceived threats and protective behavior for potential collaborators. Some groups were wary of working together because they feared losing students, funding, or their reputation to other providers. One survey respondent said that LitComm's greatest obstacle was "jealousy between providers and the difficulty in attracting students to the programs". The writer continued:

Providers are still too possessive of their students. Too much emphasis is placed on the number served and not enough on which program is the best one for each individual student.

Rebecca felt that Grayson had avoided this dynamic because of LitComm's neutral positioning in her community. "Because we were an independent entity, we were able to bring providers together," she said. "So therefore, when we called the providers together, they knew that there was no turf issue about us at all...I think that we really had no barriers because of that. People were more willing to work with us."

An organization that is concerned with domain issues cannot function as a good collaborative partner because it is too busy protecting its turf. During Pineville's difficult times, Logan came to believe that his program's integrity was at stake as a result of the collaboration. He said,

The baseline of it is that you have to play a little bit of hardball. If you become the one collaborative (partner) that does all of the giving, then your program has no merit. So you've got to stand up for what you have to have.

In this frame of mind Logan was unable to look beyond the survival of his own program. It is understandable then that when Lisa tried to bring family literacy into the collaboration, he reacted by declaring that he couldn't make his numbers by serving children. Logan's domain was adult literacy, and family literacy threatened it.

It is important to understand that this conflict did not take place on an even playing field. Logan's program was sponsored by the Department of Education (DOE). As in many states, this was the primary provider of literacy education. Housed at local community colleges and well-funded by state and federal money, DOE-sponsored programs provided basic and general literacy education and administered GED testing for each community. In contrast to the DOE program were the numerous grassroots efforts that carried little or no weight in the community.

In many areas, literacy providers were already collaborating to a degree when the community decided to join the LitComm initiative. LitComm, with its broader approach and expansive reach into the business, civic, and educational parts of the community, changed the dynamics of provider collaboration and threatened the identity of the DOE program. Juniper County's commitment to LitComm had been half-hearted from the beginning, and when I talked to their LitComm director, Leslie, it sounded like the fragile alliance was falling apart. Jupiter brought LitComm into a community that already had a non-profit literacy organization, the Literacy Council. Juniper kept the two collaborations separate, with separate advisory boards. The LitComm director, Leslie, was charged with coordinating the work of the two groups. After five years of parallel existence, one of the groups, the Literacy Council, decided to split away from LitComm entirely. Leslie suspected that the problem involved turf issues more so than identity, as discussed in the image section of this study:

I think it is territorial, I think it goes back to when LitComm was formed. It's old stuff, and they are just not going to do it...What actually is going to happen is that at the end of September, I will no longer be their executive director.

They are going to try to run their Learning Center with a part time person who is already overworked and volunteers. So, what's going to happen with me, I mean,

I think you've got a board that a lot of them have been on there for a long time and it's just not going to happen.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to understand the nature of ongoing collaboration among organizations that provide adult literacy education to the community. In this chapter I will discuss the study's findings, major conclusions, and their implications for practice and policy in future research.

This study was primarily conducted as a qualitative content analysis. Instead of asking broad questions, I did a theory-driven analysis in which I set out to discover the nature of interorganizational collaboration inductively and deductively. The research questions and the analyses were structured around the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Three, specifying four broad components: resource sharing, image, pressures, and independence and control. This theoretical framework was an appropriate lens to examine the data in new ways, particularly to rework data that was originally gathered through an evaluation model. The evaluation had been intended to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of a particular program, whereas for this study I needed a framework specific to ongoing collaboration in order to uncover the elements of day-to-day partnering.

Chapter Four presented the detailed findings according to my framework. The components of the framework were comprehensive enough to elucidate the major themes of the data. A limitation of the framework was that some themes had aspects that fit into more than one component. It was difficult for instance to determine whether church

resistance could best be explained as an image issue or the result of internal pressure. Overlap was also evident in situations where organizations were concerned with turf protection and identity. It is possible that further research of interorganizational collaboration in other settings would reveal ways to tighten the framework.

In this chapter I will discuss the study's findings, which revealed both positive and negative aspects of the collaborative experience. Table 5.1 lists these findings as they relate to the four components of collaboration and gives indicators of their supportive or negative impact on collaboration.

Conclusions

From the detailed findings I have extracted the primary lessons learned in the form of three conclusions that cut across the theoretical model. Each of these deal with a major process of collaboration: cost benefit analysis, power dynamics, and reciprocity. The conclusions are:

- Cost benefit analysis is fundamental to collaboration.
- Power dynamics pervades collaboration.
- Reciprocity is essential to collaboration.

Conclusion 1: Cost Benefit Analysis Is Fundamental to Collaboration

The balancing of cost versus benefit is an ongoing process that determines each organization's continued involvement in collaboration. This is the foundational basis of Cervero's model (1992). It is supported by Beder's (1984) definition of collaborative failure as the point where an interorganizational relationship costs more than it benefits a program. Not all organizations in my study faced every condition described in the framework, of course, but when such considerations did arise, organizations had to weigh

each condition through a cost benefit analysis to determine whether and how they intended to collaborate. The areas listed in Table 5.1 become factors in a cost-benefit analysis that takes place when organizations consider the continuation of a collaborative relationship.

Overall the findings support the notion that the benefits of collaboration far outweigh the costs. The study was a strong endorsement for community programs to use

Table 5.1

Cost Benefit Analysis of Collaboration Components and Themes

COLLABORATION COMPONENTS	THEMES	COST VS. BENEFIT
Resource sharing	Reciprocal sharing of resources strengthens interorganizational collaboration.	Positive
	Coordination of services makes it possible to use resources more efficiently.	Positive
	State and local involvement supports collaboration.	Positive
Image	Organizations strengthen their image through collaboration.	Positive
	Incompatibility weakens organizational image.	Negative
Pressures	Internal pressures affect organizations' ability to collaborate.	Positive and negative
	External pressures encourage organizations to collaborate.	Positive
Interdependence and Control	Sharing control creates challenges for collaboration.	Negative
	Competition among providers discourages collaboration.	Negative

collaboration as a strategy to overcome limited resources, to gain credibility in the community, to satisfy internal and external pressures, and to minimize competition and control issues.

Resource Sharing

Often during the data collection, respondents affirmed that resource sharing was a primary benefit of membership in LitComm, a benefit that far outweighed the cost of sharing. Resource sharing nearly always fell in the benefits column because providers saw collaboration as a way to stretch resources, reach more learners and match them to the appropriate services. The potential was there for resource sharing to be inequitable, but in the case of most LitComms this was not a problem. Other benefits, as discussed in Chapter 4, were the opportunity for networking and technical support. Image improvement was a strong positive in the broader community, as respondents to the community survey noted.

Resource sharing was a major theme in the literature. It was often identified in terms of the flexibility it offered to participating organizations (Beder, 1984; Hemphill, 1996; Zachariadis, 1986; Ziebarth, 1999). Literacy education, because it is provided to the community primarily through centralized (state) programs, is limited in its responsiveness to learner needs. Demographics and economic conditions change and program planners need to be able to respond to those changes Ziebarth (1999). Beder (1984) advocated collaboration as a good strategy for overcoming inflexibility and other limitations of working alone and having inadequate resources.

The centralized programs in this study were the DOE programs, which worked mostly with GED students, while small independent organizations provided one on one

tutoring for beginning readers. The community needed both types of literacy programs, and collaboration created the flexibility for providers to coordinate services and meet a wider range of learner needs. Gomez (1999) learned from a study of centralized programs at community colleges that these programs need to collaborate and not compete with small, local providers to keep low-level and foreign-born learners from falling through the cracks.

There is clear evidence in the study to support the advantages of resource-sharing reported in the literature. Only through partnership in LitComm did DOE directors have the capability to bring the community's leaders together, to raise money, and to align with other literacy organizations. Participants reported that they had a much broader impact on literacy in the community. Sitcom's simple structure, with an advisory board and a single director, and with no financial accountability to the state, gave it flexibility to respond to local conditions and needs. This finding supports Hemphill's (1996) research on the flexibility of community based organizations and how they can respond quickly to changing community needs without many of the restrictions of bureaucratic government-sponsored programs. Communities were able to respond to unique demographics and needs.

Another aspect of resource sharing covered in the literature is linkages that collaborative providers establish with the community (Beder, 1977). These linkages strengthen the collaborative process. One study of community collaboration (Borden, 1999) reported a significant relationship between these linkages and goal achievement for partnerships. External communication is another means to establish community linkages (Ebers, 1999). LitComm partnerships illustrated the strength of community linkages in

varied ways. The study revealed evidence of strong linkages between the LitComm partners and various sectors of the community, including local government, business, and civic organizations. The primary vehicle for accessing community resources was the LitComm advisory board, which represented the leadership of those sectors.

Image

Image was another important element in the cost benefit analysis. An essential outcome for organizations to participate in collaboration was that it maintain and strengthen their organizational image. This was more compelling even than the goal of improving literacy services to the community. Organizations collaborated primarily because it was in their own best interest. The majority of participants in the evaluation agreed that LitComm provided sorely needed recognition and credibility for their literacy efforts. Organizations gained cachet and a certain degree of access to the power structure of the community and the state by affiliating with LitComm. It also gave disparate literacy organizations a cohesive image and dramatically increased the ability of small, grassroots organizations to raise funds for literacy projects.

Not only was the image of the literacy organizations at stake; the reputation of the community and of adult basic education in general was affected by association with LitComm. Community development theorists generally agree that collaboration improves the community's image and that it is good for solving social problems (Christenson & Robinson, 1980; Gray, 1989). One literacy model (SIL International, 1999) characterizes one of the roles of literacy as providing a conduit between education and community development activities and supporting a community development mission. In this study, literacy collaboration had many positive effects on community image, according to

LitComm stakeholders. Some observed that it also improved the image of adult education in the community and increased community awareness and sympathy for the needs of undereducated adults. This had a lot to do with the wide support that LitComm got in many communities.

Concern over image could also work in a negative way, discouraging certain organizations, in some cases even entire communities, from participating in LitComm. Concerns over negative image and loss of respect created conflict for some and discouraged collaboration. A community-wide partnership with diverse representation like LitComm is likely to have a social agenda that might not fit the image of some literacy providers. Churches were one such example. This is a possible explanation for why the churches in the LitComm study chose not to participate.

As for groups who wanted to keep LitComm out of their community altogether, the study revealed that some wanted to hold onto a low wage working class; but there were others who were concerned that highlighting a literacy problem could have a negative effect on community's image and discourage businesses from investing in the area. Fortunately, the study revealed many more communities who had the foresight to recognize a prospering literacy education system as an attraction to prospective businesses.

In one area the literacy coalition split over an issue of organizational identity when some leaders determined that the cost of collaborating was too high. They decided to prioritize maintaining a separate identity in the community over any benefits that collaboration could offer them.

In the adult education literature image is an important consideration in the decision to collaborate. Cervero's model (1992) places organizational image in both positive and negative roles, as either a motivator or a disincentive. Larson (1992) found collaboration's effect on image to be most beneficial to the smaller, entrepreneurial organizations that had not built a reputation for themselves. My findings upheld this point, revealing many instances where small organizations that would otherwise be invisible to the community at large earned credibility through their membership in LitComm.

Community development literature (Christenson & Robinson, 1989) notes the positive effect that community collaboration has on the image of the community. In my findings, this was reflected primarily in survey responses from those who had a stake in the reputation of the community. Providers, of course, most often noted the effect on their own organizational image. Logan noted that membership in LitComm connected his organization to the community in ways that would otherwise have not been possible and this gave his state-based organization local credibility.

Reciprocally, LitComm gave the community a role in literacy education through inclusive advisory boards and county-wide fundraisers. This enhanced the partnership's image of being community-owned. It supports the SIL model of linking education and community, as well as Cervero and Wilson's (1994) finding that adult educators are increasingly involving the community in planning their programs.

Community based organizations are mission oriented by definition. (Christenson & Robinson, 1989). A model created by SIL International (1999) characterized community-based programs as being accountable to the people in the community, being

sensitive to local cultural values and mores, and supporting a community development mission. According to theory, community development is not a means to an end (Ewert & Grace, 2000) but a process of helping people improve their social and economic situations (Christenson & Robinson, 1989). With strong community ties, LitComm partnerships were able to broaden their mission and bring in more partners, as illustrated by Pineville's expansion into family literacy.

Some organizations see collaboration as a threat to their image or identity rather than a benefit. Schermerhorn's (1984) framework addresses the negative effects of collaboration on organizational image, indicating that a provider agency could lose prestige or its position in the community by affiliating with other organizations. There are a number of factors that could damage an organization's image, such as incompatible missions or position in the community. For instance, LitComm's affiliation with the state may have been an image factor in discouraging some providers such as churches.

Internal and External Pressures

Cost and benefit needed to be considered when providers felt pressured to collaborate. For some organizations this was easier than for others. Internal pressure was generally seen as beneficial; potential partners were coming together because of compatible goals and core values and a common commitment to the community.

External pressures, however, can impose a strong incentive to collaborate, especially a requirement from a crucial funding source, without consideration of the costs to the individual organization. These costs need to be weighed, particularly in terms of the compatibility issues mentioned above. For independent organizations there is a choice of whether to accept the funding and some providers choose to remain independent and

seek funding elsewhere. In other situations, such as those imposed by government mandates, leaving the collaboration may not be an option, but a cost benefit analysis can still reveal issues that need to be addressed.

An organization's internal value system can impose pressure that leads to collaboration (Cervero, 1992; Schermerhorn, 1975). Borden (1999) found that organizations with social agendas were likely to collaborate because broad and diverse representation was needed to address social issues. LitComm attracted organizations that valued inclusion and community involvement. The LitComm model required diverse community representation on advisory boards and a broad approach to serving the full community. The areas where LitComm appeared to be thriving were the ones who followed this model. There were also examples in the study of organizations that did not participate, possibly in part because of value system differences.

How an organization responds to imposed pressure is determined in large part by its internal structure. Systems theory, which is concerned with groups and organizations within a system and the relationships among them (Cummings, 1998), illuminates issues of an organization's capacity to collaborate. How organizations interact with their environments is determined by organizational structure, which can be rational (formal), natural (informal), or open (Scott, 1992). Scott described open structures as more receptive to the external environment than the other two. Open organizations are also better able to adapt to changing conditions (Cummings, 1998, p. 651). This receptivity, according to Smutz and Toombs (1985) encourages organizations to form external relationships. The writings of Beder (1984), Schermerhorn (1975), and Limerick and Cunnington (1993) agree that open organizations are the most likely to collaborate.

Cervero's framework of interorganizational relationships (1992) includes organizational openness as an aspect of support capacity, along with goal compatibility and opportunity and means. There were good examples of open organizations within the current study; LitComm attracted organizations that considered the whole community in planning and coordinating with other providers. The expansion into family literacy was a good example of collaborators coming together to expand their services and target audience. This reflects another aspect of systems theory studies, the synergistic behavior of the whole created by the interaction of its parts.

The pressure to collaborate also came from the outside. External ideological influence such as community norms exert pressure on organizations, particularly those dealing with complex social problems (Gray, 1989). Low literacy among adults is certainly complex, as the collaborators in the study were well aware. No one agency was able to meet all the demands for literacy services in the community, and LitComm provided a network for those services to be coordinated. Coe's (1990) community development model emphasized that collaboration needed a shared vision to guide the community. The work of Zachariadis (1986) produced a similar conclusion that community-based programs have a broad community mission. The SIL study (1999) of community-based programs emphasized the need for sensitivity to local cultural values and mores.

External pressure was considered a motivator in both Cervero (1992) and Schermerhorn's (1975) collaboration models. The pressure experienced by LitComm study participants tended to involve funding requirements or government mandates, as described by Cervero. In many cases these pressures were accompanied by accountability

measures that restricted the activity of affected organizations. This was ameliorated in part by the membership of community-based organizations which did not have such restrictions. This partnership of state and local groups supported a Benseman and Sutton study (Benseman & Sutton, 1999), which found that locally based organizations in a New Zealand initiative were able to maintain their individuality and styles of provision while working within government guidelines.

Interdependency and Control

Cost benefit analysis was also appropriate when conflict and control issues occurred. The difficulties of shared decision-making created much of this conflict. Logan, Pineville's beleaguered DOE director, considered early retirement at a point when he and his counterpart, Lisa, could not agree on the basic direction their partnership would take. Instead, Lisa resigned. On a personal level, the costs of the conflict had outweighed the benefits of the collaboration. These issues are discussed further in the next section.

For several years now organizational and community development literature have reflected the theme of interdependence. According to Gray, "The increasing interdependence of public and private organizations and the interweaving of local, national, and global interests has reduced the capacity of any organization to act unilaterally." (1989, p. 232). Interdependence is an important concern in the IOR literature (Beder, 1984; Borden, 1999; Cervero, 1992; Ebers, 1999; Gray, 1989). Borden (1999) found that interdependency in collaborative relationships involves a common vision, an interdependent way of developing ideas and planning, and shared decision-making and leadership.

Conclusion 2: Power Dynamics Pervades Collaboration

The second broad conclusion from the findings is that collaboration is saturated with power dynamics and issues of control and competition. Schermerhorn (1975) designed his model to examine how power is used by individual and organizational decision-makers when they work in partnership and Cervero and Wilson's (1994) program planning model put the negotiating of power and interests at the center of the planning process. Through these models I fashioned my framework on their work, it is not surprising that these issues surfaced in the study.

When planning involves the community, power is often unevenly distributed. Hardy and Phillips (1998) found that collaboration may not always be the solution in situations where conflicting goals and unequal power relationships exist. In many LitComm communities the DOE program was the dominant partner. A powerful partner may use collaboration to guard its domain and to protect its interests. Collaboration controlled by powerful stakeholders is not really collaboration, but compliance, say Hardy and Phillips.

Defining relationships, ending relationships, and providing the impetus for the formation of new ones can make or break collaborations. These were definite challenges to collaboration, as evidenced by the instances of conflict and competition reported in the findings. The most difficult aspect of collaboration involved the necessity of sharing control. This was manifested by joint decision-making, by conflict over goals, and by personal control issues. Organizations that were used to functioning autonomously now had to share decision making over serious issues like goals and mission. Structures and

procedures were not always in place to negotiate these issues. At times personal conflict made it impossible for a partnership to achieve its goals.

The most striking illustration of power dynamics in this study was in Pineville, where for over a year two literacy leaders vied for control of Pineville's LitComm partnership. The conflict involved issues of mission, resource use, and organizational image in the community. When I first heard about the conflict, Logan, the DOE director, appeared to be the one causing all the trouble, resistant to collaboration and unwilling to relinquish any control to the LitComm partnership. This was a pattern that LitComm's state executive director had seen in other parts of the state as well. Aware that I had been influenced by this bias, I attempted to listen objectively to everyone I interviewed in Pineville. During the interview with Logan I was struck by his candor, particularly over the pain caused by his conflict with Lisa and the obvious enjoyment he now had for his job.

Later, as I analyzed the data from Pineville, I began to see the pattern of Logan's change. Over the years he had earned the title "Mr. Literacy" by providing traditional adult education classes at the community college, in essence carrying out his responsibilities as head of the DOE program. It is likely that for most of this time his was the only literacy program in town. Lisa then became the director of LitComm at a time when the role of literacy was changing rapidly. She immediately began to question Logan's authority and to impose her concept of what literacy providers should be doing in Pineville. The personal conflict that developed was volatile and she and Logan never found common ground. Hardy (1998) indicates that some partners use intentional conflict

to gain positionality in an uneven power situation and that may be what was happening in this situation.

Neither Lisa nor Logan was incapable of collaboration; Lisa had had successful collaborative experiences before coming to Pineville, and Logan was later able to develop a good collaborative relationship with Martha, Lisa's replacement. There seemed to be several reasons for the differences between their failure with one another and their success with others. One was that the power dynamics between Logan and Lisa escalated so fast that they never developed a sense of trust. Another was that for Logan this was a truly painful experience in which he nearly lost everything he had worked for, and he learned a lesson from it. A third was that Martha approached the situation very differently than Lisa had. She listened to everyone who would talk to her and she showed respect for Logan's position and years of experience.

The lesson that Logan learned was how to realign power within the partnership and allow for collaboration and trust to build among the partners in a more equitable way than what had previously existed. The literacy board also learned a lesson when it moved from a passive role to an active one toward the end of the conflict. This was a common goal among LitComm directors, to develop advisory boards that would be more active and more of a support to collaboration.

Competition was another aspect of power dynamics. The issue of counting students came up again and again. Organizations worried about protecting their turf, feeling threatened because their students were also being counted by LitComm in its attempt to reach the community goal. Directors refused to share information and

resources through a lack of trust. The key to overcoming this challenge seemed to be finding a way that partners could complement rather than compete with one another.

Trust is a theme that appears in the collaboration literature anytime power dynamics are discussed in a comprehensive way (Beder, 1989; Cervero & Young, 1987; Gray, 1989; Larson, 1992; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Rose, 1994). The foundation of successful partnerships is trust and the perception of fair treatment. Beder said that “real trust and commitment” (p.87) was as important to collaboration as reciprocal benefit. Larson found that in the business world collaboration was built on personal relationships, reputation and trust rather than on marketing factors (1992). Trust and a concern for reputation are important issues that must be protected if the relationships are to thrive.

In many collaborative communities there was a high degree of trust among partners, and they spoke with confidence about the benefits of collaborating. In others, there was an atmosphere of distrust, and collaboration was problematic. Differing visions of mission led to conflict and power struggles. Competition emerged over turf issues. A lack of trust affected partners’ ability to share resources and coordinate services. Organizations that did not like LitComm mentioned a fear of losing students, funding, or their reputation to other providers. These experiences, both positive and negative, supported the common theme that trust is essential to healthy collaboration.

The upheaval that ensued in Pineville supports Hardy and Phillips’ findings that less powerful partners may introduce conflict to redefine the problem domain and adjust the balance of power. This is exactly what happened in Pineville, and it nearly ended the collaboration. After another change in leadership, however, Pineville’s partnership recovered and moved toward collaboration, where everyone’s interests were better

represented. Other LitComm locations did not fare as well. My findings uncovered many situations where issues of conflict and competition were not being addressed through a collaborative process. In more than one area, LitComm was either abandoned or relegated to a minor role in literacy provision to the community. These negative experiences supported Valentine's (1984) study of failed collaboration, which pointed out how poor planning, bad management and loss of trust could destroy an effort to provide community services collaboratively. The Valentine study involved literacy providers as well, but without an overarching organization capable of strategizing the coordination of services, supporting the negotiation of power issues, or ensuring reciprocity among the stakeholders.

Conclusion 3: Reciprocity Is Essential to Collaboration

The LitComm partnerships that worked best for all concerned were those where all partners recognized a mutual benefit from the relationship. It became a cost benefit analysis across organizations. Beder (1984) finds the "principle of reciprocity" (p. 15) to be the most essential aspect of IOR. He emphasizes that "the basis for establishing cooperative relationships is mutual, reciprocal benefit" (p. 15) and warns organizations not to waste their time with potential partners if reciprocity is unlikely. Hardy and Phillips (1998) agree that collaboration may not work if power is unequal or goals conflict.

Most often, collaborators in the study said they joined LitComm in order to increase their resource capacity. At the same time each partner needed to provide a way to benefit other partners. Logan, DOE director in Pineville, explained that what LitComm had to offer his program was its nonprofit status and therefore its ability to raise money.

Reciprocally, the DOE program provided the partnership with literacy classes and teachers and an affiliation with a strong educational institution that attracted students in need of adult education services. This created a healthy, symbiotic relationship for both the partnership and the individual organization.

Another aspect of resource reciprocity was the coordination of services so that learners would be referred to the appropriate provider to meet their needs, while at the same time allowing each LitComm partner to focus on the particular type of literacy and ABE that fit its organization and mission. DOE programs could concentrate on GED preparation and level completion and smaller organizations could provide the basic literacy instruction needed by others, including low level learners. These positive experiences of LitComm partnerships support Chisman's (1990) finding that partnering agencies could provide a broad range of programs that might not otherwise be available. Pineville's interorganizational building that offered literacy services to the entire family was another approach to service coordination.

Reciprocity extended beyond the partners in a single LitComm to the networking system available to LitComm directors across the state. Here they could share information and best practices, a mutually beneficial arrangement with little cost involved. Reciprocity also extended to the relationship between a LitComm and its community, with the community offering support and the LitComm offering much needed services and enhancing the image of the community.

Organizations There were mutual advantages to participating in LitComm in the areas of image and pressure to collaborate. An effective way to improve their organizational image was to join LitComm. By joining forces they increased their

recognition and influence in the community. LitComm was also a way for many organizations to respond to pressures to collaborate in a mutually beneficial way.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Because this study is based on the experiences of many people and diverse communities, it offers the opportunity to learn about the potential and the pitfalls of collaboration at the organizational, community, and, to some extent, at the state level. Practitioners, educational planners, and community developers may have an interest in the implications of the study's findings.

The results of this study point to an image of healthy, sustainable collaboration. Earlier in the chapter I discussed three processes that dominate in interorganizational collaboration: cost benefit analysis, power dynamics, and reciprocity. Table 5.2 describes the conditions that characterize successful collaboration, based on these three processes.

Table 5.2

Conditions for Healthy Collaboration

PROCESS	CHARACTERISTICS
Cost Benefit Analysis	Healthy collaboration helps partners identify and weigh the benefits and costs of collaborating.
Power Dynamics	Healthy collaboration is structured for organizations to recognize and negotiate issues of power and control.
Reciprocity	Healthy collaboration is characterized by careful considerations of reciprocity.

These are the policies and contracts that structure the dynamics of interorganizational collaboration and make the partnership work.

Implications for Policy

The data clearly indicates the importance of having an overarching structure to implement the conditions described in this model of healthy collaboration. It has distinct advantages to offer to program administrators, literacy providers and communities. An overarching agency can look at the whole community and its needs, then coordinate and supplement resources and services for its members. Through this structure the partnership can offer guidance to literacy providers to maximize benefits, to negotiate power and control issues, and to ensure reciprocity.

Through collaboration, individual organizations can affiliate with county leadership, no matter what their size. By networking across the state, these community partnerships also gain access to resources beyond their borders. They achieve a relationship with the state and access to policy makers at both the local and state level. At the same time ownership stays in the community. When these programs come together under one umbrella, collaborative members can consider the entire community and determine what is needed and where. Planning is not limited by the resources of one agency or by one perspective on adult literacy. By sharing perspectives and resources, the partnership is more likely to uncover and address the needs of its constituency.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study are directly applicable to the world of practice. The study was intended to illuminate issues of collaboration first of all to interorganizational groups that need guidance to strengthen their partnerships and avoid the problems that

make real collaboration so elusive. It was also intended to guide those considering partnering and states and other bureaucratic entities considering initiatives to encourage it. Practitioners and administrators involved in the collaboration of educational programs can use the model as a guide to create structures that support healthy, sustainable collaboration.

Administrators can use this knowledge to monitor and evaluate their collaborative programs. Funders who require collaboration can use this knowledge to determine the value of collaboration in meeting their goals and to determine where partnering is appropriate and where it is unlikely to work. By understanding what went right and wrong in the communities of this study, community planners and practitioners can go into collaboration with more awareness of where those strengths and challenges may be.

The discussion of the findings represents a way for organizations to identify problems, look at the components of those problems, and weigh the benefits of collaboration against the costs. For those who decide that collaboration is worth the risks, the positive experiences of the organizations in this study may help them find a way to negotiate through the difficulties and maximize the benefits.

Implications for Future Research

Because this study was based on restricted data, the findings cannot be generalized. The framework (Table 4.1) that I used to determine the findings could be greatly enhanced by studies that attempt to replicate this work in other settings, other states, and other kinds of programs. The model in Table 5.2 needs to be tested in the field.

Because the model was not developed until the analysis stage of the study, I have not pursued the dominant processes involved in collaboration. Each offers rich areas for detailed research investigation of collaboration. Studies could be designed to investigate how an overarching organization like LitComm could provide a system that would build a healthy environment for collaboration following this model.

Particularly interesting to me during the study were the power dynamics that occurred at several levels: between partners, between LitComm and the community, and at the policy level within the state Department of Education. Although much has been written about conflict and control issues in collaboration, little research has been done to learn what works to diffuse these problems. A survey designed on the model from this study could explore experiences that would shed light on this.

In the same way, more research is needed in the area of decision-making intended to maximize benefits and minimize costs to individual organizations. Pursuing organizational goals can be compatible with partnering to meet collaborative goals, but little is known about how partners successfully address the problems that arise in the process. A study to track ongoing collaboration in progress could be specifically designed to interview collaboration participants about these issues, coupled with observation and interactions.

Because of increasing mandates for community service agencies to collaborate, it is important to know more about the potential for compatibility and reciprocity among organizations that are considering collaboration or partnerships that are considering inviting new organizations to join them. More study is needed to learn about experiences of collaboration where reciprocity is at issue.

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APPENDIX A
DIRECTORS' SURVEY
TELEPHONE INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Note: This form has been amended slightly to preserve confidentiality

AVATAR CONSULTANTS

Demographic Information

1. Are you a LitComm director? Y/N If not, other title
1. How long have you been in this position?
2. Have you had other experience with LitComm or with literacy in your community?
3. How old is your LitComm program?
4. Would you describe your community as rural/urban/or some other way?
5. Is your LitComm directly providing literacy services as well as overseeing other providers?

Local LitComm

1. In your opinion, has the LitComm brought any significant benefits to your community?
 What do you consider most important? – Or –
 Why do you think it has not?
2. What or who do you consider to be your strongest community partner?
3. What has been the main barrier to the success of your LitComm?

State LitComm Support

4. What is your perception of the State Department of Adult Education’s role in the LitComm initiative?
5. What is the most valuable service the state provides to you presently?
6. What would you change about what the state is currently doing?

Annual Reporting System

7. Think about all the ways literacy is being delivered in your community - - how much of this activity are you tracking for the LitComm ?
 - Briefly, what does this include?
 - How are you tracking this? (specifics)

8. Are there literacy programs that you're not including in your annual reports?
- If yes, please describe.
How could you capture this?

If no,

- How do you know you're getting everything?
9. What kind of feedback could the state LitComm provide from the annual reports that would be helpful to you?
- How would you use it?
10. How would you rate the overall effect that LitComm has on literacy work in your community?

Very Weak	Somewhat Weak	Somewhat Strong	Very Strong
1	2	3	4

11. How would you rate overall community support for LitComm ?
- | | | | |
|-----------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Very Weak | Somewhat Weak | Somewhat Strong | Very Strong |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

12. How would you rate State office support for your local LitComm program?
- | | | | |
|-----------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Very Weak | Somewhat Weak | Somewhat Strong | Very Strong |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

13. How would you rate the annual reporting system as it is now?
- | | | | |
|-----------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Very Weak | Somewhat Weak | Somewhat Strong | Very Strong |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Looking Forward

The state office is looking into the feasibility of a computerized reporting system for the annual reports.

14. What is your level of interest in such a system?
- For this to work effectively, what would you need that you don't have now?
15. What do you see as the next step for your LitComm?
16. What do you see as the next step for the LitComm, state-wide?

Any other comments or suggestions?

APPENDIX B

STATE ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Note: amended slightly to preserve confidentiality

AVATAR CONSULTANTS

LitComm has recently celebrated its ten year anniversary. During this time, its stated mission has been:

To mobilize every resource available to a community into an adult literacy campaign that functions within state certification guidelines and will result in a literate community within ten years.

With this in mind, please answer the following questions:

1. How do you interpret the LitComm mission?
2. How good a job is the state doing to support this mission?
(Including: State Department of Adult Education, State LitComm Office, Governor's LitComm Advisory Board, Presidents' Council)
 - What improvements could be made regarding state support?
3. How well are the local programs fulfilling the LitComm mission?
4. How do you see the next ten years?
 - Does the mission need to change?
 - What is the greatest challenge to the program? What solutions do you see?
5. At the end of each year, LitComm groups are submitting to the executive director a report of their activities. This information is used to track each participating community's progress toward its 10 year goal. What should this report be measuring?
6. How could a yearly analysis of the reports help you support the program?

APPENDIX C
COMMUNITY SURVEY LETTER

Note: This form has been amended slightly to preserve confidentiality

AVATAR CONSULTANTS

Dear Community Member:

The purpose of this survey is to include as many voices as possible from different levels of the LitComm community. Please provide as much information as you would like for each question. Examples to illustrate your points would also be appreciated.

Only the independent evaluation team will have access to completed questionnaires. Your name, community or county will NOT be used in any part of the final report.

Please return your survey in the envelope provided directly to the MTV Consulting. Please return your survey by _____.

Thank you very much for your time,

MTV CONSULTING

Community Survey

1. In your opinion, what significant benefits has LitComm brought to your community?

2. What is the main barrier to the success of your LitComm group?

3. What support could be added or changes made that would help your community in meeting its goal* of becoming a Literate Community? Why is this important?

4. What recommendations do you have to improve the existing LitComm program?

5. This question will be used for descriptive purposes only. Please circle as many as apply.

Which of these best describes your connection to LitComm?

Advising Board Member

Literacy Teacher

Another Institution in the Community

Other Collaborative Member

Other _____

Please return this survey in the self-addressed envelope provided

* The LitComm goal is to provide literacy services to a majority of those adults determined to be in need of services at the time participation begins.

APPENDIX D
COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS AND DOE DIRECTORS
SURVEY LETTER

Note: This form has been amended slightly to preserve confidentiality

AVATAR CONSULTANTS

July 21, 2001

Dear Presidents and Directors:

To mark the State Community Initiative's first decade of operation, the Technical College Presidents' LitComm Committee has contracted for an evaluation of the program's operation across the state. This evaluation is being conducted by the MTV Consulting, an independent consulting company that has worked with LitComm on numerous projects.

As a unique program in the state of Georgia, the State Community Initiative's mission is "to mobilize every resource available to a community into an adult literacy campaign that functions within state certification guidelines and will result in a literate community within ten years." In keeping with the mission the evaluation team is seeking the insight of the Presidents of the Technical Colleges as well as the DOE Directors. The information you provide will help to improve the way the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education supports your literacy efforts on behalf of adults, families, employees and employers in Georgia's communities.

The intent of this survey is to include as many voices as possible from different levels in the LitComm community. Please provide as much information as you would like for each question. We are not asking for your name or community location in this survey, and only the independent evaluation team will have access to completed questionnaires. Please contact the MTV Consulting if you have any questions about the survey and return the completed questionnaire directly to us by August 10, 2001.

Thank you very much for your time.

Diane, Anne and Catherine
Avatar Consultants

LitComm Community Survey

1. What do you see as the role of the LitComm Program in your community?

2. In your opinion, what significant benefits, if any, has LitComm brought to your community?

3. What changes or added support would help your community meet its goal of becoming a Certified Literate Community*? Why is this important?

* Completion is reached through the provision of literacy services to a majority of adults determined to be in need at the time of participant enrollment.

4. When your community has achieved certification, what do you envision as the next step for the LitComm Program?

The following information will be used for descriptive purposes only. Which of these best describes your affiliation with LitComm? (Please circle as many as apply)

- Community College President
- DOE Director
- Other _____

(Use additional sheets as needed)

Thank you for your participation. Please return this survey in the enclosed self-addressed envelope by August 10.

APPENDIX E

PINEVILLE INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Note: This form has been amended slightly to preserve confidentiality

The Effectiveness of Multiple Provider Collaboration in Adult Literacy Programs

Interview Script

LitComm interest me because it go into communities and tries to collaborate by bringing a lot of different providers together. What I am looking at in this study is how well that is working. But specifically what I want to talk to you about is your own experience with LitComm. We are hoping that this study will eventually benefit community literacy efforts, that I'll learn something from this that actually might be beneficial in the communities. Do you have any questions about the study?

If I ask you anything that you are uncomfortable talking about, please let me know. Or if we talk about something and you decide later that you are not comfortable, if you don't really feel good about my using that information, tell me what it is and I'll strike it and I won't use it. At any point, you can say that you don't want to continue with the interview if you don't feel like it. I'll have you sign this participant consent form and keep a copy of it. It has phone numbers and email addresses if there are any questions that you have.

1. I'd like to start out by asking you to tell me a little about how you got to this job, what you did before and how you got here.
2. Could you talk about an experience of collaboration you've had, giving me any details that would help me understand what that was like?