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Coalition Sustainability After Federal Funding Is Expended: A Case Study

Shawnee Marie Seese
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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Shawnee Seese

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Coalition Sustainability After Federal Funding Is Expended: A Case Study

by

Shawnee Seese

MBA, Grand Canyon University, 2009

BS, Eastern Mennonite University, 2003

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

May 2020

Abstract

Community coalition sustainability has been a focus of scholars as community coalitions deliver vital programs and services for communities in need. Despite the value coalitions bring to U.S. communities, they often become vulnerable after federal funding is expended. Researchers acknowledge the need to build understanding of coalition sustainability and have identified factors that contribute to the sustainability of programs, but studies on the topic remain quite limited. Federal funding requirements are more stringent than in previous years, requiring evidence of sustainability planning, which increases the urgency to identify those elements that ensure sustainability. The purpose of this study was to explore, understand, and describe the elements that contribute to coalition sustainability after federal funding is expended. Butterfoss's community coalition action theory was used as the framework for this study. Using a qualitative case study design, interview data were gathered from 10 coalition leaders of an active community coalition. The results of the analysis showed seven elements essential to community coalition sustainability: (a) the belief in a common mission, (b) strong relationships with members and the community, (c) the use of a strategic planning process to guide strategies, (d) sustainability planning that addresses potential risks and ensures successful outcomes, (e) a sense of positive community value, (f) diverse funding sources, and (g) maintenance of an effective leadership structure. The study's implications for positive social change include demonstrating the value of community coalition programs to community members and policymakers, the latter of whom may be compelled to improve funding opportunities for dedicated coalition leadership positions.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research study to the people who work on the front lines of every community they serve with their blood, sweat, and tears. I recognize the endless hours of working with people who have passion and drive to change their communities for the better. Community coalition members often give more than they receive, whether it is personally donating money so that a program can be implemented, sacrificing valuable time with family and friends, or working for a salary that does not acknowledge the expertise or selfless passion for the cause. It is because of your selfless service that I work to illuminate what is necessary for the sustainability of community coalitions. Thank you to my fellow coalition leaders. For the sake of all of us, please continue to fight the good fight.

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I am forever grateful for the love and support of my family and friends who encouraged me along my journey in life. To my parents, Jill and David Bigelow, it was your undying love and dedication to hard work, compassion, and perseverance you modeled that provided me the foundation I needed to succeed in life.

To my sons Zachary and Alec, I thank you for loving me no matter my failures, no matter the twists and turns of life. Thank you for cheering for me when I succeeded and standing by me always. I love you with everything I have within me. You made life fun and gave it meaning. To Alethia, words cannot express the blessing you have been in my life. Your friendship is an oasis of comfort and your fierce loyalty to me is a testament to your character. To Mike, thank you for your unending unconditional love and support. I value our life we have built together; you are the love of my life. To my daughter Jessica for the many years of conversations, laughter, and tears that inspired me to push forward and reach my goals. I cherish the memories. Lastly, to my daughter Tiffany in Heaven, your life helped me to find the meaning of my life. You forever changed me and I look forward to the day when I can hold you again.

I could not have achieved this milestone without the invaluable guidance and support from my committee members, Dr. Gary Kelsey and Dr. Mark Gordon. Thank you for walking alongside me on the most difficult journey of my life. What a ride! Finally, to all my friends, family, and co-workers who mentored me, cheered for me, supported me financially, who comforted me in times of my greatest sorrows and stress, your loyalty and love for me can only be repaid by a promise: I promise I will pay it forward.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Sustainability is a vital element in maintaining the integrity and strength of community coalitions used to solve pressing public health issues (Fagan, Hawkins, & Catalano, 2011). Community coalitions deliver a wide variety of programs and initiatives that can be the foundation for overall community health. Coalitions can have a great impact on society as they have sparked historical movements led by icons of history where much of the world's classrooms have studied their impact on society over the years. It is easy to assume that our greatest national coalitions were built up through passion and dedication to a worthy cause.

Community coalitions often form from grassroots movements; as such, there can be considerable challenges in sustaining vital programs to reach specific goals. Lawmakers often see dispersals to coalitions as a prudent way to spend money because the brunt of the cost is at the community level. However, these federal monies are short-lived, producing considerable challenges for community coalitions to sustain their efforts, especially after the initial federal funding that once supported it has ended (Delvin & Tang, 2008)

As the landscape of community prevention changes and federal funding is reduced due to more scrutinized and reduced budgets, community coalitions must address the issues that hinder sustainability if they want to continue their mission, reach their goals, and make a long-term impact within the community or population served. I conducted a descriptive case study to address and measure community coalition sustainability (see NORC, 2011). The community coalition action theory (Butterfoss &

Kegler, 2002) was the study's theoretical framework. I applied the theory to improve understanding of the dynamics involved in the sustainability of community coalitions. In Chapter 1, I will discuss the background of the study and problem, as well as the purpose of the study discussing the need for further research for specific issues surrounding sustainability of community coalitions. The research question is identified as well as a description of the theoretical foundation and nature of the study. Particular use of key words will be defined, as well as assumptions and limitations will be discussed. Lastly in this chapter, the significance of the practice, theory and potential implications for positive social change will be highlighted.

Background of the Study

As the number of community coalitions grows within the United States and internationally, researchers are increasingly developing theories and identifying variables related to the organizations' sustainability. Braithwaite and McKenzie (2012) asserted that coalition sustainability is dependent upon several factors, such as new member orientation practices and the sheer size of the coalition in membership numbers. Sustainability is also dependent upon the power and influence of the representatives and key leaders for ongoing training that helps enhance the skills and knowledge of the participants and will ultimately affect population behavior change (Braithwaite & McKenzie, 2012).

Since the early 1990s, there has been a pronounced movement to develop community-based coalitions made up of citizens, organizations, and governmental agencies. This movement has been quite successful in building capacity to address certain

aspects of community need (Butterfoss, Goodman, & Wandersman, 1993; Foster-Fishman, Berkowitz, Lounsbury, Jacobson, & Allen, 2001). Even as far back as 1988, the National Institutes of Health, in partnership with the National Cancer Institute, required intense and coordinated activity of communities to help reduce tobacco use (Pertchuk & Shopland, 1989). The Drug-Free Communities Act of 1997, signed by President Clinton, highlighted the importance of community coalitions in helping to decrease substance abuse among youth and in schools (Drug Free Communities Act, H.R. 956, Public Law 105-20, 105 Congress June 27, 1997).

In the 1970s, Dr. David Hawkins began to build a solid foundation of understanding with his groundbreaking work in juvenile delinquency that started the modern movements towards community coalition building. In his studies, he discovered specific risk and protective factors in alcohol and substance abuse among youth, teen pregnancy, and school dropout, which led to the social development model (Hawkins & Weis, 1985). The results of decades of study illuminated intensive community and governmental responses that reduce risks and increase protective factors among individuals and peer groups, family units, schools, and communities. Hawkins's research led to the development of the communities that care (CTC) model, which was created to equip communities with tools and resources to develop community coalitions (Hawkins, Catalano, & Kuklinski, 2011). The model has helped coalition leaders to improve connection and collaboration and to formulate effective responses to local problems, thereby significantly reducing risks among youth (Hawkins, Catalano, & Kuklinski, 2011).

The assessment tools in the CTC model measure community risks and protective factors further supporting a robust knowledge base. These measurement tools are used to this day by the U.S. government, evolving understanding of the effectiveness of collaborative community responses (Hawkins, et al., 2012). Other researchers contributed to the field, such as Butterfoss, who further studied community coalitions and developed the CCAT to probe the dynamics of leadership and community buy-in (Butterfoss, 2007). His work contributed to a greater understanding of the intricacies of community coalitions and the elements required to move a community into action (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2009). The concepts continue to evolve as researchers try to determine those elements needed to sustain a community coalition as a whole, not just its programs.

A major contribution of the Drug Free Communities Act of 1997 was the federal grant monies that followed, providing hundreds of diverse types of communities the opportunity to build a multisector coalition. Community coalitions have grown immensely since 1988, as the first ties to federal funding began to emerge in relation to the understanding that if health promotion were going to be successful, federal agencies would need to include community participation to aid in the decrease of health risks and destructive behaviors (Borden, Perkins, & Hogue, 1998).

The following is an explanation of a rural coalition that were recipients of the Drug Free Communities Support grant, awarded from 2005-2015. The Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (“CADCA Institute,” (n.d.) assert there are approximately 2000 DFC coalitions in the United States responding to the call to reduce community risks. One specific example is that of a rural community coalition housed in the northeast

region of the United States, which has operated for over 15 years.

It has engaged hundreds of volunteers representing multiple sectors, while being led by not only influential governmental and nongovernmental leaders, but supported by community members such as parents and youth, people in recovery, law enforcement, health professionals, and faith leaders. The coalition is responsible for community assessments, used by several local and state agencies, facilitating strategic planning sessions, and implementing evidence-based initiatives in the schools and community to reduce risk factors that lead to substance abuse.

The coalition is a Drug Free Communities (DFC) coalition, mainly funded by the DFC grant, which allowed two five-year awards, and no more than 10 years of funding to 1) develop and strengthen a community coalition, and 2) reduce the risk factors that lead to youth substance abuse. It received the grant in 2005 and expended the DFC Grant in 2015. Interestingly, five years later the coalition has still thrived despite losing most of its financial resources. A notable factor, the county in which the coalition exists, consistently ranks as one of the most impoverished counties in the state. Despite overwhelming challenges, it is important that we as the research community provide an opportunity to understand these successes and challenges through the examples of this one rural coalition, with the intention of learning their strategies that contribute to the field of study of coalition sustainability.

Currently, research is sparsely related, most all addressing program sustainability, rather than the sustainability of a whole community coalition as a community-based organization. The results of research only speculate the elements that could have an effect

on coalition sustainability, not actual investigative methods to determine elements that actually contributed to the sustainability within a working coalition.

The study is needed to determine what elements contribute to the sustainability of community coalitions after federal funding is expended or significantly reduced. This study will assist coalition members, policymakers, grant funders, and community stakeholders in efforts to guide sustainability planning to ensure vital programs and effective outreach initiatives lead to successful outcomes.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed by this study was the lack of information about issues, challenges, and factors that impact sustainability of community coalitions. There is still a gap in researchers' understanding of community coalition sustainability as a whole. Programmatic sustainability is quite different than sustaining a community coalition. Community coalitions require significant buy-in from the local community; organizations lacking such support have difficulty with sustainability. Feighery and Rogers (1989) explained that coalitions are diverse people, agencies, or special interest groups that collaborate with human, material, and financial resources to be the driving force of change in their communities. In conducting this study, I sought to address the lack of research on the sustainability of community coalitions, which is a more significant endeavor than the sustainability of a particular program.

The CCAT provides a detailed framework for community coalition development and sustainability processes. Butterfoss and Kegler (2009) asserted that community coalition sustainability is highly probable when specific variables exist. NORC (2011) at

the University of Chicago asserted the importance of implementing several strategies that are known to contribute to coalition sustainability. A few examples are (a) effective coalition leadership, (b) diverse funding, (c) strategic planning processes, (d) positive board relationships, and (e) community buy-in (NORC, 2011). NORC (2011) have identified several key factors that suggest how coalitions can be sustainable. Although a generally accepted definition of sustainability has been presented, it is yet to be tested. Thus, it is important to explore working community coalitions that are currently addressing sustainability challenges after federal funding has been expended.

Community problems, such as homelessness, substance abuse, violence, and crime, are as complex as are the strategies used to provide solutions. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, community coalitions have acted as a conduit to stimulate health promotion efforts or to eradicate disease. The idea evolved when it was discovered that mobilizing communities could help solve a wide array of local problems (Butterfoss et al., 1993, 1996). There is significant research available to help understand the function and impact of community coalitions on social issues, health promotion, and the effectiveness of programs, as well as sustainability strategies to ensure that programs have a better chance at sustainability (e.g. Beery et al, 2005; Butterfoss, 1993; Hawkins, D. J., Catalano, R. F., & Kuklinski, M. R., 2011). Unfortunately, there is minimal to no research addressing how community coalitions are actually sustained as an organization as a whole, especially after federal funding is expended, that could corroborate the many scholarly claims. It is one thing to assume that if a program has a set of indicators present it is sustainable. However, researchers and practitioners cannot truly know if these

assumptions and theories are accurate without corroborated evidence, especially if they are only addressing programs as opposed to the coalition as an organization.

It is important to point out that program sustainability is different from coalition sustainability. Programs address a very narrow problem (e.g., whether to provide advocacy, education, and/or materials) for a specific population group. Coalitions are much more complex in that they are an organization of not just one agency, but of multiple agencies, groups, and individuals, all having independent values that energize a particular mission and vision (Butterfoss, 2007). It is here that the gap remains unfilled in research. The research available tends to address programmatic sustainability, rather than the sustainability of a community coalition (Chinman et al., 2005; Cutler, I 2002; Edwards et al., 2007). Light and Pillemer (1984) presented the muddles of bias when reviewing science research. Butterfoss expounded on this idea as an important factor when considering our limited understanding, and at times blind acceptance, of the positive effects of coalitions. Butterfoss (1993) asserts that the evidence of coalition effectiveness is circumstantial and unreliable, mainly consisting of subjective opinions not necessarily grounded in experience but rather in what is called “wisdom” (Butterfoss, 1993 p. 318-319) literature. To address the limitations in previous studies, I sought to engage members of a working coalition currently addressing sustainability post federal funding. I wanted to provide evidence regarding coalition sustainability to augment the more subjective claims provided up until this point.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore the sustainability of a community coalition post-federal funding. The study helps strengthen the understanding among community stakeholders, funding organizations, and policy makers of complex sustainability issues that could strengthen community coalitions and enable them to sustain themselves in the future. I focused on a rural coalition that was awarded the Drug-Free Communities grant between 2005 and 2015. I assessed the coalition's history, which is well documented, as well as the outcomes of leaders' sustainability efforts. I compared the factors that contributed to the success of the rural coalition to the elements of sustainability in the CCAT (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2009). The research data consist of personal interviews of participants in key leadership and volunteer positions in the coalition.

The research was a case study that was conducted using a retrospective lens. Use of this approach offered considerable context to the problems and issues that emerged and allowed for the development of a scholarly understanding of current and past issues with coalition building (see Creswell, 2013). Other qualitative research designs such as ethnography or phenomenology, in which researchers explore a problem via the culture of a group or an experience of an individual within a cultural setting (Creswell, 2013) were not as applicable as a case study, which allowed for a comprehensive and exhaustive analysis of the specific situation being studied.

The research design addresses a research problem and a research question, followed by techniques in data collection and analysis. I followed Creswell's (2013)

guidelines for case study research. This approach required researching and organizing the facts of the case, categorizing the data, interpreting specific and single occurrences, identifying thematic patterns and uniformities, and, last, framing inferences based upon the analysis of the data (Creswell, 2013).

Research Question

The research question for this study was as follows: What elements are required to sustain community coalitions after federal funding is expended?

Theoretical Foundation

I based the theoretical framework for this research of coalition sustainability on the CCAT (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2009). The theory is connected to leading community mobilization models, such as Hawkins and Catalano's CTC model (Gloppen, Arthur, Hawkins, & Shapiro, 2012) and the strategic prevention framework (SPF; Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, 2009). Both the CTC model and SPF are suggested systems for coalitions that are awarded Drug-Free Communities grants (Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, 2009). The SPF model was used by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention to develop the strategic plan of the participant coalition. These models are discussed further in Chapter 2.

Francis Butterfoss and Michelle Kegler developed the CCAT based upon their extensive literature reviews and research in the promotion of public health (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2002). Their groundbreaking theory addresses the role and organizational development of community coalitions and its relationship with the surrounding community through the cycle of formation, maintenance, and institutionalization. These

concepts have complemented effective models such as the SPF and others, paving the way for future coalitions. The theory, though founded on a wide array of previous research in public health and government, was significant in that it provided the foundation for community stakeholders to build and maintain a coalition. The theory now informs what we know about coalitions and how we can then begin to add to that knowledge, especially when considering sustainability of programs. However, it does not thoroughly address long-term sustainability, which is a vital component if community coalitions desire longevity.

It is here where more research must be conducted to add to the full picture. It is important to understand how elements identified in the community coalition action theory are displayed among active coalition members who work toward a common mission, implementing effective strategies, and ultimately achieving successful outcomes. As it is crucial to identify these elements, it is just as important to seek a deeper understanding of the impact to the coalition and to the greater community. It becomes essential to exploring these factors if the goal is to help community coalitions who have challenges in funding, have a better chance at success in coalition sustainability.

Nature of the Study

The nature of the study was a qualitative case study to understand the elements that exist within a community coalition to ensure sustainability after federal funding was expended. Conducting a qualitative case study was the preferred approach in extracting vital pieces of information from coalition members and leaders about their experiences and knowledge that could help shed light on community coalition sustainability. In

conjunction with comparing the results of the interviews with known sustainability frameworks (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2009), this information helps to determine what support mechanisms are utilized by the participant coalition to ensure its sustainability post federal funding.

The research design for the descriptive case study of sustainability of community coalitions post federal funding is a retrospective causal comparative study using qualitative measures (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The research question is what elements are required for sustainability of a community coalition after federal funding is expended? The types of information and data sources included semi structured interviews with active coalition members and board members who had responsibilities in shared leadership.

Definitions

Community coalition: “A group of individuals representing diverse organizations, factions, or constituencies within the community who agree to work together to achieve a common goal” (Feighery, E., & Rogers, T., 1989., p. 1)

Drug Free Communities Support Program (DFC): A program that was created as part of the Drug Free Communities Act signed by President Clinton in 1997 to provide financial support for community coalitions to address substance abuse prevention among youth (Drug-Free Communities Act, 1997).

Sustainability: The ability of a community partnership to continue to work towards one or more of the original goals in existence when initial funding began (NORC, 2011).

Assumptions

The research included several assumptions and limitations that could unintentionally affect the validity of the data. The assumptions are 1) the members of the coalition would be willing to discuss their experiences, 2) participants would provide truthful and transparent answers, 3) and that the length of time that had passed since the participants' initial involvement with the coalition would not distort the participant's recall and perceptions of events that took place.

Scope and Delimitations

Specific aspects of the research problem addressed in this field study concentrated on sustainability with an operating community coalition actively involved in sustainability strategies. Sustainability of community coalitions was chosen because of the limited research available, especially in qualitative case studies of the results generated due to a coalition's active efforts to sustain the organization as a whole, as opposed to only a program. The boundaries of the study are they are not inclusive with theories of organizational development within the constructs of for-profit business or even non-profit business; rather it stays within the constructs of community-based coalitions that exist solely on the passions and commitment of the uncompensated individuals and organizations only. The reason being is that community coalitions consist of primarily volunteers with varying degrees of education, experience, skills, and knowledge, and are often at a significant disadvantage with limited financial and human resources. Organizational development models geared towards established businesses may or may not fit into a more complex community setting.

Limitations

The limitations may be that previous and current members unable to participate due to circumstances beyond their control, and the distance of travel needed to conduct the interviews may be a deterrent for the collection of data. Phone and video interviews with participants would be conducted when limitations created significant barriers to the data gathering process.

Significance

The project is unique because it addresses the impact of the loss of federal and state funding on coalitions that often have an influential role in reducing community risks (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2009). Coalitions have become a valuable source of community empowerment and the study is an important addition to research of sustaining such vital community resources. The significance of this study relates to the increasing dynamic role that coalitions have in delivering prevention programs and services to communities, through intensive collaborative partnerships. The results lead to a greater understanding within the field of researchers, community stakeholders, funders, and policy makers of the delicate nature of coalition sustainability and could help illuminate areas of greatest potential for success for coalition longevity.

Significance to Practice

This study explores the lessons learned from a small town coalition so those community leaders wanting to produce effective solutions, can have more insight of dynamics that contribute to the sustainability of community coalitions after federal funding ceases to exist or is significantly reduced. If a coalition is able to successfully

sustain the organization as a whole, it is safe to assume that people in need of services and communities struggling to address a problem effectively, will have a consistent support system that will ensure that these vital services and programs will at the very least continue.

This is especially critical because funding is increasingly becoming less available and requirements to receive funding are becoming more competitive and stringent. If coalitions want to be sustained, they are compelled to think ahead and determine effective strategies that will make them more likely to be awarded grants as well as maintain the coalition of stakeholders. This case study ultimately provides a compelling picture of the challenges and barriers to sustainability, as well as provides another level of evidentiary support to better understand how to increase success to community coalition sustainability.

Significance to Theory

Community coalition development has been studied over the last 3 decades by a small group of researchers dedicated to the understanding of how coalitions function and effect change. Several models of community coalition development, some highlighted in this field study, are used as a powerful tool to improve a community's response to identified needs. This research complements the community coalition action theory in that it supplies support and data to better understand the needs of community coalitions to ensure sustainability of vital programs. Programs are at great risk for sustainability without the people who lead and support the operations of the coalition. Sustainability practices are an integral part in the development of community coalitions.

Significance to Social Change

As community coalitions continue to increase in their depth and breadth of impact within local communities, innovative sustainability strategies are required to compete with changing and expanding needs. Solving problems requires not only funding, but also other vital human resources that help to ensure programs can continue to meet the needs of the target population. In addition, community perceptions and attitudes determine the level of activity and effort that drives the coalition to reach its goals.

Summary and Transition

Community coalitions play an important role in the reduction of risks, while improving overall community health and other priority issues identified within a community. Many programs and initiatives that help reduce risk factors become dependent upon whether the coalition as a whole can be sustained. Chapter 2 explores the factors that predict sustainability and the challenges and barriers that affect the process. A theoretical framework is presented along with an exhaustive literature review of the history of community coalitions, the history of federal funding specifically for community coalition building, and the sustainability of community coalitions post federal funding. Chapter 3 presents the method used for the collection and analysis of the data. Chapters 4 presents the data results and Chapter 5 presents a comprehensive analysis of the data and recommendations for further study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review consists of an exploration of coalition sustainability models that includes the importance of community roles, partnerships, predictors, and challenges. I explored coalition sustainability and how it is achieved. My goal was to provide a clear and consistent understanding of the conditions surrounding the efforts for coalition survival after federal funding has been expended. The problem addressed by this study was the lack of information about issues, challenges, and factors that impact sustainability of community coalitions. The research question is what elements are required to sustain community coalitions after federal funding is expended? This chapter will highlight key literature regarding community coalition sustainability reviewing the research of leading theories in the field regarding predictors of sustainability (e.g. of Butterfoss, 2007; Edwards et al 2007; Feinberg, M. E., Bontempo, D. E., & Greenberg, M. T., 2008).

Literature Search Strategy

I searched academic databases, including ProQuest News, Policy, & Politics, Periodicals Archive Online, Periodicals Index Online, Policy File, Dissertations and Theses Global, Public Health Database, Research Library, Science Database, Social Science Database, Social Science Premium Collection, Sociology, and Sage Databases. I used the search engine Google Scholar using key terms that included *coalition*, *community coalitions*, *sustainability*, *Communities that Care*, *Community Coalition Action Theory*, *coalition building*, and *coalition leadership*. I narrowed the search results by limiting them to more recent literature as much as possible. I found limited research

on coalition sustainability that was published within the past five years, so when it was relevant to the research project, I used many of the sources available. I discontinued the search when saturation of research materials was achieved.

Theoretical Foundation

The leading theory of coalition development and sustainability is the CCAT (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2002; NORC, 2011). I used the theory as the theoretical foundation for this study. The theoretical foundation for CCAT must begin with the understanding of how coalition building can be a powerful conduit of change to promote health and well-being not just on an individual level, but at the community level as well. Butterfoss et al. (1993) asserted that building a coalition that consists of community-based organizations and agencies is increasing in mainstream community development. The CCAT model has three stages: Formation, Maintenance, and Institutionalization (Butterfoss, 2007). Strategies and theories in health promotion have stemmed from its groundbreaking understanding of how coalitions really work and remain effective (Braithwaite, R. L., Murphy, F., Lythcott, M., & Blumenthal, D. S. 1989).

CCAT Formation starts with intensive collaborative efforts to address a target need within a community (Butterfoss et al., 1993). Usually, a community-based organization interested in a problem will rise to build leadership, membership, and buy-in from other organizations that have similar interests, either directly or indirectly (NORC, 2011). As with any type of group, developing a board is important, with key roles and responsibilities identified, as well as the structures and functions necessary to achieve a well-stated mission and vision (Feinberg, 2008). Synergy is highly likely when efforts in

organizational development move these structures and functions into actual implementation of activities that make a significant change for the better.

This leads to the second stage of CCAT called Maintenance, which involves a collective approach by coalition members to garner support and resources for all of the activities needed as well as the continued lifespan of the coalition itself (Butterfoss et al., 1993; NORC, 2011). The maintenance stage includes important aspects such as assessment, planning, and member engagement, all of which contribute to the overall effectiveness of community change, which is identified as the Institutionalization stage (Butterfoss et al., 1993; NORC, 2011). This final stage is indicative of coalitions that are highly successful in reducing risks, increasing protective factors, improving policies and procedures for community responses. Ultimately, successful coalitions can increase a community's capacity to respond to critical issues, by increasing awareness, building skills, and increasing local resources as a collaborative response to identified critical economic and social health promotion (Butterfoss et al., 1993; NORC, 2011).

Kegler and Swan (2011) assessed CCAT by testing it with 20 California Healthy Cities and Communities coalitions and found strong relationships with sustainability and diverse funding sources as well as the number of dollars leveraged in relation to new opportunities acquired through new partnerships. Another interesting concept is that of Katz and Kahn's (1978) assertion that organizations are open systems that require energy contributed to the current understanding of coalitions. Their framework of organization viability states that energy is created by cyclical inputs and outputs, where the outputs regenerate the open system within the organization (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

The community and organization and development model (Braithwaite, Murphy, Lythcott, & Blumenthal, 1989) emphasizes the importance of community boards in helping to facilitate positive social change especially within communities of color. This model suggests the need for community participatory assessments, influential policy change, the development of leadership skills, as well as implementing specific culturally appropriate interventions to solve community problems (Braithwaite et al 1989). This particular model references the differences within the Alinsky approach to conflict as opposed to more consensus-based movements (Braithwaite et al 1989).

The framework for partnerships for community development (Habana-Hafner, Reed, & Associates, 1989) emphasizes the importance of partnerships and collaborative efforts to better solve complex community problems. The framework acknowledges that growing mandates from grant funders require robust collaboration among community partners. The research suggests that collaboration among partners reduces the risk of duplicated services and initiatives (Habana-Hafner et al., 1989). Collaboration could improve the quality of services provided within a community, and it allows community partnerships to maximize their resources. There are two pillars of the approach: (a) that collective goals will begin to emerge within the partnership at the same time the relationships to the external community will strengthen and (b) that partnerships will help to identify a problem and negotiate the terms of solving the problem (Habana-Hafner et al., 1989). A plan of action is then developed to not only implement the activities deemed necessary, but also empower the members to be able to develop the structure and function of the partnership.

The typology of community organization and community building (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2005) addresses group dynamics such as organization and group phases and identifies types of leaders as compared to their level of expertise necessary to accomplish certain activities. An example would be in the Orientation phase, where leaders would need low-to-moderate leadership ability and low-to-moderate expertise to be effective (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2005). The Control phase involves a much more complex interactive leadership role (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2005). Leaders would need exceptional skills and experience to move the coalition from a simplified state to a more complex and effective vehicle of change.

Not all research has shown positive reviews of community coalitions and their effectiveness long term. Roussos and Fawcett (2000) asserted that despite the positive perceptions of community coalitions, there are more rigorous studies that debate the risks for sustainability. More work must be done in understanding the complexities so better constructs that are more lasting can be built. The rationale for the choice of this theory is the extensive use of Butterfoss's (2007) model in understanding coalition sustainability. The model is based upon previous research of individual elements to program sustainability and works to synthesize what is known about the science of sustainability. The CCAT model is also based on coalition building models developed by Hawkins and Catalano (1985).

Conceptual Framework

I based the conceptual framework of this research of coalition sustainability on the CCAT (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2009). The theory also connects with leading

community mobilization models, such as, Hawkins and Catalano's CTC system (Gloppen, Arthur, Hawkins, & Shapiro, 2012) and the SPF (Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, 2009). Both are mandated systems of approach for communities that are awarded Drug-Free Communities grants, and both have been used throughout the tenure of the participant coalition. These strategies are discussed further in the literature review.

Francis Butterfoss and Michelle Kegler developed the community coalition action theory based upon their extensive literature reviews and research in the promotion of public health. Butterfoss & Kegler (2002) research addresses the role and organizational development of community coalitions by conducting assessments, building capacity, developing a strategic plan and implementation strategies, and monitoring and evaluating the process and outcomes. The theory, though it is founded on a wide array of previous research in public health and government, was significant in that it provided the foundation for community stakeholders to build and maintain a coalition. The theory now informs what we know about coalitions and how we can then begin to add to that knowledge, especially when considering sustainability of programs. However, it does not thoroughly address long-term sustainability, which is a vital component if community coalitions desire longevity.

NORC, previously known as the National Opinion Research Center, an institute housed at the University of Chicago (NORC, 2011), asserted that sustaining a coalition involves meeting two criteria: (a) the coalition has three or more organizations represented, and (b) the coalition is addressing one or more of its original goals. If these criteria are not met, the coalition is not sustained. Coalitions can be either fully or

partially sustained, meaning that coalitions are addressing some of their original goals versus all their goals. Coalitions can also be shown as expanded or not expanded, dependent upon whether they have added new goals in addition to all the other goals. If so, it is considered to be expanded. If a coalition is addressing a new goal and at least one other original goal, it is considered to be expanded, if not it is not considered to be expanded, and therefore not sustained (NORC, 2011).

It is here that coalition sustainability can be measured in relationship to the participant coalition's current organizational structure and function. The strength of relationships internally, meaning the synergy and commitment displayed among leadership and volunteers to work toward the mission to achieve their vision, will also inform the strength of relationships displayed within the community and population that is served as a result of the coalition's sustainability.

Literature Review

The History of Community of Coalitions

The study of coalitions and sustainability begins in our practice and understanding of military, governments, and social behavior. From Alexander the Great's world domination, Genghis Khan's confederacy of nomadic tribes, to the political prowess of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, coalitions have millenniums of scientific evidence of the power to move geographic boundaries, erect powerful leadership, destroy and build communities, and change longstanding social norms. The word Coalition derives from the Latin *Coalitus* meaning "fellowship" or *Coalesce* meaning, "to become one in growth" (Hoad, 2010). Coalitions have made a significant mark in history as a strategic

tool used to build alliances, gain information, and assess the challenges and barriers of any given problem. Coalitions foster strategic decisions within empires, governments, open society movements, and can be found in the intricacies of organizational development.

Even in recent years, coalitions have become a powerful force for social change with the development of the National Alliance for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Another example is the United Nations, confirming that coalition building is key to not only creating effective strategies in problem solving, but to sustain the efforts made by community stakeholders and to promote peace and security among all levels of global development. In the most recent years, coalitions have greatly affected the geopolitical environment in the United States, with more influential political movements such as Black Lives Matter (BLM), MeToo movement, or the WalkAway Campaign and Turning Point USA, all of which have had considerable influence in policy making and cultural shifts.

All have profound influence in community responses to critical issues, empowering community coalitions with new energy that fosters action within geopolitical and social constructs. Communities are as complex as the human cell, made up of many different elements that determine its function, structure, and even health and life cycle. This sentiment is longstanding throughout history, first appearing in Plato's Republic where he asserts the relationship between the various functions and parts of society and the human psyche (Pangle, 1977).

Coalitions are made up of people that represent a particular community sector, which include businesses, law enforcement, schools, government, medical, mental health, media, places of worship, as well as civic and community organizations that focus on health promotion or community prevention initiatives. Many types of individuals and special population groups represent each sector, such as youth, parents, people who identify as LGBTQ, people with disabilities, people of distinct cultures, and others, that all have common goals stemming from deep seeded beliefs and values. As a result, perceptions and attitudes are significantly influenced that can lead to population behavior change (Bem, D. J., 1972). Each of these sectors and individuals are small parts to the whole, which influences the environment in which we work, the building and strengthening of our interpersonal relationships, and even contributing to what and how we learn.

Because of the diversity and exceptional circumstances that come with individuals, whether related to cultural, political, economic, or social challenges, communities are not without their problems, sometimes very significant. These problems, left unaddressed, perpetuate critical malfunctions, where communities once thriving no longer function in a productive manner. The way communities deal with problems is also complex as the effectiveness of the responses depends upon a variety of reasons.

Community coalitions help to increase the capacity of the community and local organizations to meet the growing needs of the population in which they serve (Butterfoss, Lachance, & Orians, 2006). Coalitions are strategic alliances of individuals and organizations that assemble to achieve a goal (Butterfoss & Kegler,

2002). Some may include improvements to service delivery, strengthening systems, building capacity, and empowering community members. In addition, increasing outreach and education, as well as preventing disease, and even responding to disaster, can all influence better strategic planning efforts.

Federal Funding for Community Coalitions

As the research addresses community coalition building after federal funding is expended, it is important to understand what federal funding is and how it is distributed via federal grants. A grant is financial assistance for public endeavors that provide the general welfare for all and is often delivered most effectively through non-profit and community based organizations. Grants help to support a variety of initiatives that range from projects like cleaning up the environment, reducing opioid abuse, revitalizing a community, or major capital projects such as States using it to build stronger bridges and other infrastructure development. The monies effect how public services are rendered and how problems and identified risks are reduced for the benefit of all of us (Grants.gov, Grants 101, 2019).

Since 1970, there has been a remarkable increase in the utilization of public funds as an investment to support public welfare for improving the quality of life of individuals and communities. The Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act (Public Law 95-224, Feb 3, 1978) established the relationships between cooperatives and procurements to further define how funding is to be allocated for the public. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which operates within the Executive branch of the United States, oversees the regulations to protect the way funding for public assistance is distributed. As

grant policies have evolved, regulations now address lobbying and construction limitations, accountability and transparency standards, protective data collection procedures, using Presidential Executive Orders to support Acts in Congress, as well as offering strict guidelines for single audits and amendments to improve standards of money management (Grants.gov, 2019). There are limited articles associated with the history of federal funding specifically for community coalitions, however as grant eligibility requirements are developed, it is written within the requirements for funders, such as shown in the DFC Community Support Grants.

Community coalitions often utilize public and private monies to manage vital community based programs while maintaining a small staff and acquiring necessary materials to promote and execute programs and initiatives. The federal government, having seen the positive opportunities that coalitions contribute on the local level especially in health promotion, provides funding to build community coalitions. Miller & Hendrie (2009) assert the cost-benefit of prevention programming via community coalitions is greatly enhanced, especially if focusing on building individual and community capacity to lead such efforts are developed. The most successful community coalition initiative began in 1997 when President Bill Clinton signed the Drug-Free Communities Act acknowledging the importance of community-based coalitions, thus creating the Drug Free Communities Support grant (Public Law 105-20).

The DFC Act was a bipartisan effort believing that in order to succeed in reducing risks that lead youth to use alcohol and drugs, communities needed to be well organized with a solid cross-sector representation to address local health issues. Local people help

to solve local problems. Since 1998, funding has increased from 10 million to 95 million per year supplying funding for over 2000 community coalitions each for potentially up to 10 years (CADCA, n.d.).

In recent years, coalition building on a community level has increased as more communities see the value of collectively addressing identified risk factors. Federal grant funders have continued to intensify its associations with community coalitions, requiring grant proposals to include mandated collaborations and partnerships among grantees. The reason being, coalitions breed collaborations, helping to increase the chances of sustainability after grant funding is no longer available. Recognizing the need to establish community coalitions as a workable source to build community collaboration, federal and state agencies often require community coalitions to provide a sustainability plan that describes specific strategies that will ensure the programs that are funded will have a higher probability of longevity and success. Chavis, D.M., (2001) asserts the important role of community coalitions and their ability to garner combined resources from its members that can help move the organization to meeting its goals. Federal agencies see the value in this idea to ensure success of program grants, which in turn have informed the process and integrity in which Requests for Awards (RFA) are made.

This was not always the case in the past, as organizations were able to submit a simple description of their program, a few ideas and sources, and if the proposal meant minimal requirements, would have a good chance of being awarded the grant solely based upon the idea, without considering effectiveness of the outcomes and long-term sustainability. However, grant requirements have evolved over the last two decades, as

funding awards are more stringent with government regulations and oversight.

Sustainability planning requirements provide federal agencies an insurance policy of sort, to influence and predict better outcomes, while decreasing spending and waste.

Coalitions who seek sustainability must keep diverse funding sources, as this has been shown to be a key predictor of coalition survival (Butterfoss, 2007). Resources are not always attributed to money; rather it includes goods, services, and human capital. Butterfoss & Kegler, (2009) suggest that diversity in funding can be achieved through many strategies such as grants and contracts, in-kind donations, as well as major private donors and foundations. Leviton, (2006) asserts that coalitions with budgets that were greater than \$25,000 per year and had more than three sources of funding had more probability of survival than coalitions that did not meet this predictor. Community coalitions, just as coalitions associated with military and politics, are very powerful vehicles for change, especially for community health promotion. Coalitions have considerable influence and reach into a community, which is why it is of the utmost importance to continue researching and increasing our depth of knowledge of coalition sustainability. This will ensure the communities in which we live continue to thrive, especially when federal funding is expended or no longer available.

Sustainability of Community Coalitions Post Federal Funding

Coalition sustainability is discussed in many journal articles and addressed by leading researchers within their various theories and models of coalition development. In review of important literature on community coalition sustainability, there are several important contributions that must be acknowledged if we are to understand the context in

which this research project and future research projects are fundamentally based. Each component listed below are described and referenced in numerous peer reviewed articles spanning 30+ years and are considered the bedrock of sustainability theories, models, and frameworks, fostering new emerging ideas and practices.

Perspectives on coalition sustainability. There are several components that determine whether a coalition is sustainable and the level of the impact generated for local communities is effective (NORC, 2011). Swerissen and Crisp, (2004) suggest sustainability is determined by a program's benefit and effectiveness to the community over time, while Stevens and Peikes, (2006) assert the viability of social service programs and their success in providing the actual service greatly influences sustainability. Butterfoss, (2007) theorizes that the ability of the coalition to maintain and support the activities over a long period determines whether a coalition is sustained. Shediac-Rizkallah and Bone, (1998) forged the earliest research on sustainability within community settings and maintained a strong belief that sustainability operates on many various levels, is revealed in many different forms, and is dependent upon many factors, always evolving and changing in how services and programs are delivered (Butterfoss, 2007).

Sustainability models. There are several conceptual models of program sustainability to be considered when conducting this research. Alexander, J., Weiner, B., Metzger, M., et al (2003) asserted in his model for community health partnerships the importance of maintaining alignment and synergy of the partnership. He referred to the necessity of outcomes-based advocacy, and the need to have balance between vision and

focus of the partnership. He also emphasized the significance of the ability of leadership to understand and respond to complex community problems via a strong representation of different sectors in the community. One of the most important findings that came out of the research project is that it delineates the components that can affect efforts to sustain the partnership, such as taking into consideration the historical, cultural, political, physical, and economic facets of the partnership. He predicted based upon his findings that each component increased the value of the partnership and would therefore help to ensure its sustainability.

In 2011, NORC conducted an extensive literature review on sustainability with the six concept models presented above and determined six overlapping factors among them that makes a solid argument for the level of their importance. The six factors are the following:

1. Skilled and experienced leadership.
2. Successful collaboration and strategic alliances.
3. Strategic planning and commitment to long-term goals. Dissemination of results and quality of communication of their value to stakeholders.
5. Strategic and diverse fundraising plans.
6. Community buy-in and involvement.

The six factors have been adapted as evaluative measures that community coalitions can use to assess and plan sustainability of programs.

Factors that predict sustainability. There are several predictors of coalition sustainability that broker effective partnerships, programs, and expansion of mission

ensuring a continued benefit to the community at large (NORC, 2011). Per the available literature on sustainability for community coalitions, it must be decided what is being sustained i.e. a program and/or the coalition, the prolongation of the activities, and effects of the coalition or program (NORC 2011).

Sustainability has different meanings for different operations within a coalition or program. For example, Edwards (2007) and Rog (2004) assert that coalition capacity to secure new funding and resources determines sustainability, while Rog expounds on this theory and suggests that coalitions must have signs of growth, collaborative and strong alliances, as well as have organizational structures put in place such as policies and procedures. Mancini and Marek (2004), assert that the coalition's ability to respond to identified needs within the community, determines sustainability and points out the importance of flexibility and adaptability.

Quality of leadership is key to sustainability, needing those who are skilled and experienced in the field of coalition building, (Mancini & Marek, 2004), and that coalitions must invest substantial resources for qualified leaders, (Alexander et al., 2006), and must have a robust allegiance to the coalition. Another key predictor of sustainability is diverse membership, promoting cultural competency as well as multisector representation. Feinberg, (2008) and Rog, (2004) asserted that the more diversity in membership the more probability of growth and expansion of services and programs.

Coalitions that have a documented history of collaborative initiatives are more successful with sustainability after funding has been expended. Leviton's (2006) study of

over 700 coalitions suggested that coalitions that had a history of partnerships with services and programs were significantly more likely to continue than coalitions who did not have prior relationships. This supports other study findings that assert the same, such as Rog's (2004) study of coalitions that confirmed this relationship between these two variables. Another key predictor is whether coalitions have defined clear policies and procedures in coalition and program management. Butterfoss asserted, (2007), along with Feinberg, (2008), Leviton (2006), that these organizational factors are essential for sustainability.

Feinberg, (2008) asserts how a board functions is detrimental for coalition survival, as well as Leviton's study in 2006 confirmed a significant relationship between sustainability and effective governance (Leviton, 2006). Sustainability planning was found to be an essential key predictor for coalition sustainability as it requires strategic thinking and evaluation (Friedman & Wicklund, 2006). Lastly, predictors include the levels of community buy-in as Butterfoss (2007) asserts that community respect, trust, and involvement increase access to other resources and prospects.

Foster-Fisherman et al. (2001) asserted effective leadership is vital to the advancement of a vibrant collaborative adept to reach coalition aims. Leadership styles that are focused on empowering stakeholders enrich team effectiveness and participant fulfillment when working within community coalitions (Kumpher, Turner, Hopkins, & Librett, 1993). Highly trained and experienced leadership contributes to the overall success of the coalition (Rog, et al., 2004) as well as the availability of competent staff members ensures momentum and cooperation (Butterfoss, 2007).

Productive relationships and communication are crucial to coalition operations, as it is through personal and professional connections that collaboration happens, stimulating trust, and promise for long-term involvement (Butterfoss et al., 1996). The quality of communication between coalition leaders and the coalition board, productive conflict resolution processes, and cooperation are foundational requirements to promote healthy communication and connection with coalition members. Butterfoss asserted that to show effective coalition operations and collaborations, as told within the Community Coalition Action Theory he developed, mandates productive interpersonal relationships (Foster-Fisherman et al., 2001).

Coalitions who are task oriented and mission led ease growth and advancement in the identified issues important to coalition stakeholders, while preventing departures from the original mission resulting in added costs and subpar results. Coalitions that keep their resolve to meet their specific goals, avoiding mission creep are more probable to sustain programs and services (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001). Zakocs & Edwards, (2006) & Alexander, (2003) suggest that mutually agreed upon decision-making processes increase the chances of achieving goals while Zakocs and Edwards (2006) assert the importance of efficiency in the role of successful coalition building, especially since resources are increasingly becoming less available.

Chinman & Wandersman, (1999) assert the value of recruiting and retaining key leader involvement in a coalition where communication of the costs and benefits to coalition participants becomes quite important. Chinman, 2005 discusses the many factors that are costly to members, time being one of the most important. If members

perceive that the benefits outweigh the costs, then consistent participation will be more easily achieved. Perceptions are reality in a sense, as several studies find a significant relationship between the level of participation and involvement as opposed to the perceptions of the personal costs and benefits to the member.

True to any corporation, sustainability of operations, programs, and services over a period of years are essential to coalition success (Brown, Feinberg, & Greenberg, 2012). It is common knowledge that community coalitions are greatly challenged in their efforts to sustain vital programming; however, with significant planning activities, sustainability is achievable. One of the more popular citations is that of the research involved in a communities that care coalition within the state of Pennsylvania that resulted in 60% of the coalitions deemed successful in their efforts up to five years after state level funding had been expended (Feinberg, Bontempo, & Greenberg, 2008).

If programs and services are not sustainable on their own, it is more likely that coalition participation and support will decrease, reducing the capacity of the coalition to respond to identified needs. It is essential for coalitions to strategically plan for sustainability in its infancy, as it addresses very significant challenges and barriers to success (Johnson, Hays, Center, & Daley, 2004). Sustainability planning includes an array of strategies, financial and developmental that reliably forecast the viability and longevity of coalition sustainability (Feinberg, Bontempo, et al., 2008).

Community buy-in is essential, as coalitions need individuals to garner support and to mobilize the community to ensure that programs and services are implemented productively, (Butterfoss et al., 1996; Foster & Fishman et al., 2001). Multi-

sector involvement is vital to averting unanticipated opposition and guaranteeing cultural competency throughout the implementation phase (Florin, Mitchell, Stevenson, & Klein, 2000; Foster-Fishman et al., 2001). Community buy-in can also enhance coalition sustainability by offering in-kind support and human and material assets (Scheirer, 2005).

Involving professional experts in the fields of health and prevention are vital resources for knowledge and access that improve health outcomes. Sofaer, (2004) asserts that coalition health and sustainability is placed at substantial risk when content and field experts are not retained. His research suggests that programs and coalition function to exist long after first initiation; sustainability must be a priority and is dependent on the length that a coalition is in operation to establish consistency and connection so that programs and policies can be supported.

It is important that community members perceive that improvements have been made as it directly relates to health outcomes. Coalition sustainability more than likely increases as positive perceptions about the progress made will contribute to the levels of commitment and involvement in the coalition (Wells, Feinberg, Alexander, & Ward, 2009). Offering education in coalition building and community mobilization techniques helps to sustain programs (Woods, Watson-Thompson, Schober, Markt, & Fawcett, 2014).

Challenges and barriers to sustainability of community coalitions. There are several challenges for community coalitions to achieve sustainability, one being the type of structure that is used in the organization. Alexander (2003) asserts that coalitions are volunteer-based, and therefore is simple for members to step out of the coalition,

potentially placing programs and leadership at risk. Coalition members have prior obligations and different organizational cultures that can place added stress and workloads for a coalition that does not pay them for their ability or involvement. Weiner, Alexander and Zuckerman, (2000) suggest this relates to problems with decision making and governance issues, not only due to inconsistent attendance, but also due to responsibilities of members and committee leaders that have not been clearly defined. Sink (1996) asserts the importance of maintaining a collaborative advantage by fostering ownership and community buy-in and trust. Coalition members present with significant differences in available resources or potential conflict between the partner organization's goals and the execution of those goals through activities and those of the coalition (Okobu and Weidman, 2000; Swain, 2001). Butterfoss, (2007) ascertains that sustainability is compromised when roles and responsibilities are not understood or that there is not a memorandum of understanding in place (Rog, 2004).

Another significant challenge is the lack of funding for organizational operation costs. Too often, funding agencies do not have monies available but for programs and activities, greatly reducing the capacity of the organization to deliver vital services. Programs need to manage the operation to serve the community effectively, and when it is not, sustainability is more challenging and can place organizations and vital programs at risk of being discontinued. Webber & Karlstrom, (2009) assert that a possible solution for coalitions is to garner support and corporate sponsorships from larger institutions, such as health and academic sectors.

Butterfoss and Francisco (2004) asserted the importance of evaluating the process and outcomes. He asserts that it not only provides accountability to stakeholders, but it also provides performance and outcome data that benefit funding agencies, enhances coalition activities, as well as identifies potential problems. Evaluating sustainability also increases community awareness of a problem, and helps to advise in policy decisions for municipalities, organizations, and state and federal agencies. Past research implies the importance of naming sustainability as its own outcome and is vital to show if a coalition is trying to secure vital resources either through developing innovative funding strategies or multiple diverse strategies to foster at the very least a feeling of ownership of the community coalition, to support important activities beyond just grant funding.

Summary and Conclusions

The coalition's core efforts are often embedded in its policies, organizational structures, and procedures, solidifying the core values attributed to other projects while building active commitment from within to ensure the work that was started, continues. Another area of importance is to address the quality of relationships with partner organizations, longevity of service and commitment over time, as well as evidence of integrated projects that mutually benefit partners and the coalition as a whole. Finally, it is important to consider how coalitions use their initial results to address policies, achieve committed support and the length in which key champions, such as policymakers are committed to the mission and its stakeholders over time.

Sustainability of community coalitions play an important role in increasing collaborative partnerships within organizations and communities, developing the human

and social capital to address the most pressing needs. Coalitions are made up of a diverse group of individuals, sectors, and special population groups, that are in of themselves, as well as the coalition as a whole, a change agent, actively responding to harmful policies, advocate for those who have no voice, or building awareness of a problem so that communities can be accurately informed. Coalitions broker partnerships, facilitate discussions, implements vital programs, and mediate for significant changes to the environment in which we live. Chapter three presents the research design and methodology of the project. Chapter four presents the data collection processes and results, and lastly Chapter five presents lessons learned and future research prospects.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to employ a descriptive case study method to determine if the principles of sustainability concept models impact the demise or viability of a community coalition. I gathered data from interviews of coalition stakeholders and board members as well as document reviews to determine the scope and reach of the coalition in relation to funding. I considered the following criteria when developing an analysis plan:

- outliers: values that do not appear to be consistent with the rest of the data,
- discontinuities: a break or gap in a process that would normally be continuous,
- trends: a general tendency in movement or direction, and
- periodicities: any recurrence at regular intervals. (Creswell, 2013)

In this chapter, I discuss the research design used in the study. I also discuss sustainability concept models with analysis of key measures consistent with variables known to be associated with sustainability of community coalitions.

Research Design and Rationale

The research design for the case study of sustainability of community coalitions post federal funding was a retrospective causal comparative case study using qualitative measures (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The research question was what elements are required to sustain community coalitions after federal funding is expended? The central concept of this study was the sustainability of community coalitions after funding has been expended. A premise of the study's conceptual framework was that community coalitions have significant difficulty sustaining not only the programs but also the

operations of the organization due to a range of factors such as insufficient or ineffective leadership, lack of community buy-in, a poor strategic planning processes, inadequate communication, and so forth. Therefore, I theorized that community coalitions can sustain themselves post-federal funding if particular factors exist.

The research tradition was qualitative in nature. I used a case study approach to investigate a community coalition's strategies to build capacity to sustain the operations and programs to best achieve its mission. Creswell (2013) discussed the elements of a case study approach in the context of it being an event, a specific problem, or process. Yin (2017) added to this description the importance of understanding conditions and contexts that provide a clear picture of the problem.

I decided that a case study approach was the best design choice because it enabled an immersion into the processes of the development of a coalition that has sustained itself despite the nonexistence of federal or major funding. Using a case study approach allowed me to obtain a more in-depth understanding. I was able to conduct interviews with persons who have been involved with the organizational efforts and to build upon my relationships with key leaders involved in community coalition building.

The research tradition and method were aligned with the research question and study topic. Creswell (2013) offers three identifiers for appropriate case study questions being either descriptive, causal, or related to processes. The research question for this study was descriptive in nature and therefore fit the requirements for a case study (see Yin, 2017). In this chapter, I will present the various aspects of the investigation and analysis.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was to extract information from research participants to better understand the strategies used to address coalition sustainability post federal funding. Participants expounded on their personal and professional experiences and perceptions and shared insights in the coalition efforts to sustain vital programming. I acknowledge challenges related to having a broader perspective in the field than most rural practitioners. However, my responsibility was to be that of a listener, while taking great care in communicating participant experiences and perceptions that were directly related to the research question. I believe that I have insights and experiences that allowed me to more fully understand the issues in the study.

I have had frontline and meaningful partnerships with students and leaders within the field. I have lectured on several occasions with the Geneva Institute on Public Policy and Leadership and around the United States at universities, colleges, and for international nongovernmental organizations. In this role, I have educated leaders and practitioners in the stages of coalition building, assessments, capacity building, strategic planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and sustainability planning.

Given my expertise in the field, it will be of utmost importance to address my own potential biases that could be present throughout the research process. My own research bias is enhanced by many years of working in the field as a community coalition coordinator, as well as being an internationally sought-after speaker, trainer, and consultant in global development with an emphasis in coalition building. My knowledge is extensive; however, I did not anticipate it being an issue as the sustainability of

community coalitions is a documented need within communities and even governments across the globe. The broad recognition of coalitions and sustainability allowed me to focus on the progress of one particular coalition and to provide the scientific community with a rich understanding of their experience. The relational connections are not those of shared power, shared resources, or in any way a conflict of interest between the interviewer and research participants.

To protect the identities of the leaders and stakeholders interviewed and prevent possible conflicts, I referenced them in the third person as executive director, current or former committee chair, and so forth. This was necessary to encourage full and transparent participation, encourage a more vibrant discussion that improved the quality of responses. It also ensured a safe environment so to not provoke or increase risk for retribution from either community stakeholders or coalition leadership and members. Participant comments were coded without the use of their real names.

Methodology

The geographic location of this study was in the Northeastern region of the United States. I spent 1 week to gather data by interviewing participants who have been involved with the development of the community coalition. This approach is in line with the suggested protocols of qualitative research, which require the researcher to become engrossed in the process of data gathering and future analysis (Creswell, 2013).

Participant Selection Logic

I used criterion and purposive sampling (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2001) to determine participants based upon their roles in leadership and responsibilities of

sustainability of both coalitions. The participants had a wealth of experience and knowledge and, though a small selection, were able to complement a study that was limited in resources yet had an abundance of information available (see Patton, 2002). I knew participants' positions and roles due to my work in the field within the region since 2005.

The study included interviewing 10 individuals from a pool of 20 potential participants. I determined that a small number of interviewees would yield more intimate and honest discussions about the details of the case. The participant coalition was decided based upon three factors:

1. The coalition is a functioning coalition that maintained approximately 50 volunteers. I felt that a coalition that was thriving and showed meaningful activity would bring credibility to the research.
2. A strong board of advisors oversees the coalition. I felt that with a strong board of advisors, access to information would be readily available.
3. The coalition has been in existence for at least 10 years and is not currently receiving federal funding, or its funding has been significantly reduced. I felt this would be a vital component as the research was focused on coalition sustainability post federal funding. It was imperative that the coalition show documented success in sustainability.

Using the three criteria, I concluded that the participant coalition and its members exceeded baseline standards and were a credible and reliable candidate for participation.

Instrumentation

Interview questions were developed prior to the meeting. The questions were conducted as a non-structured, open-ended format, which provided the opportunity for flexibility and adaptability by the interviewer and interviewee. The protocols developed for the case study (Yin, 2017) were formulated as more of an intellectual framework with a guided predetermined verbal exchange with the interviewee. It was the intention to be able to observe the thought processes of the interviewee while receiving answers that are more apt to show depth and breadth of knowledge and personal experiences, thus providing a meaningful rich dialogue directly related to the research question. In addition, I developed a list of characteristics of coalition sustainability essential for longevity of programs and coalitions. The checklist was developed from my own personal experience and from known components associated with sustainability that is referenced within the literature.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

One of the essential characteristics to ensure a clear and accurate data collection via interviews is to utilize dependable recording apps. Thus, it was imperative to sample several apps and other recording tools that have high performance. After a thorough search, it was decided to use Easy Voice Recorder Pro, an app best known for clear audio capabilities. As a backup, a second recording device was used, a Sony digital recorder. The audio was recorded, saved in mp3 and wav format, and uploaded to a secure Google Drive and copied for backup purposes to a secure dedicated Microsoft One-Drive account. After the data collection process was completed, the audio files were then

transcribed with Trint, a high quality artificial intelligence transcription service. The audio files were transcribed from speech to text and then downloaded into a Microsoft Word format so that data could then be cleaned. All transcribed documents were saved and secured in the dedicated Google Drive.

Participants were able to decide their own appointment times allotting for 1 to 2 hours for each interviewee. Meeting space was mainly located at the local Sheriff's office conference room, while other interview locations were personal offices, as well as at participant's homes. The interviews took place in comfortable settings that ensured privacy and promoted a more open conversation. The interviews were conducted in an open-ended discussion arrangement equivalent to select interviews (Yin, 2017), with professionals that are exceedingly knowledgeable about the issues addressed. The case study protocol questions were used as a springboard for each interview, all participants receiving the same questions to ensure consistency and clear direction, also allowing for robust exchanges including the possibility for additional questions as the interview became more involved or detailed.

As interviewees gave responses to the initial questions, I made follow up comments or added questions for clarification, providing more opportunities to add more depth to the discussion. Interviewees received questions that were most relevant to the interviewees' experience and role as it related to the coalition, thus some participants were given the particular questions. The format helped to ensure a thought-provoking and motivating interview experience and contributed to a more in-depth exchange.

Data Analysis Plan

The unit of analysis is the coalition's activities in of itself (Yin, 2017) which is found thru the process of sustainability and to the degree, it has been sustained. The data collected was categorized, analyzed, and interpreted according to themes that manifest from a preset "lean coding" as referenced by Creswell (2013). Data collected from interviews, archival documents, and recorded notes were categorized per the pre-coding manifest. The data was analyzed through summative and evocative measures and assigned a code specifically related to the research question. Coding determinants included the frequency of particular responses to critical insights that affect the coalition's sustainability. I recorded the frequency and sequence of events and responses when necessary to determine possible relationships between variables. Patterns in similarities and differences of descriptive language and thematic ideas were extracted so to develop a deeper understanding of perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors associated with the interview participants as it relates to coalition sustainability. Exploratory coding was utilized to determine the deeper focus of the research question. Table 1 is a template that shows the coding structure used in the study. It differentiates the emerging themes, the relationship of the responses comparatively, and the analysis of the data presented. Each category is then summarized to produce a clear comprehensive picture of participants' contributions to the interview questions.

Table 1
Table of Exploratory Coding Manifest

| Categories | Emerging themes | Relationship | Analysis | Summary |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|----------|---------|
| Common Mission | | | | |
| Relationships | | | | |
| Strategic Planning | | | | |
| Sustainability | | | | |
| Evaluation | | | | |
| Community Value | | | | |
| Funding Diversity | | | | |
| Leadership | | | | |

Analysis was completed manually, organized, and interpreted in correlation to the patterns discovered and themes that emerged, thus bringing forth a robust interpretation of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

The matter of trustworthiness is vital to the integrity of qualitative research as there is greater risk for unintended bias. The researcher has greater flexibility while analyzing data collected thru interviews that take a more conversational path. Variables as simple as voice inflection and other nonverbal communication and behavior, can influence a person's perceptions, that of the interviewer as well as the interviewee.

To establish credibility, it was imperative that participants be given the opportunity to ensure that the recorded answers were verified to reflect their intended meaning. Potential problems affecting credibility was researcher and participant bias and possible selective analysis to ensure a desired outcome. Participant's accurate recollection, transparency, and honesty determine the level of credible evidence that can influence data interpretation by the researcher.

The methodological approach using a case study, is in of itself a protective barrier to researcher bias, as it was intended to allow the participant, not the researcher, to tell their story from their perspective, influencing their attitudes about the topic leading to their behavioral responses or the responses of the coalition. Participants were interviewed and provided information specifically about coalition sustainability and its development within the context of their county. Coalition sustainability is not a new concept for the participants as it is addressed extensively within the coalition strategic plan.

Transferability

The quality of transferability was dependent upon whether participants gave a thorough and accurate account of their experiences. If the participant withholds pertinent information due to fear of retribution, a reluctance of transparency for fear of shedding what they would consider a negative light onto their efforts, or even a lack of knowledge of the coalition's activities, current and past, it could risk the integrity of the impending results. To reduce these risks to transferability, Yin asserts (2013) the importance of using purposeful sampling strategies.

In this case, I ensured that the participants served as key members, holding extensive knowledge and experience of the strategic planning process when the coalition was first developed. Key members of the coalition had significant leadership, activity, and longevity within the coalition and were intimately involved in its sustainability efforts. The participants were active members of the community and versed in its own culture, able to recognize its idiosyncrasies, subtle expressions, and the unique effect it has on the local people, practices, and establishments.

Dependability

The risk of selective analysis was reduced, as the sole purpose of this research is to gain perspective and data from the subjective firsthand experiences and knowledge of the interviewees themselves, thus preventing a predetermined outcome. To confirm participant's references, triangulation was used in conjunction with other data sources, including accounts verbalized by other participants. Participants shared different versions of stories to the same incidents, as well as separate and individual accounts not experienced or expressed by other interviewees, which only added to the overall quality of the process of analysis and the results produced from the research.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the extent of which the findings can be corroborated, taking into consideration the unique experiences of the interviewees over a period of time (Social Methods Research, 2017). To increase the probability of confirmability, several strategies were implemented. The first was to document my efforts to corroborate the information collected throughout the duration of the case study. Secondly, I counter-analyzed, looking for inconsistencies of argument or data provided either from participants or from documents that could show a different or opposing view. Lastly, I conducted an audit of the data itself, data collection processes, and sources to determine any misstated, falsified, or inaccurate accounts, as well as the possible bias that could result from such distortions.

Because I am known in the geographic region where I resided and worked in the field, there is a natural rapport that exists. More than being a potential threat to the

process, it enhanced the quality of the case study as my credibility and relationship with the participants played a vital role in improving the accessibility of the data generated to answer the research question, while extracting a complete and accurate picture of the case study. The ultimate goal was to provide an empathic and spontaneous interaction to acquire the information needed to answer the research question (Maxwell, 2013).

Ethical Procedures

Once this dissertation field study passed Institutional Review Board standards and received an approval number (12-10-19-0315526, with an expiration date of December 9, 2020), the participants signed a consent agreement for participation. The agreement explained all the necessary details of the case study, expectations and limitations of the participants and the researcher regarding setting of the research, its purpose, the protection of data and confidentiality of participants, the handling and distribution of results, as well as its potential impact upon the field of study.

Participants were selected based upon their criteria of prior involvement of the community-based coalition at the center of the study, and specifically their involvement and development of its sustainability. Participants were highly experienced in coalition development and sustainability and had a good understanding of the research process and the ethical issues associated with conducting research.

All recorded data retrieved from the interview process was backed up and secured in independent locations virtually and in hardcopy with daily monitoring. Access to the data is located in locked files that are developed to withstand fire and water damage. Files and recordings are stored at my home and on my computer, and is password protected.

Summary

This chapter defines a plan to conduct a case study of coalition sustainability for a community-based coalition located in the northeast region of the United States. My approach to the research was to interview 10 participants identified as active and informed members, those whom are consistently involved and have extensive knowledge of the development of the coalition and the efforts taken to sustain its organization and programs over the years of operation. The methodology chosen was determined to be the most optimal and thorough strategy to answer the research question, while producing a meaningful and accurate description and opportunity to explore the barriers and challenges of community-based coalition sustainability.

My role as the researcher was also that of an observer and former participant within the field, known and respected by the participants, and one that has been an active participant in the field of study for over 20 years. The data was collected via individual participant interviews and triangulated by archival data when available. The interview was conducted via open-ended reflexive interaction, while being recorded with the full knowledge of willing and consented participants. Data was organized and analyzed to produce credible and reliable results. Finally, the ethical concerns that touch all aspects of this research study were thoroughly identified and addressed to protect not only the outcomes of the research, but to ensure the integrity of the process, and the safety and protection of the participants.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the elements that effect community coalition sustainability after federal funding has been expended or significantly reduced. Community coalitions are vehicles of change that provide vital programming and resources for the people it serves. They are comprised of people and organizations who have an interest in a common mission but are oftentimes dependent upon federal monies to implement programs and initiatives to further the mission (NORC, 2011). In this study, I explored the insights of 10 coalition members, with various degrees of responsibilities and tenure, on the topic of coalition sustainability.

Setting

The setting was a large rural county in the Northeastern region of the United States, with a population of approximately 47,000 people, primarily living in the Northern Appalachian Mountain regions. The county frequently places in the top 2 most impoverished counties in the state, depending upon the year surveyed. Though the area struggles with financial resources and a dwindling economy, it possesses lush agriculture, quaint small villages, and people who have deep roots throughout the generations.

The coalition is connected with a lead agency, otherwise known as a fiscal agent, which is responsible for grant administration, operational, and financial oversight. The coalition itself consists of several partner agencies and individual members. The fiscal agent supports a coalition director, who is tasked with the grant administrative duties associated with the past federal grant that first helped start the coalition and who serves as the director of prevention, a separate department within the independent lead agency.

This is a dedicated staff position within the organization. The coalition coordinator is responsible for all aspects of capacity building, strategic planning, and implementation of the programs and initiatives, as well as the leadership duties to maintain focus, sustain the momentum of efforts, and communicate with members and the community at-large. The lead agency also contracts an independent researcher to conduct community assessments and to oversee the risk and protective factor surveys distributed with county school districts, as well as to assist with grant evaluation and reporting requirements. An independent key leader advisory board oversees the integrity and implementation of the projects of the coalition and includes decision makers of the most influential partner agencies in the county, including the office of the sheriff, county department of social services, county department of health, and the local hospital and school district representatives. Finally, the coalition manages several subcommittee groups with lead volunteers to drive the activities and initiatives.

The coalition started out as an ad-hoc group of decision makers who wanted to address children and youth unified services, starting as far back as 1998. Even earlier than that, those same leaders were involved with a group addressing unified services that consisted of decision makers within the same agencies. In 2005, the lead agency secured the Drug-Free Communities Support Act grant and began to formulate a more structured coalition. The grant allowed up to 10 years of funding, at \$125,000 per year with upwards of an 80% match requirement. The grant supported significant efforts in building a coalition, among other initiatives that addressed decreasing risk factors among youth. In 2015, the coalition expended its federal funding from that particular grant and now only

operates on a small grant of less than \$50,000 to run specific media campaign ads associated with alcohol and substance abuse prevention. The consequences of the reduction in funds were a reduction in the coalition coordinator time from a full 40-hour week position to no more than 20 hours, a significant decrease in dedicated leadership. Despite the expiration of vital funding, the coalition continues to thrive with a robust membership, the continuation of important countywide assessments, and successful outcomes with highly coordinated community-based programs.

Demographics

Of the 10 participants, four were male and six were female. Each participant was a member of the coalition for at least 10 years and had varying degrees of involvement. Participants included one representative of the fiscal agent, one paid staff member, and one paid evaluator. Two participants were considered key leaders, the sheriff and former commissioner of the department of social services, and 3 were considered staff or contractors for the lead agency. The remaining five participants were longtime coalition members and served as volunteers for various subcommittees responsible for the implementation of coalition programs and initiatives within the community. Participants consisted of representatives from law enforcement (two), health (four), and education (four) sectors. The education sector included those participants who serve within schools or prevention education, including alcohol and substance abuse prevention. The health sector included those participants who serve in the field of medicine, social services, developmental disabilities, and mental health.

Data Collection

Participants received an invitation and consent form to take part in interviews for the duration of up to 2 hours. Of the 10 participants, five chose to meet at the Sheriff's Office conference room, two chose to meet in their homes, and three chose to meet in conference rooms at their organization. All meeting spaces were private, comfortable, and to the participant's preferences.

I used the interview questions provided in Appendix A and asked each participant the same set of questions. Once participants shared their answers, I followed up with additional questions to add clarity to their answers. When the questions did not pertain to their personal knowledge or experience within the coalition, they were skipped, and discussions continued as participants felt comfortable and were able.

I compiled and preserved the data in audio recordings per the stated methods in Chapter 3. I transcribed the recordings using artificial intelligence software and was able to clean the data with multiple thorough reviews. All transcribed interviews were saved into Microsoft Word documents and printed so a more hands-on, in-depth note taking effort could be made. All data were password protected and saved on a dedicated Google Drive to be used at-will for review.

Data Analysis

I used Creswell's (2013) "spiral" approach to data analysis. Creswell suggested the need for a continued flow of working with the data, from organizing, reviewing, reflecting, categorizing, classifying, and interpreting patterns and themes to prioritizing and finally discarding unrelated or unneeded elements of the data. I listened to participant

recordings multiple times and recorded thoughts and questions that would arise from deeper analysis. I highlighted each interview question and participant response as new thought patterns, topics, and themes emerged. Patterns and themes of the responses of individual participants were classified and prioritized and then compared to each participant, ensuring a more comprehensive and complete result.

The interview questions consisted of seven main categories, all of which are directly correlated with the academic research cited within Chapter 2, identifying them as significant factors that contribute to coalition sustainability:

1. Common Mission.
2. Relationships.
3. Strategic Planning Process.
4. Sustainability Evaluation.
5. Community Value.
6. Diverse Funding.
7. Leadership.

The coding manifest template presented in Chapter 3 includes emerging themes, relationships, and analysis of the data. I first listened to the audio recordings of each participant highlighting my thoughts about their responses and eventually determining the strength in which they understood the question, as well as my own perception about their depth of understanding of the question. Oftentimes, participants became more direct and more firm in their intonations nonverbally, as they exhibited responses that were more emotional.

Participants did not expound as much on their experience with certain questions, as some were less interested or knowledgeable about the topic, and therefore did not feel they had a strong connection to a particular idea or experience within a designated category. For example, Participant 10 had very little knowledge or experience in the category of diverse funding, rather was much more experienced in the actual volunteerism within subcommittees which means in other topics of interest, the answers held more weight, as opposed to areas that this participant had less experience. Another example is Participant 2 was more involved with the business of the coalition administration as opposed to actual subcommittee volunteerism. This participant's responses to the category of diverse funding held more weight as she showed significant interest, knowledge, and experience within this particular category.

The patterns that divulged were more often associated with cause and effect. For example, several participants expressed their reasons for getting involved in the coalition was due to personal or professional trauma-related experiences. Either something happened with a friend or family member that caused them to want to turn their passions to community prevention work, or in their capacity of a service provider, serving at-risk families, had seen great need, loss, risk, or trauma, causing them to want to become more active in the coalition and community at-large. Thus, a specific event happened, the cause, and ultimately their dedication to that cause, the effect, contributed to their involvement with the coalition.

Determining relationships between emerging themes and patterns was the next step as I sought to identify the common themes within the various answers provided by

each participant. For example, the number of participants that provided a similar opinion was then totaled to show not only frequency of the emerging theme, but also the strength of connection or relationship it had to the overall category. For example, 8 out of 10 participants shared a common belief that the role of the coalition was to provide resources and programs to the community, and participants felt that this service helped to determine its strength of relationship with the community. This belief or common opinion among eight of the participants ultimately supported my own analysis that the coalition indeed does have a strong relationship with the community, based upon the sheer number of shared opinions and experiences of the participants.

However, data also showed that there were outliers of opinions and experiences. These outliers may have influenced a change in my perception of the strength of the relationship of the coalition to the community because I felt that though there were opinions that seemed to stand alone, they often were very detailed explanations and therefore supported a view that was a caveat of sort. For example, one participant felt that the coalition, though it offered several resources and programs as discussed in the previous paragraph, the strength of the relationship with the community ultimately depended upon whether or not people were personally impacted by those resources and programs. This participant's opinion shed light on how fragile the coalition could become if programs and resources were discontinued. Therefore, though she stood out as the only one who stated that answer, the weight of her answer was significant because it directly implicated a cause and effect and possible risks to the coalition's strength of relationship within the community it serves. Each type of answer provided a more complete picture of

just how strong the coalition really was within the community. Therefore, my analysis included the depth and overlap of conflicting answers and the possibility of those conflicts to help supply a more complete understanding of the actual strength of relationship the coalition has within the community. Eight participants providing one view, and one participant providing a conflicting view to the same question ultimately provided a more in-depth understanding of the reality.

Lastly, the analysis consisted of determining an overall narrative and offering a complete picture from the participant's combined answers to the interview questions. The analysis of emerging themes included a diverse approach to the answers, considering not only common themes, but conflicting viewpoints, as well as identifying frequency of the common themes and patterns that began to emerge. The emerging themes along with supportive quotes from the participant interviews are presented in more detail in the results section of Chapter 4.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

No changes were determined to be imperative to strategies addressing the credibility, transferability, dependability, or confirmability of the data. As outlined and planned, I gathered data from highly informed and involved members of a community coalition. All have been active members of the coalition for at least 10 years and have served in different capacities in leadership and volunteerism within the community. Some were government organization executives, teachers and health professionals, long-time community members, or public elected officials. They were able to provide information due to their level of access to data and resources or had significant experience in

community coalitions. The extensive level of involvement of the participants was necessary to provide enough reliable and credible information so to acquire data that best answers the research question. Audio recordings of the interviews were utilized to confirm the accuracy of participant answers.

To provide another level of data credibility, a thorough review of the coalition's strategic plan was conducted. A complete description in each category of this research was addressed in the strategic plan. For example, the strategic plan clearly stated the mission and vision of the coalition. The mission of the coalition was to 1) build a coalition, and 2) reduce risk factors among youth. Research participants described in their interviews their support and commitment to the mission individually and as representatives of their organization of the common mission. Each participant stated why he or she was involved and how the mission of the coalition complemented their own.

Secondly, the coalition's plan addressed the importance of relationships and discussed in detail the representatives of several sectors of the community that were involved in the coalition. The strategic plan corroborated the research participants' testimonies about the strength of the interpersonal relationships, with not only one another, but the community as well. This was presented as an essential characteristic of coalition sustainability. Thirdly, the strategic plan detailed the structure and function of the coalition, as well as how decisions were made among leadership and a consensus was achieved. This corroborated research participants' descriptions of their experience in developing and executing the action plans. Furthermore, sustainability evaluation plans were incorporated within the greater strategic plan. The strategic plan evaluated the

accomplishments, strengths, weaknesses, and risks of the coalition, demonstrating a clear commitment to further the coalition after federal funding is expended.

Furthermore, the strategic plan demonstrated the commitment to the community to increase the value of the coalition to the community at large. The strategic plan provided specific action plans to implement quality programs and initiatives that were data-driven and that met the specific needs of the community. The strategic plan also presented a strong description of diversity of funding, describing the commitment to seek funding from federal, state, and local agencies, as well as garnering the support of in-kind donations. The game changer in all of this is its connection to a sense of value, the more connection through strong relationships with individual members and community, the more probable key leaders would donate their time, money, and talents to coalition efforts.

Lastly, the strategic plan demonstrated its commitment to quality leadership and its efforts to fund a dedicated coalition leader position. This is considered essential in the sustainability of the coalition to not only lead the efforts and increase connection, but also to motivate and build momentum over a long period. Research participants agreed the key to its success over the years was the strong leadership provided to help ensure successful outcomes. The elements of community coalition sustainability that are presented within the data findings through participant interviews are strongly corroborated by the strategic plan and therefore provided a significant confirmation of the data by the use of triangulation. The strategic plan of the coalition confirmed research

participants' shared experiences as well as the dependability and reliability of previous research in the field of study.

Results

I communicated in the methodology section of Chapter 3 and to the research participants their association with the research would be anonymous and confidential, thus, the names of participants are not presented in the results. To ensure the confidentiality, separate contributions were not attributed to a specific participant except when referencing a distinct quote. The findings are comprehensive and integrated to ensure that the reader has a narrative that flows well and presents a clear picture that includes diverse perspectives. I organized the findings under the major categories that specifically relate to previous research in coalition sustainability. The emerging themes were consolidated and prioritized by importance to the relevance to the research question.

Findings for Common Mission

The first category identified from the data analysis is Common Mission. Questions in this category established the participant's initial contact with the coalition, the motivating interests in attending meetings, and factors that influenced them to become more involved. Table 2 shows the themes that emerged and the total number of participants who shared similar thoughts within their answers. Table 2 describes the thematic codes associated with coalition sustainability. The most common answers among participants related to (a) the importance of shared interests, (b) the level and quality of effort for community outreach and involvement, and (c) the opportunities for meaningful connection with like-minded people and partner agencies.

Table 2
Emerging Themes in Common Mission

| Emerging themes | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | P8 | P9 | P10 | Total |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|
| Describe the initial contact with the coalition. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Community presentation | | | | | X | | | | | | 1 |
| Personal invite | | | | | | | X | X | X | X | 4 |
| Administrative requirement | X | X | X | X | | X | | | | | 5 |
| What is the motivating interest to attend meetings? | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Shared interests | X | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | 7 |
| Community outreach | X | | | X | X | X | X | | X | X | 7 |
| Personal reasons | X | | | X | | | | | | X | 3 |
| Connection with like-minded people | X | X | | X | | X | | | X | X | 6 |
| After the initial meeting, what factors influenced you to become more involved? | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Quality programs | | X | | X | X | | X | | | | 4 |
| Reliable data | | X | X | | X | | X | X | | | 5 |
| Data-driven strategies | | X | X | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Effective outcomes | | X | X | | X | | | X | | | 4 |
| Effective leadership | | X | X | | | | X | | X | X | 5 |
| Grant opportunities | | X | X | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Targeted initiatives | | | | X | | X | | X | | X | 4 |
| Shared resources | | | | X | | X | | X | X | X | 5 |
| Offered a positive experience | | | | X | | X | | X | X | X | 5 |

Participants shared their initial contact with the coalition, which ranged from hearing about the coalition at a community presentation, having been required to

participate due to administrative requirements, or receiving a direct invite to attend a meeting by the coordinator or existing coalition member.

Participants were asked about their motivating interests in attending meetings. Several felt that there was a common interest among those who attended, and the coalition's mission was in line with what was important to them personally, or aligned with the mission of the partner agency. One participant shared the excitement felt when hearing about the efforts to build a more collaborative approach to community problems stating:

The first memory I have is hearing a presentation at the local college...and the idea of forming a coalition that would include all the stakeholders in our county to really collaborate, and I remember feeling like at that time, this is what we need. This is really going to benefit all of the work, all of our individual efforts.

(Participant 6)

Another participant expressed interest of becoming involved due to a good friend who died. The participant shared:

It's a personal thing for me. One of my best friends in college was on prescription pills because of a football accident in high school, and ended up passing away at 26 from a brain aneurysm that they figure was due to him being on pain meds for so long of his life. (Participant 2)

Several participants felt the opportunities to develop connection with like-minded people spiked their interest not only with their initial contact but also influenced them to continue being involved. One participant stated, "I like being engaged in the public and

I've always felt that was the reason I got into public work, was to help out with the public and help the community.” (Participant 9)

Participants were asked to identify factors that may have influenced them to become more involved after the initial meeting. Several themes emerged with strong consensus that the coalition offered quality programs and leadership, as well as targeted initiatives. Several participants saw that there might be greater opportunities to compete for grants for the partner agencies benefiting the community. Lastly, participants shared the coalition often had effective outcomes, showing favorable approval in how the coalition approached problems with data-driven strategies. These factors were extremely influential in the decision to become more involved. One participant stated about the coalition:

They were very open and actually looking for data and using data. And that, what you think should be common, is not. I think a lot of coalitions will use data that's required by their funders, and not a whole lot more. So that was really a big part of it, was they really wanted to use it and dig deep into what we had...they really wanted to do data-driven planning. (Participant 3)

Participants' initial contact with the coalition and their decision to stay involved were for various reasons. Each shared one common underlying factor, they all had a common mission either personally or professionally and their involvement provided the opportunity for each to reach their goals. The coalition was the vehicle of change they needed to achieve their mission and to make an impact on the community they cared for.

Findings for Relationships

The second category identified from the data analysis is Relationships. Questions in this category established the participant's relationship with the coalition and how it may have changed over time. This category also included questions about the participant's perception of the coalition's relationship to the community, and how it may have changed over time. Table 3 highlights the emerging themes.

Table 3: *Emerging Themes in Relationships*

| Emerging Themes | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | P8 | P9 | P10 | Total |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|
| Describe the relationship you have with the coalition and how it has changed since initial involvement. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Regular attendance | X | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 8 |
| Useful resources | X | X | | X | | X | X | X | X | X | 8 |
| Team focus | | | | X | X | | X | X | X | X | 6 |
| Meaningful work | | | | X | X | | X | X | X | X | 6 |
| Mutual benefit | | X | | X | | X | X | X | X | X | 7 |
| How has the relationship changed since initial involvement? | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Increased sense of ownership | | | | X | | | X | X | X | X | 5 |
| Strengthening relationships | | | | X | X | | | X | X | X | 5 |
| Increased awareness of needs | X | X | | X | | | X | X | | X | 6 |
| Increased community outreach | X | X | | X | | | X | X | X | X | 7 |
| Describe the relationship of the coalition to the community it serves, and how it has changed over time. | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Opportunities for involvement | X | X | | | X | X | | X | 5 |
| Increased outcomes | | | X | | X | X | X | X | 5 |
| Coalition longevity produces legitimacy | | | | X | X | X | X | | 4 |

Participants expressed their viewpoints about the relationship the coalition has with the community and how it may have changed over time. Several themes emerged highlighting the coalition efforts to provide opportunities for community involvement and its expansion in outreach to more non-traditional community based groups, such as snowmobile clubs, hairdressers, and flower shops. Participants felt that it offered community and coalition members the flexibility to ebb and flow in the level of involvement as needs arise.

The most frequent answers among participants displayed the importance of outreach efforts of the coalition, in providing resources, information, and services, indicating these factors would influence positive relationships among coalition members and the community. Another important contributor of strong relationships is the mutual benefit it creates for partner agencies; the more benefit to partner programs and initiatives, the more probability that the strength of relationship will increase. Moreover, the findings indicate the importance of meaningful and effective teamwork to overcome challenges within the community, which could lead to stronger relationships internally and externally.

One participant expressed the significant change in feeling of a sense of purpose stating, “My relationship with the coalition became more of a priority in my mind, instead of a responsibility, because I started to enjoy it and get a more personal satisfaction out of it.” (Participant 4) The participant also felt strongly about the level of activity the coalition produced because of the stronger relationships and common challenges, stating:

The people who attend represent on a regular basis...it’s not a silent coalition. I mean, there’s always stuff going on and always something happening, everything from the Prom Promise event and how people will place stickers on pizza boxes, the flower shops are involved, the pill drops we’ve all come together to support. Really in the end, the real activity is in the relationships, the depth of the relationships that have been built over time in the community. The partner agencies all have the same issues, when they are all working with the same families. They all understand each other’s trials and tribulations on certain levels. Yeah. And we understand how rural we are. And I think maybe that’s why we buy-in so much, because we all understand the challenges. (Participant 4)

Some participants felt the relationship they had as members was quite important requiring a greater sense of responsibility. Most participants viewed the coalition’s role was to provide useful resources, information, and services, to one another and to the community. These factors helped to increase awareness of community needs, and ultimately increased the efforts for community outreach. Participants felt strongly that

these efforts solidified the relationships among members because there is a perceived mutual benefit for partner agencies. One participant described the relationship, stating:

I am a regular participant. I have certainly participated in some of their town hall meetings, on their panels. If something was important to either me personally or to the people that we served in my community, I thought it important to be a part of it. So relationship is key. (Participant 7)

When asked how the relationship had changed over time, the participant eluded to consistency and commitment to involvement stating, “We have players who come and go, but I think I’ve always been able to maintain good relationships.” (Participant 7)

Another participant felt strongly that the relationship was quite positive, stating:

I think it’s a good relationship. I enjoy going to the meetings. I’ve met several people at the meetings with all different interests. It’s led me in a direction where I’ve done a lot of things that I may have not done before, I’ve gotten involved in several different organizations that I might not have gotten involved with in the community. (Participant 9)

The participant then shared that over time, the relationships have just become stronger because of the trust level increasing among members, stating:

I’ve got to know the people in the coalition much better. We’ve gotten a lot closer where we’re more able to speak now than at first. When you first get into the group, you don’t always say exactly what you mean because you’re not sure who everybody is. But we’ve got to a point now where we all trust each other and we trust each other’s judgment. We are able to speak out. (Participant 9)

Not all participants felt that the relationships were as strong as coalition leaders believe and were not necessarily heading in a positive direction. One participant expressed concern that while the relationships started out strong, especially between the coalition as a whole and the positive level of effort to work with the subcommittee, that due to meetings being scheduled during strict working hours, a whole subcommittee is feeling disconnected. The value associated of being involved in the coalition hasn't changed, however there is less communication between coalition leadership and subcommittee members, as this particular subcommittee has to meet in the evening away from school hours, thus, creating a decreased ability to participate in fuller coalition meetings. The participant stated:

Our subcommittee group is pulling away, not purposely disassociating, it is just kind of fizzling. We seem to be segregated from what happens during the day when they are more likely to have a coalition meeting. (Participant 8)

Findings for Strategic Planning Process

The third category identified from the data analysis is Strategic Planning Process. Questions established the participant's level of understanding of the strategic planning process, their level of involvement with the development and execution of the plan. It also addressed their perceptions in how the execution of the plan affected the coalition and the community. Table 4 shows the themes that emerged.

Table 4: *Emerging Themes for the Strategic Planning Process*

| Emerging Themes | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | P8 | P9 | P10 | Total |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|
| Describe the strategic planning process of the coalition as you have experienced. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Moderate understanding of planning process. | X | | | | X | X | | | | | 3 |
| Extensive understanding of the planning process. | | X | X | | | | X | X | X | | 5 |
| Describe the level of involvement you had in the development of the strategic plan. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Regular planning meeting attendance | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | 9 |
| Designated a Key Leader | X | X | X | | | | X | | X | | 5 |
| Minimal to no involvement in development of plan | X | | | X | | | | | | X | 3 |
| Moderate involvement in the development of plan: sector or subcommittee specific focus | | | | | X | X | | X | X | | 4 |
| Extensive involvement in development of plan | | X | X | | | | X | | X | | 4 |
| Describe the level of participation you had in the execution of the strategic plan. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Extensive involvement in execution of plan | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 10 |
| After the execution of the strategic plan, how has it affected the coalition? | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ensured program success | | | X | | | X | X | | X | X | 5 |
| Coalition success solidified more consistent and | | | X | X | X | X | X | | | | 5 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| active participation | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strengthened member relationships | | | | X | X | | X | | X | 4 |
| Increased coalition activity | X | X | | X | X | X | X | | X | 7 |
| Increased collaborative efforts | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | | 7 |
| <hr/> | | | | | | | | | | |
| After the execution of the strategic plan, how has it affected the community? | | | | | | | | | | |
| Increased a sense of community benefit. | | X | | | X | X | X | | X | 5 |
| Increased use of services | | X | | | X | X | X | | X | 5 |
| Increased community education and awareness | | X | | X | X | X | | X | X | 7 |
| Coalition expanded into different communities and population groups. | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | 8 |
| Risk and Protective Factor surveys contribution. | | X | X | | | | X | X | | 4 |

In this category of Strategic Planning Process, it was important to determine the level of understanding participants displayed in their answers of the strategic planning process, which for this coalition, was deeply imbedded in the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF). There are specific components that coalition members have been trained and educated about over the span of their involvement that guided the process of

coalition development from its inception. When asking the participants to describe the strategic planning process, I was looking for specific key words related to the SPF to determine their level of understanding of specific key elements the coalition leadership has used throughout their tenure to build and operate the coalition. The key words and ideas that helped to indicate their level of understanding were the following:

1. Assessment
2. Capacity building
3. Mission and vision
4. Goals and objectives
5. Board development
6. Process of decision-making
7. Implementation
8. Monitoring and evaluation
9. Cultural competency

The findings showed that 8 out of 10 participants had a moderate to extensive understanding of the planning process, which means either they could describe specific mechanisms, fully or partially, that would indicate they had at least a working knowledge of the strategic planning process for the coalition.

Next, participants were assessed their level of participation in the development of the strategic plan. To determine the level of participation in the development of the plan, participants identified specific activities they took part in, such as attending regular planning meetings, interacting with the data and its implications, or helping to identify

priorities. Participants may have offered their subject matter expertise on an issue or provided valuable insights as a representative from a specific sector that contributed to the plan. Findings indicated that 9 out of 10 participants had a moderate to extensive level of participation in the development of the plan.

To assess the level of involvement the participants had in the execution of the strategic plan, participants identified their roles and responsibilities of specific activities they may have led, assisted, or otherwise contributed. It could be that they helped collect pills from the community for the community drug take-back day, or they may have contributed their voice for a radio ad, or provided a specialized service in their field so that a particular program or activity could be executed. 10 out of 10 participants had a high level of involvement with the execution of the strategic plan. These findings show that the participants that were interviewed were highly committed and responsible for delivering coalition programs or initiatives. Most participants had a solid working knowledge of how the coalition prioritizes and addresses identified problems within the community.

Participants shared what they felt the most significant impact the strategic plan had on the greater community highlighting the outcome helped not only with the provision of vital resources, but it resulted in increased access to those vital resources not otherwise available. The strategic plan created more of a directed focus within target populations and specific areas of need, therefore increasing the level of awareness to a problem. Lastly, participants indicated a strong relationship between effective strategic planning processes and greater success with community outreach as well as contributing

to a positive and collaborative team mentality. The more success in coalition efforts, the more participative and team oriented the coalition members and partner agencies remained committed and active within the coalition. Furthermore, the findings strongly suggested that the more success in executing the plan and positive teamwork, the more likelihood the activities and outreach efforts would expand into other surrounding communities.

Participants also identified one significant common concern. While there was no question among participants that the strategic planning process had great success with specific activities and outreach efforts, the majority of the communities served still were unaware of the coalition and its existence, or specific details about what the coalition offered. Participants felt that the strategic planning process, despite its obvious successful implementation, still had not secured enough community awareness to the coalition, which increases the risk to the sustainability of the coalition after federal funding is expended.

Findings for Sustainability Evaluation

The fourth category identified from the data analysis is Sustainability Evaluation. Questions in this category established the participant's own definition of coalition sustainability and were asked to assess the coalition's accomplishments, challenges, strengths, and risks. Participants also identified what they felt were the most significant of each. Table 5 highlights the emerging themes what participants deemed to be important elements of coalition sustainability.

Table 5: *Emerging Themes for Definitions of Coalition Sustainability*

| Emerging Themes | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | P8 | P9 | P10 | Total |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|
| In your own words, define the term coalition sustainability. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Must have a lead agency. | X | X | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Must have diverse funding. | X | X | | | | | X | | X | X | 5 |
| Must have active members | | X | | | | X | | X | | X | 4 |
| Must have a dedicated coordinator | | X | X | X | | | | | X | X | 5 |
| Must have members that are dedicated to mission and vision. | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | 6 |
| Must have members with sense of purpose | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | | | 6 |

Defining coalition sustainability was an important aspect to the participant interview due to the diverse understanding within literature, and the lack thereof, of what coalition sustainability actually means or looks like. Thus, each participant was asked for their own definition so to gain a greater understanding of different perspectives. There were several common factors identified in their definitions of coalition sustainability. After careful analysis, the definition of coalition sustainability among the research participants included four pillars that were essential in coalition sustainability, 1) dedicated leadership, 2) diverse funding sources, 3) commitment to uphold the mission, and 4) meaningful active involvement.

For the purpose of this research, participants provided the following definition of coalition sustainability:

“Coalition sustainability is having consistent dedicated leadership, diverse funding sources, active membership involved with meaningful activities that support the steadfast commitment to its mission.”

Participant 1 stated, “You have to have a lead agency that wants to keep it going and then you also have to have some kind of fiscal backing. If there is no funding, then there’s no sustainability.” In comparison, Participant 2 felt strongly that coalition sustainability demanded a dedicated leader and without it, it is almost impossible to succeed stating,

Coalition sustainability is truly one of the most difficult things, it’s almost impossible. The two things don’t compute. Coalitions are wonderful. It brings people together, brings communities together, but they are so siloed. Even though there’s a coalition and everybody comes together, they do things together, you have to have the income to support at least one person driving, leading people and helping them to keep things going and focused. It’s one thing to have a strong network, but it’s the financial part of it that is the biggest burden to keep it alive.

The belief in a common mission and vision was found to be essential to the sustainability of the coalition. Participant 3 stated, “Sustaining it means that the people in the coalition continue to meet, but also that they keep their mission and their vision there and continue to try to come up with additional and new growing approaches to addressing that vision.”

Committed teamwork was also found to be important by participants. Participant 5 stated, “The coalition sustains itself when there is a continued work as a team.” Participants felt strongly that the commitment of the members was the driving force of sustainability, not necessarily money or a specific agency. Participant 6 stated, “The coalition is a commitment of people from all different areas that work with the public to enhance the well-being of the community. Sustainability means that something will continue on, no matter who leaves or not.” Participant 7 added to this sentiment stating, “Sustainability is when the coalition has a purpose and drive and the people all believe in its mission.” Participant 8 clearly echoed this sentiment adding,

I think any coalition could survive without funding if they had that drive and that purpose from each of the participants. It certainly does help if you have some funding because it gives it more flexibility to do some of the things you think would be helpful. (Participant 8)

Participants seemed to agree to the importance of diverse funding and how it would provide dedicated leadership, however overwhelmingly felt that sustainability was more reliant on the people and the purpose. Without those two factors in play, funding would not matter.

Another important research finding included the accomplishments of the coalition that participants believed to be significant factors to its sustainability. There were three factors that were identified to be the most important, 1) maintaining member and community buy-in, 2) meeting goals and objectives to ensure successful outcomes, and 3)

Community buy-in was an important aspect to the coalition's accomplishments that was frequently addressed by participants. Participant 6 stated, "one of the greatest accomplishments is many of the original members are still involved and they still have buy-in...It says a lot." Participant 2 strongly reiterated the success of buy-in stating,

The biggest accomplishment has been the ability to keep the partners on board, keeping the different sectors represented. They actually collaborate through in-kind donations, contributing to the strategic plan, and they have a strong desire to still want to see the coalition grow even with all the different issues over the years.

Participants also agreed that the coalition has had many successful outcomes that contribute to their buy-in. Members experience success, and they come back for more. Participant 5 referenced multiple times throughout the interview, the success of the pill-drop initiatives and how it incorporated the volunteerism of several agencies and communities. The participant explained, "The coalition is a big resource to the community, so the people can utilize its services." Lastly, participants felt strongly the accomplishments could not have happened without the dedicated coalition coordinator position. Participant 2 added, "Coalitions must have dedicated leadership and a lead agency willing to make it all happen, and this coalition has been able to sustain the role, even after the funding has gone."

Table 7 highlights participant views of the challenges they perceive to be important, including what they feel is the most significant challenge. Findings included two important considerable challenges of the coalition, 1) the ability to maintain effective

coalition leadership that can sustain the momentum while strengthening key relationships, and 2) maintaining consistent involvement of key leaders, or decision-makers within the partner agencies. Therefore, the very accomplishments highlighted in Table 6 are also the greatest of challenges to the coalition.

Table 7: *Emerging themes for Coalition Challenges*

| Emerging Themes | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | P8 | P9 | P10 | Total |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|
| Describe the challenges of the coalition as it relates to coalition sustainability. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Effective fundraising approaches. | X | | X | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Sustaining momentum | | | | X | X | X | | | X | | 4 |
| Sustain a dedicated coordinator | | X | X | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Recruitment of and retaining members | | | | | | | X | | X | | 2 |
| What is the most significant challenge of the coalition? | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dedicated and effective leadership | | X | X | | | | X | | | | 3 |
| Sustained involvement of key leaders | | X | X | | | | | | | | 2 |

Table 8 highlights participant views of the coalition strengths perceived to be important, including the most significant strength. Findings revealed four coalition strengths that participants identified as important factors that contributed to its sustainability.

1) The willingness and readiness of the community and coalition members to participate and collaborate for the mutual benefit of not only partner agencies' individual initiatives, but also for the benefit of the whole community,

2) Recognizing the deep multi-generational roots residents have geographically and historically within their community,

3) Recognizing the significance of the culture of rural poverty and how it effects the sense of connection and strength of relationships among the people, who reside in the community,

4) The significant support the coalition has of key leaders who are consistently and effectively serve as “champions for the cause” of the coalition.

Table 8: *Emerging Themes for Coalition Strengths*

| Emerging Themes | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | P8 | P9 | P10 | Total |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|
| What strengths are present with the community that enables the coalition be sustainable? | | | | | | | | | | | |
| The willingness of the community and coalition members to participate and collaborate. | X | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | | 8 |
| Strong community connection and loyalty to one another; deep roots. | | | X | X | X | X | | X | | X | 6 |
| Of the strengths identified, what is the most significant strength? | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Effective Champions Significant key leader support | X | | X | X | | | | X | | X | 5 |

Table 9 highlights participant views of coalition risks they perceive to be important, including what they feel is the most significant risk. Findings exposed three significant risks that participants felt were clear and present dangers to the coalition's sustainability.

First, the culture of rural poverty can have a positive and negative effect on coalition sustainability. Participants felt that poverty is often thought to be the weakest part of a community culture, though it can also be a benefit, as people tend to come out in droves to help one another in crisis. Participants felt that it could also be a significant risk in that it can contribute to a lack of belief that things can actually change and get better. Several participants referenced the culture of rural poverty as the most significant challenge and strength. Participant 7 expounded on this topic stating,

If you think about it, it has to do with relationships. We rely on each other and it creates resiliency. I grew up in poverty myself and always thought I've just helped myself come out of that, I knew what I wanted and I strove for it and got it. Not everybody can do that. So when you talk about the culture of poverty, it's important for people to understand how people think and why they do what they do. Many are one paycheck away from becoming stuck and not knowing whom they can go to, but in our county, we have strength in the relationships. We work to promote the idea that even in our poverty we are strong because we have one another. It is a strange dichotomy like the culture of poverty and being the greatest need is our greatest strength because we have one another. And the

coalition steps into the gap, strengthening connections to the community amidst the culture of rural poverty. (Participant 7)

Participant 8 and 10 shared their concerns about the connection between poverty and the sense of hopelessness and how that can influence behaviors that would mirror the sentiment. The risk to the coalition sustainability would be the perceptions of the success of program outcomes and ultimately perceived value to the community. Second, economic development and declining population was a significant concern, as more people and organizations have fewer financial resources available for vital programs and initiatives. However, Participant 4 noted the different perceptions about the economy and expressed frustration over the negativity that can show up at times stating,

There's just a weird negative stigma that a lot of people have in the community, thinking it's never going to get better, everything is closed in, all the jobs are gone. 'It used to be this and it used be that,' It is like yesteryear was this amazing place. But I don't know, I see businesses opening all the time and new people arriving. And I don't say that it's happening in droves, but it's not like it's drying up and there's nothing happening. I mean people are like 'there's nothing to do here.' Really? Well then let me give you some of my stuff to do. I got a lot of stuff to do, you know? So I mean, there's a lot of naysayers. (Participant 4)

Third, participants had a common sentiment that there were significant disparities in communities hard to reach, meaning the coalition has a large segment of the target population that live in areas that are extremely isolated, making it difficult to increase accessibility to vital resources. Participant 7 stressed how vast the community was, the

geography alone creates difficulty with transportation and access to services stating, “Our County is just so vast, I literally go from one end of the camp to the other and it’s an hour and half drive between the two. It can be very inconvenient. You still have a lot of people way out.” Participant 10 compared the lack of awareness of the coalition within the outlying communities to the level of support for its continuation of programs in the future stating,

I think a lot of the accomplishments flies under the radar which could mean keeping people invested and supporting the actions of the coalition. I mean if you don’t know what something is, you don’t care about it. (Participant 10)

Table 9: *Emerging Themes for Coalition Risks*

| Emerging Themes | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | P8 | P9 | P10 | Total |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|
| What risks are present in the community that limits coalition sustainability? | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lack of awareness of the coalition within the larger community. | | X | | | | | | | | X | 2 |
| Culture of Rural Poverty Segments within the community that cannot be reached. | | | | X | | X | X | X | | X | 5 |
| Loss of funding for a coordinator | | | X | | | | | | X | | 2 |
| Lack of funding for programming | | | X | | X | | | | | | 2 |
| Of the risks identified, which is the greatest risk? | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Economic development | X | | | | | X | X | | | | 3 |
| Declining population | X | | | | | X | | | | | 2 |

Findings for Community Value

The fifth category identified from the data analysis is Community Value. Questions in this category established what the participant perceived to be the cost/benefit of the coalition as individual members, as representatives of partner organizations, and as a community. Participants were also asked to describe what they felt the perceptions of the community were towards the coalition and the change over time.

Findings consisted of two significant factors that contributed to a member's sense of value being associated with the coalition, 1) members benefit from program outreach and receive support from partner agencies, and 2) members benefit from shared knowledge, resources, and data, increasing their personal and professional development.

Findings also showed partner agencies had strong opinions about the cost/benefit of being involved with the coalition. First, partner agencies experience a significant increase in cost effectiveness of delivering programs and services due to an increase in collaborative efforts. Duplication of programs is greatly reduced among partner agencies and the consensus is that the outreach is more expansive and effective as human and material resources are then shared among one another. Second, program outcomes are much more likely to be successful as partner agencies support one another with initiatives where there is a common mission. Third, partner agencies receive significant benefit in the development of new relationships and the strengthening of long-standing partnerships. This dynamic contributes to an overall sense of meaningful connection not only with one another, but also with the community at-large.

Lastly, the findings for the benefit to the community have been most remarkable as participants illuminated two major benefits of the coalition. First, the sheer number of community activities has increased dramatically, contributing to an increase in awareness to a problem, changing perceptions of a problem, which ultimately can effect attitudes and behaviors, leading to population behavior change. Participants felt strongly that population behavior change they have observed, especially when delivering prevention strategies to the community through coalition-based projects, contributes to a better quality of life for individuals, families, and communities. Therefore, participants asserted the coalition is linked to increasing the quality of life to those it serves, the ultimate benefit of the coalition to the community.

The findings also highlight one significant cost to the members and partner agencies, and that was time, personal and professional. Participants all agreed that time to attend meetings, volunteer with collaborative community-based activities, and time to mentor and develop key relationships was the most significant requirement. Participants all expressed their own tendency to feel stressed in their activities with the coalition, as well as their own responsibilities to their place of employment and the projects on their own desks, as well as the commitments they have at home with family and friends. However, despite their acknowledgement of the stressed time commitments and at times competing responsibilities, not one participant felt that it was not worth it to be a part of the coalition. Not one participant felt they wanted to leave or reduce their donated time.

Finally, the participants all felt that the cost to the community was minimal at best. The coalition had provided incredibly valuable benefits with miniscule cost to the

community, if anything at all. Essentially, the community members consistently come out as the winners, because the coalition members have such a strong buy-in to the mission and vision, and an incredibly strong connection with one another, that the community only sees the positive outcomes. Participants felt that the coalition was so effective in delivering outcomes to the community, that the community was on the receiving end of something very special and oftentimes even were oblivious in a sense to those benefits, yet their quality of life had been improved because of the coalition. This was a significant finding, considering that the participants were representatives of different agencies that are not reimbursed financially for their involvement. The findings indicate the members and community sense of value on many different levels was exceptional and quite remarkable.

Table 10: *Emerging Themes of Cost/Benefit to Members, Partner Agencies, and Community*

| Emerging Themes | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | P8 | P9 | P10 | Total |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|
| Describe what you perceive to be the cost/benefit of the coalition to individual members. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Shared outcomes | | | | X | | X | | | | | 2 |
| Greater program reach. | X | | | X | X | X | | X | | X | 6 |
| Support from partner agencies. | X | | X | X | X | X | | | | X | 6 |
| Shared knowledge, resources, and data. | | X | X | X | | X | | X | | X | 6 |
| How has the coalition been helpful to your organization? | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Shared responsibility | | | | | | X | X | X | | X | 4 |
| Access to credible and reliable data | | X | X | X | | | | X | X | | 5 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| used planning and reporting | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Increased credibility within the community. | X | | | | | | | X | | 2 | |
| Increased understanding of community needs. | X | | | | | X | X | X | | 4 | |
| Cost effective outreach with shared resources and mission. | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 8 | |
| Successful outcomes because of the support generated from members. | | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | 6 | |
| Strengthened relationships internally and externally | | | X | | X | X | X | X | X | 6 | |
| Personal satisfaction for meaningful projects and professional credibility. | | | | X | X | X | X | | X | 5 | |
| <hr/> | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Describe what you perceive to be the cost/benefit of the coalition to the community. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Reduced community risks | | | | X | | | | X | X | X | 4 |
| Increased awareness and education | X | X | X | | | | X | X | X | X | 7 |
| Increased information about available resources and events | X | | | X | | X | X | X | X | 6 | |
| Access to reliable and credible data | X | | | | | X | | | X | 2 | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coalition is seen as a resource for educational programs. | X | | | X | | X | X | | 4 |
| Perception varies depending on level of awareness of issues and its presence in community. | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | 7 |
| How have community perceptions of the coalition changed over time? | | | | | | | | | |
| Greater awareness of the coalition's resources it offers and helpfulness to the community. | X | | X | X | | X | X | X | 7 |
| Perceptions change depending upon if the coalition has helped directly or not. | X | X | | | | | | X | 3 |
| Greater awareness of issues through community education | | X | | | | X | X | X | 4 |

Findings for Diverse Funding

The sixth category identified from the data analysis is Diverse Funding. Questions in this category, and reported in Table 12, establishes participant's level of understanding of funding streams of the coalition and its effect within the coalition and broader community.

Findings indicated that the majority of the participants either had a moderate to extensive knowledge of the coalition's funding streams, and the other third had minimal understanding of how the coalition has been funded historically, and how it is operating

now. Though most could deduce that historically the funding was through a federal grant, several were not aware of the extent of contribution that the lead agency had to the overall success of the coalition.

All participants had a strong understanding of the impact of the funding for the coalition. First, participants surmised that past federal funding was responsible for funding the coalition coordinator, all agreeing it was the most important impact on the sustainability of the coalition. Second, participants understood that funding helped to supply major media campaigns, utilizing radio, print, and social media. Third, participants all felt that funding was vital to be able to conduct Risk and Protective Factor surveys, as well as other data collection efforts. Participants agreed as to the importance of the data for major funding opportunities for their own agencies, as well as its ability to increase grant competitiveness for future grant opportunities.

Lastly, participants felt strongly that past funding has provided the impetus to continue member involvement in the coalition, as the benefit is in sharing resources among partner agencies. With past federal funding, the coalition has been successful in building a sense of connection and leadership, as participants see the potential of financial benefit, not so by actual monies, but more by collaborative efforts. Therefore, participants all acknowledged the significant in-kind donations that have resulted and the success that ultimately supported the mission of the coalition to the benefit of partner agencies and the community at-large.

Findings exposed one significant concern and that was the lack of awareness among participants of the role and specific contributions of the lead agency. Several

participants were unaware of the lead agency's significant financial investment made to the coalition efforts, and to the benefit of all partner agencies and their successes. The financial cost to the lead agency is compelling, as financial resources of the independent agency are often directed toward the coalition, despite the federal grant that once supplied most funding for the activities of the coalition and its partner agencies has expired.

Table 12: *Emerging Themes for Diverse Funding*

| Emerging Themes | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | P8 | P9 | P10 | Total |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|
| <u>Describe type of funding the coalition has actively pursued and obtained.</u> | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Federal Grants | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 10 |
| State Grants | X | X | X | | X | | X | | X | | 6 |
| Foundation Grants | X | | X | | | X | | X | | | 4 |
| Local Grants | X | X | X | | X | | X | | | | 5 |
| In-kind Donations | X | X | X | | X | | X | | | | 5 |
| <u>Assessing the level of knowledge of funding streams.</u> | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Minimal knowledge of funding streams. (Could not recall source of grant that funded coalition.) | | | | X | | | | X | | X | 3 |
| Moderate knowledge of funding streams. (Could identify some information about coalition funding sources.) | | | | | X | X | | | | | 2 |
| Extensive knowledge of funding streams. (able to identify all sources of funding) | X | X | X | | | | X | | X | | 5 |
| <u>What has been the impact of funding on the coalition?</u> | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Funded the ability to build the coalition via the Lead Agency. | X | X | X | | | | | | | 3 |
| Provides guidance and oversight of grants. | X | X | X | | | | | | | 3 |
| Funded dedicated coordinator position | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 9 |
| Increased opportunities to serve community | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | 8 |
| Funded Risk and Protective Factor Surveys vital for school and agency planning | X | X | X | | | | X | | X | 5 |
| Increased collaborative efforts for strategic planning; Shared initiatives in budgets. | X | X | X | | X | | X | | | 5 |
| What has been the impact of the funding on the community? | | | | | | | | | | |
| Funded major media campaigns resulting in community education | X | X | X | X | X | | | | | 5 |
| Funded programs and initiatives resulting in community access to services | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 9 |
| Printed resources and give-a-ways to community events | X | X | | | | | X | | X | 4 |
| Shared facilities | X | X | | | | | X | | X | 4 |

Findings for Coalition Leadership

The seventh and final category identified from the data analysis is Coalition Leadership. Questions in this category, and reported in Table 13, establishes participant's level of understanding of the coalition leadership structure. Participants identified the strengths and challenges that contributed to the coalition's sustainability, and what they felt were the most significant of each.

Findings indicated that the participants were all highly informed and aware of how the coalition is structured. Participants identified the lead agency, key leader advisory board, the coalition coordinator, and subcommittees as the most important components of the coalition. The majority of participants were not aware there was a coalition director that had the responsibility to oversee the administrative aspects of the coalition. The director position oversees funding, contracts for vendors, serves to inform state-level policy advocacy, strengthening relationships with key decision-makers, garnering financial support with major donors, and implementing the highly coveted Risk and Protective Factor surveys conducted within 12 school districts in the county.

Findings identified several strengths in coalition leadership that participants felt contributed coalition sustainability. First, participants expressed their satisfaction that the coalition has been successful in maintaining dedicated coalition coordinators long-term. Participants acknowledged the contributions of the coordinator responsible for the development, providing direction, and maintaining the momentum of the coalition over a long period. Participant's also acknowledged the efforts of the lead agency to sustain the coordinator position, understanding its significance to the sustainability of the coalition.

Second, the coalition has a strong committed and diverse representation of key leaders, who contribute with their own time, money, and agency resources so that the coalition can have successful outcomes. Lastly, the coalition is comprised of supportive and motivated community members who are willing to volunteer significant time to coalition and community-based programs.

Findings exposed two major challenges with coalition leadership that could negatively affect coalition sustainability, 1) the continued challenges of finding funding for a dedicated coalition coordinator position and 2) the high turnover rate that is encroaching as long-term key leaders are retiring from their positions in the partner agencies, and new agency leadership is taking their place. Oftentimes, the new leadership is unaware of the coalition, or the level of participation the agency had in the development and execution of coalition programs and resources.

Table 13: *Emerging Themes for Coalition Leadership*

| Emerging Themes | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | P8 | P9 | P10 | Total |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|
| <u>Define the structure of leadership that exists within the coalition.</u> | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lead Agency | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 10 |
| Key leaders | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 10 |
| Coalition Director | | X | X | | | | X | | | | 3 |
| Coalition Coordinator | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 10 |
| Subcommittees | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 10 |
| Community volunteers | | X | X | | | | X | X | | | 4 |
| <u>Assessment of level of understanding or awareness of coalition leadership structure</u> | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Minimal | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Moderate | | | | | X | | | X | | X | 3 |
| Extensive | X | X | X | | | X | X | | X | | 6 |
| <u>What strengths of the current leadership structure affect coalition sustainability?</u> | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Maintains coalition coordinator position | X | X | | X | X | X | | X | 6 | |
| Strong support from key leaders | X | | X | | X | X | | X | 6 | |
| Dedicated members and champions of the cause | | | | X | X | X | X | X | 5 | |
| <hr/> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Of the strengths identified, what is the most important strength? | | | | | | | | | | |
| Positive attitudes among members increasing credibility | | X | | | | | X | X | X | 4 |
| Dedicated passionate coordinator | | | X | X | X | | | X | | 4 |
| <hr/> | | | | | | | | | | |
| What challenges exist with the current leadership structure that affect coalition sustainability? | | | | | | | | | | |
| Maintaining a dedicated coordinator position. | X | X | X | | | | X | X | X | 6 |
| Turn-over; replacement of outgoing key leaders | | X | X | | | | X | | X | 4 |
| <hr/> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Of the challenges identified, what is the most significant challenge? | | | | | | | | | | |
| Funding for coordinator position | X | X | X | X | X | | | X | | 6 |
| Turnover of key leaders and members | | | X | | | | | X | | 2 |

Table 14 highlights the emerging themes of other elements not previously discussed that helped to ensure coalition sustainability. Two significant findings permeated throughout participant answers across several different categories. First,

participants felt strongly that efforts in recruitment of new memberships were vital.

Moreover, the need to nurture and protect established relationships among the key leaders was most imperative to the coalition's sustainability. Eight out of 10 participants stated their concerns about the Key Leader Advisory Board no longer meeting, in fact has not met in well over a year. Participants suggested that this was a major oversight and one that places the coalition at severe risk long-term. Participant 9 stated,

We need to make sure that key leaders are meeting on a regular basis. We definitely need to increase our meetings among key leaders. I don't even remember the last one, so yes, we need to keep everyone motivated and keep it fresh and just to make sure that we don't get complacent. (Participant 9)

Several participants expressed their desire to reconvene the Key Leader Advisory Board to strengthen the relationships among key leaders and the coalition as a whole, as well as continue the strategic planning process, renew commitments to recruit new members, and secure future funding for a full-time coalition coordinator position.

Finally, findings revealed that participants overwhelmingly agreed the need to explore creative ways to increase the level of awareness of the coalition to the greater community. Participants suggested that this would ultimately contribute to the coalition sustainability as community-buy in was of the utmost importance to ensuring its longevity.

Table 14: *Emerging Themes for Other Elements Important to Coalition Sustainability*

| Emerging Themes | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | P8 | P9 | P10 | Total |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-------|
| Describe any other factors that have not been previously addressed in this interview that you feel contribute to coalition sustainability? | | | | | | | | | | | |
| The effect of politics on policy changes effecting prevention strategies | X | | X | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Quality orientation for new member and key leaders for recruitment and retaining committed members. | | | X | | | | X | | X | | 3 |
| Maintaining a strong key leader advisory board | | | X | X | | X | | | X | X | 5 |
| Exploring creative ways of increasing the awareness of the coalition to the greater community. | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | 10 |

Summary

The presentation of the findings of the research question included results within each of the seven categories relevant to coalition sustainability. These findings created comprehensive and informative insights that provide a deeper understanding into the elements that contribute to coalition sustainability after federal funding has been expended. After completing a rigorous analysis of participant interviews, thematic patterns emerged from the data that complemented the previous peer-reviewed research

within academic literature documented in Chapter 2. It is from these findings that fresh viewpoints were identified and older concepts were either challenged or supported.

Chapter 5 presents the integration, synthesis and evaluation of findings related to the research question. The chapter concludes with the study significance, its implications to the field of study as well as recommendations for further research.

Chapter 5: Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore the elements of coalition sustainability after federal funding is expended. The nature of the study was a qualitative research case study designed around the framework of the community coalition action theory (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2002). I collected data through semiformal interviews including a robust interactive discussion with members and key leaders of a community coalition. I conducted the research to create a more comprehensive understanding of the contributing factors necessary to ensure that community coalitions are able to achieve their mission, despite the challenges of significantly reduced funding. The findings are associated with seven major categories of coalition sustainability. They include (a) a common mission, (b) relationships, (c) a strategic planning process, (d) sustainability, (e) community value, (f) diverse funding, and (g) leadership.

Interpretation of the Findings

The interpretation of the findings confirm the knowledge in the literature that community coalition sustainability after federal funding is expended is dependent upon several factors, all working together (Butterfoss, 2009; Shediak-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998; NORC, 2011; Feighery, E., Rogers, T., 1989; Feinberg, M. E., Bontempo, D. E., & Greenberg, M. T., 2008; Gloppen, 2012; Johnson, K., Hays, C., & Daley, C. 2004). All are interrelated to varying degrees depending upon the strength of the foundation of the organization and its functionality within the community context (Butterfoss, 2007). Coalition sustainability incorporates an array of ideas and variables from formational challenges and institutional barriers to interpersonal dynamics, all within interesting and

unique community contexts (Butterfoss, 2007). This study extends the knowledge of the complex factors that determine community coalition sustainability by providing a synthesis of personal insights from coalition member experiences, their knowledge and education, and the extraordinary service and dedication to a meaningful cause.

Extension of Knowledge

I found no previous qualitative study that addressed community coalition sustainability after federal funding is expended. There are several studies about coalition building and its effectiveness in delivering programs or reducing risks in community and public health (e.g., Chinman, M., et al., 2005; Gloppen, K. M., Arthur, M. W., Hawkins, J. D., & Shapiro, V. B., 2012; Hawkins, D. J., Catalano, R. F., & Kuklinski, M. R., 2011). Several quantitative studies address certain elements of sustainability through a specific type of program or framework (see Feinberg, M., Greenberg, M., & Osgood, S., 2007; Gomez, B.J., Greenberg, M. T., & Feinberg, M. E., 2005; Hawkins, D. J., Catalano, R. F., & Kuklinski, M. R., 2011). There are studies that address one particular element such as community buy-in, strategic planning, or leadership (e.g., NORC, 2011; Feighery, E., Rogers, T., 1989; Feinberg, M. E., Bontempo, D. E., & Greenberg, M. T., 2008; Gloppen, 2012; Johnson, K., Hays, C., & Daley, C. 2004; Shediak-Rizkallah and Bone, 1998); however, in these studies, there is only speculation about what could be factors to sustainability as opposed to actual evidence. Hawkins and Catalano (1985) studied the community factors that lead to juvenile delinquency, producing the social development model that spawned the creation of the CTC framework that is still used today. However, Hawkins and Catalano did not include specifics about how to sustain a

coalition; rather, it is inferred. Butterfoss in his CCAT described particular elements needed to form, maintain, and institutionalize a coalition, preparing it for sustainability (Butterfoss, 2007). However, his research lacks specifics on community coalition sustainability after federal funding is expended. Butterfoss' work is important and groundbreaking as it has provided a solid foundation for future study in community coalition sustainability.

Collective research of coalition sustainability is sparse and limited. The reason for those limitations is that the field of study is still relatively new; only within the past 20 years has coalition building come to the forefront of government funding strategies. Community grassroots movements are still learning the science behind not only the formation of a coalition, but how to sustain it when resources are limited for the continuation of programs (Butterfoss, 2007). It is here that this research not only confirms what has been theorized but also extends knowledge of the science behind the elements that are vital to the lifespan of a coalition.

The study extends knowledge in the field in several ways. First, it provides solid evidentiary support for the speculations and inferences made in previous research about what elements could lead to coalition sustainability. This is informative to researchers and practitioners in the field who want to either study the science of coalition sustainability or want to duplicate the strategies within another coalition to ensure longevity. Second, it provides specific observations concerning the dynamics present within a successful coalition, its membership, and the relationship it has in a rural community. Coalition sustainability within a rural community has not been studied, based

on my review of the literature, and this research may provide a foundation to work from as the participants provided feedback in the context of a rural community. Third, it synthesizes the literature that connects particular elements thought to be contributors to sustainability of programs to the bigger picture of a full coalition and its relationship with its members and community.

The extension of knowledge of this research is detailed in the following assertions made in the interpretation of findings, the comprehensive analysis, and the discussion that follows:

- The belief in a common mission and vision is the foundation for the development and sustainability of a community coalition.
- Maintaining strong positive interrelationships within the coalition membership and the community it serves is essential if community coalitions expect to thrive long-term when resources become depleted.
- Strategic planning processes are essential to the structure and function of the coalition leadership and membership, while guiding the coalition towards its ultimate mission.
- Sustainability is enhanced when there is continued monitoring and evaluation of the coalition's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and risks that will ensure the coalition functions well with strategies that will move the coalition forward.

- Community value is strengthened with the provision of consistent and effective programs and services to its members and the community at large to ensure that the benefits outweigh the costs.
- Securing diverse funding streams is vital to sustainability to include grants from federal, state, local, and private funding sources, as well as in-kind donations to fund the position of a coalition coordinator, ensuring the continuation of essential services and programs, and to maintain an elevated awareness of the coalition in the target community.
- An effective leadership structure requires a strong commitment of a lead agency, a dedicated coordinator position, and vested key leaders that are champions of the cause to ensure a thriving and engaged membership.

Analysis

The findings are congruent with the conceptual and theoretical frameworks detailed in this study addressing the elements of community coalition sustainability after federal funding is expended. The analysis confirms or extends the knowledge within the field of study, connecting the findings to the previous research. The final analysis is based upon research participant interviews, coupled with previous research that resulted in the following contributions to the field of study of community coalition sustainability:

The belief in a common mission and vision is the foundation for the development and sustainability of a community coalition. The interpretation of the findings confirmed in literature that coalition members share belief in a common mission, and as long as there remains a common mission and vision, the coalition has a higher

probability of sustainability (Alexander, 2003; Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Zakocs & Edwards, 2006). Circumstances within the community or family, or as an individual, either past or present, produce a reason to become committed and involved in a community coalition. Analysis of data indicate that the common mission is what keeps the coalition together, and, without this factor, it is highly unlikely the coalition could achieve sustainability long-term. The common mission is the result of shared interests among coalition members. Members want to work alongside those who desire quality outreach efforts into the community they love.

Shared data, shared leadership, and shared resources can be a result of people who believe in a common mission and often strive harder together to achieve their goals. Members desire to connect with people who are like-minded, and when that happens can create more opportunities for meaningful activities and strengthened connections over time.

Maintaining strong positive interrelationships within the coalition membership and the community it serves is essential if community coalitions expect to thrive long-term when resources become depleted. The interpretation of findings confirms within the literature the importance of positive interpersonal relationships among coalition members to ensure sustainability (Butterfoss et al., 1996; Foster-Fisherman et al., 2001; Leviton, 2006; Rog, 2004). Positive relationships often produce positive effects, which includes effective communication. When people communicate and work together well, it builds trust and nurtures new friendships. When coalition members see themselves as friends or as a family, and members of a team, they are more than

likely to provide mutual support not only individually but as collaborative partner agencies. Productive interpersonal relationships become a mandate to promote community coalition sustainability (Foster-Fisherman et al., 2001).

The interpretation of findings extends the knowledge in literature as it creates a clear picture of the reciprocity of commitment and trust built between members and the community over time. First, it is necessary for consistent and frequent meeting attendance for members and key leaders. The more involvement and higher participation levels, the more likely that members and community stakeholders have a sense of ownership vital to the sustainability of the coalition. Second, strong healthy relationships within a coalition produce more visibility within a community, as programs and initiatives are more than likely to be successful. People who work well together and are teammates tend to share resources and all participants desire to see a successful outcome. Successful outcomes tend to be more visible to the community, especially if key leaders are at the forefront in delivering goods and services. Third, the transaction that is created between members and the community can create a sense of mutual benefit, as it can increase collaborative projects independently of the coalition, as well as bring people together that would not have otherwise been connected.

Strategic planning processes are essential to the structure and function of the coalition leadership and membership, while guiding the coalition towards its ultimate mission. The interpretation of findings confirm within the literature the importance of coalitions to utilize effective strategic planning processes that help form and maintain coalitions to ensure sustainability. Using data-driven strategies, building

capacity of a strong committed membership, and building an effective board all are elements that help guide the coalition toward sustainability (Butterfoss, 2007; Edwards, 2007; Feinberg, 2008; Leviton, 2006; Rog, 2004). The strategic planning process helps to guide planning strategies to address a problem while informing the members and community of vital issues to build awareness and community readiness. The success in sustaining the coalition depends upon utilization of a strategic plan, an essential map, to help determine what activities were best to address community needs and the steps to move those strategies into implementation.

The interpretation of the findings extends the knowledge of the literature by providing a clear understanding of what is required from members. An effective membership is highly involved in all stages of planning, development, and execution of the strategic plan. Coalition sustainability is achieved when members, especially key leaders are fully engaged with interacting with the data, contributing to the decisions in developing the strategies, as well as fully participating on the front lines of the execution of the plan.

The benefits and results are significant as higher participation levels in the strategic planning processes can produce greater expansion of services in the community, more optimal and successful results of programming, and increased opportunities for future collaboration. Furthermore, the more success in production supported by its members guided by the strategic plan, the more competitive the coalition becomes in securing future grant awards. The same effect is produced among partner agencies

independently of the coalition as collaboration with the coalition could increase chances for partner agencies to secure vital funding.

Sustainability is enhanced when there is continued monitoring and evaluation of the coalition's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and risks that will ensure the coalition functions well with strategies that will move the coalition forward. The interpretation of findings extends the knowledge in literature that sustainability evaluation is an essential key predictor for coalition sustainability and is influenced by many variables (Alexander, et al., 2003; Brown, Feinberg, & Greenberg, 2012; Feinberg, Bontempo, & Greenberg, 2008; Friedman & Wicklund, 2006; Johnson et al., 2004). Research participants revealed deep-seeded insights about the barriers to sustainability, such as historical and geographical contexts within the community and its association with the culture of rural poverty. Participants were particularly concerned with economic instability within rural communities, moreover the effect of volatile political and economic environments and its influence on the coalition's programs and service deliverables. This influence is not just relating to money, but also how state and federal government representatives use the political rhetoric to inform policy, which is often associated with types of grant funding made available.

Community value is strengthened with the provision of consistent and effective programs and services to its members and the community at large to ensure that the benefits outweigh the costs. The interpretation of the findings confirms the literature asserting community value is associated with successful outcomes and the overall community buy-in, moreover how it influences greater key leader involvement to

the coalition (Butterfoss et al., 1996; Chinman & Wandersman, 1999; Florin, Mitchell, Stevenson, & Klein, 2000; Foster & Fishman et al., 2001; Scheirer, 2005; Sofaer, 2004; Swerissen and Crisp, 2004). There is power in the longevity of a coalition, its consistent presence within the community, along with its ability to deliver quality programs. It is paramount to community buy-in, moreover, it has the potential to directly affect membership participation rates. Members want to see success and that is how they value their time and money, the more successful programs; the more likelihood that members and community volunteers would remain invested in the coalition efforts. Time is the greatest challenge and the greatest cost due to competing interests and reduced resources. However if the coalition could produce greater benefit with positive outcomes on various fronts, those costs would be considered inconsequential compared to the meaningful purpose and the outcomes that follow.

Securing diverse funding streams is vital to sustainability to include grants from federal, state, local, and private funding sources, as well as in-kind donations to fund the position of a coalition coordinator, continuation of essential services and programs, and to maintain an elevated awareness of the coalition in the target community. The interpretation of the findings confirms the assertions in the literature that diverse funding streams are essential to sustainability and that evaluation of outcomes and processes can strengthen financial accountability (Butterfoss, 2007; Butterfoss & Kegler, 2009; Chavis, D. M., 2001; Webber, J., & Karlstrom, M., 2009). Diverse funding sources help to ensure program and organizational longevity. Continuity of funding ensures the continuation of programs and services, which can be evidence of

reliability and credibility to funders. When one source of funding is expended, it does not necessarily mean that the coalition or its programs end, but can provide the impetus to compete more effectively. This is a delicate balance between funding, outcome, and perceived value among community and coalition members, as well as funding agencies, and can help to support the coalition's ongoing efforts to serve the community.

The interpretation of the findings also extends the knowledge in literature by asserting diverse funding sources play a vital role in securing and maintaining a dedicated coordinator position to support coalition strategies. Funding to support the position of a dedicated leader ensures greater outcomes, which can increase the competitiveness to receive future grant awards.

An effective leadership structure requires a strong commitment of a lead agency, a dedicated coordinator position, and vested key leaders that are champions of the cause to ensure a thriving and engaged membership. The interpretations of the findings confirm that an effective leadership structure and qualified leadership pool is key to sustainability of a community coalition (Alexander et al., 2006; Butterfoss, 2007; Feinberg, 2008; Foster-Fisherman et al., 2001; Kumpher et al., 1993; Mancini & Marek, 2004; Rog, 2004). A strong leadership structure includes skilled professionals working alongside community members, while culturally representing those served. Key leaders, along with a dedicated coordinator and a lead agency can be the difference between a defunct coalition and one that thrives and expands. Leaders keep the momentum and hold the member and public's trust as important programs and services are introduced and placed in a community.

It is imperative that coalition leaders address the potential for high turnover as key leaders retire and are replaced. A strong leadership structure requires consistent recruitment and orientation of new key leaders within the community. Key leaders within the coalition are essential champions of the cause and are the bridge to growth and sustainability. To sustain a community coalition it is imperative that strong relationships are nurtured so that Key leaders stay active. The more that key leaders are involved, informed, and connected, their commitment to the coalition will thrive. Key leaders facilitate meaningful and informative meetings that address the common mission, provide opportunities for professional development, and lead and promote the work and successes of partner agencies within the community. This helps to ensure there is a mutual benefit between key leaders, the members, and the community at-large so that community coalition sustainability after federal funding is expended, can be more readily achieved.

Lastly, a lead agency is highly beneficial in overseeing the financial and administrative responsibilities of a community coalition. Funding agencies and federal rules require strict oversight of funding practices, program monitoring and evaluation activities, community and program assessments, and mandated reporting to meet federal requirements. The responsibility is significant when considering the limitations of partner agencies and individual members. Lead agencies provide the organizational structure that can help support the coalition if, and when funding is expended or significantly reduced.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study are recognizing the many variables that contribute to sustainability of a community coalition and the unique perspectives and experiences

presented during the interview, may not be present later. Circumstances present at the time of the research can change as funding is secured or not, member engagement is thriving for some and for others declining, and coalition activity is vibrant or subdued for various reasons. People and attitudes change over time, perceptions evolve, and money comes and goes. Other limitations that were predicted did not emerge, as all participants that were invited were able to take part in the interviews with no barriers to involvement with the research.

Recommendations

Further research should be conducted of the unique aspects of rural communities and coalition development and sustainability. The setting of this research was in a sparsely populated rural community, with high poverty rates, health provider shortages, limited resources, and a plethora of community risks associated with various socio-economic disparities. One interesting topic discussed by the participants in particular was the culture of rural poverty and its impact on the sustainability of a community coalition.

Another recommendation is to continue to identify emerging technologies that can assist coalitions in their efforts to build awareness of its existence in more isolated communities, monitor and evaluate sustainability initiatives, as well as deliver effective programs in communities that have significant barriers. Many rural communities, even in the 21st century do not have internet access, or sufficient public transportation, which presents a formidable problem when trying to provide effective community outreach activities.

Lastly, the recommendation is the need to develop more effective models and tools to assist coalition members and key leaders to navigate through the barriers and challenges of coalition sustainability. These tools would be specific to various communities, such as urban and rural, or coastal and native lands. Each type of geographic area produces unique challenges that require specific strategies for a more targeted approach.

Implications

Community coalition sustainability is a vital component in local communities that help to ensure the provision of vital programs and services to individuals in need. The potential impact for social change is promoting efforts to provide education and build skills for coalition leadership and members to enhance sustainability planning and development. This can help to ensure the coalition maintains its presence in the community while strengthening relationships among partner agencies and community stakeholders.

Another potential impact for social change is creating awareness among stakeholders, elected leaders, and policymakers, of the inherent value a coalition brings to its community. Sustainable coalitions help to improve service delivery, increase community connection and readiness, and even decrease risk factors that contribute to community problems.

Lastly, even within a volatile political and economic arena on the federal and state level, understanding the elements that contribute to coalition sustainability can help coalition members advocate for specific funding for a dedicated coalition coordinator

position. As members become more versed in diverse funding streams and its relationship to coalition sustainability, advocacy efforts may be more effective in influencing policymakers to include funding for vital leadership positions for community-based coalitions, paving the way for greater long-term impact within local communities.

Conclusions

Community coalitions continue to be an effective vehicle for community and social change, which means coalition sustainability is essential to continue the progress made within communities of need. In this study, I presented a synthesis of literature addressing the elements of coalition sustainability, and those factors that contribute to its lifespan even after federal funding is expended. Using the community coalition action theory model (Butterfoss, 2007) as my guide, along with previous research addressing the topic, seven categories emerged as foundational pillars of coalition sustainability. Participants provided greater insight into these categories through their personal and professional experiences working with a community coalition.

Research findings provided an interesting story about how a coalition sustains itself when federal funding is no longer available. Participants confirmed the importance of the belief in a common mission (Alexander, 2003; Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Zakocs & Edwards, 2006), maintaining positive relationships (Butterfoss et al., 1996; Foster-Fisherman et al., 2001; Leviton, 2006; Rog, 2004), and the significance of using a strategic planning process to guide the coalition (Butterfoss, 2007; Edwards, 2007; Feinberg, 2008; Leviton, 2006; Rog, 2004). This research also addressed the importance of monitoring and evaluating coalition strengths, weaknesses, risks, and opportunities

that directly affect the potential of sustainability, as well as elements such as community buy-in and its relationship to effective outcomes (Alexander, et al., 2003; Brown, Feinberg, & Greenberg, 2012; Feinberg, Bontempo, & Greenberg, 2008; Friedman & Wicklund, 2006; Johnson et al., 2004).

The research found that diverse funding is paramount for coalitions to keep a dedicated leader and to deliver quality programs and materials to the community (Butterfoss et al., 1996; Chinman & Wandersman, 1999; Florin, Mitchell, Stevenson, & Klein, 2000; Foster & Fishman et al., 2001; Scheirer, 2005; Sofaer, 2004; Swerissen and Crisp, 2004). However, it also revealed that sustainability of coalitions is not dependent upon money, as much as it is dependent upon meaningful relationships and perceived value. Money comes when people believe in something big enough that they are willing to engage and become more involved. Lastly, the research addressed the impact of strong leadership structure to include a lead agency, dedicated coordinator position, and vested and active key leaders of influential partner agencies (Alexander, et al., 2006; Butterfoss, 2007; Feinberg, 2008; Foster-Fisherman, 2001; Kumpher, et al., 1993; Mancini & Marek, 2004; Rog, 2004).

My hope is that community coalitions will have more acknowledgement of their value to community and that funding agencies and federal, state, and local policymakers would recognize that value enough to allow money for dedicated leadership positions. This would help to ensure the sustainability of the community coalition so the membership can focus on the important job of improving the lives of those they serve.

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Appendix A: Research Interview Questions

[Common Mission]

1. Describe your initial contact with the coalition.
2. What is your motivating interest in attending meetings?
3. After the initial meeting, what factors influenced you to become more involved?

[Relationships]

4. Describe the relationship you have with the coalition.
5. How has the relationship changed since initial involvement?
6. Describe the relationship of the coalition to the community it serves.
7. How has the relationship to the community changed over time?

[Strategic Planning Process]

8. Describe the strategic planning process of the coalition as you have experienced.
9. Describe the level of involvement you had in the development of the strategic plan.
10. Describe the level of participation you had in the execution of the strategic plan.
11. After the execution of the plan, how has it impacted the coalition?
12. After the execution of the plan, how has it impacted the community?

[Sustainability Evaluation]

13. In your own words, define the term coalition sustainability.

14. Describe the accomplishments of the coalition as it relates to coalition sustainability.
15. What is the most significant accomplishment of the coalition and why?
16. Describe the challenges of the coalition as it relates to coalition sustainability, and why?
17. What is the most significant challenge of the coalition, and why?
18. What strengths are present within the community that enables the coalition to be sustainable, and why?
19. Of the strengths described, which is the most significant and why?
20. What risks are present in the community that limits the coalition's sustainability, and why?
21. Of the risks described, which is the greatest risk and why.

[Community Value]

22. Describe what you perceive to be the cost/benefit of the coalition to the individual members.
23. How has the coalition been helpful to your organization?
24. How has the coalition been helpful to you as an individual?
25. Describe what you perceive to be the cost/benefit of the coalition to the community.
26. Describe the community perception of the coalition.
27. How have community perceptions of the coalition changed over time?

[Diverse Funding]

28. Describe types of funding that the coalition has actively pursued and obtained.
29. What has been the impact of the funding on the coalition?
30. What has been the impact of the funding on the community?

[Leadership]

31. Describe the structure of leadership that exists within the coalition.
32. What strengths of the current leadership structure affects coalition sustainability?
33. Of the strengths identified, what is the most important strength, and why?
34. What challenges exist to the current leadership structure that affects the coalition's sustainability?
35. Of the challenges identified, what is the most significant challenge, and why?

[Other]

36. Describe any other factors that have not been addressed in this interview that you feel contribute to the coalition's sustainability, and why?